

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



Belfast
City Council

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
COMBINED PACK

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet in the Lavery Room, City Hall on Friday, 21st November, 2025 at 9.30 am, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. **Routine Matters**

- (a) Apologies
- (b) Minutes
- (c) Declarations of Interest

2. **Restricted Items**

- (a) Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann (Pages 1 - 44)
- (b) Belfast Stories Update (Pages 45 - 56)
- (c) 2025-26 Quarter 2 Finance Report (Pages 57 - 74)
- (d) Revenue Estimates 2026/27 and Medium-Term Financial Planning (Pages 75 - 80)
- (e) Update on Standing Orders (Pages 81 - 86)
- (f) Vacant to Vibrant Programme (Pages 87 - 92)

- (g) Asset Management - Gasworks (Pages 93 - 98)
 - (h) UK Pipe Band Championships (Pages 99 - 102)
 - (i) Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy (Pages 103 - 110)
 - (j) Sponsorship (Pages 111 - 134)
3. **Matters referred back from Council/Motions**
- (a) Motion - Together: Building a United Community Strategy (Pages 135 - 138)
 - (b) Motion - Parents' Attendance Records at Council (Pages 139 - 142)
4. **Governance**
- (a) Committee Schedule 2026 (Pages 143 - 146)
 - (b) Change of Date of Council Meeting in January and Schedule of Meetings 2026 (Pages 147 - 150)
5. **Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**
- (a) Draft Amenity Bye Laws (Pages 151 - 248)
 - (b) Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayoral Challenge Competition (Pages 249 - 252)
 - (c) Cities@Heart Project Update (Pages 253 - 256)
 - (d) Update on Hardship Programme 2025/26 (Pages 257 - 262)
 - (e) Planning Information (Pages 263 - 280)
 - (f) Consultation on Review of Planning Fees (Pages 281 - 310)
 - (g) Review of Building Control non-statutory charges (Pages 311 - 316)
 - (h) Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (Pages 317 - 324)
 - (i) Age Friendly Employer Pledge (Pages 325 - 338)
 - (j) Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition Update (Pages 339 - 346)
6. **Physical Programme and Asset Management**
- (a) Physical Programme Update (Pages 347 - 354)
 - (b) Asset Management (Pages 355 - 362)
7. **Finance, Procurement and Performance**
- (a) Contracts Update (Pages 363 - 370)

8. **Equality and Good Relations**

- (a) Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting of 10th November (Pages 371 - 426)
- (b) Equality Screening and Rural Needs Outcome Report Quarter 2 2025-26 (Pages 427 - 434)

9. **Operational Issues**

- (a) Minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum of 13th November (Pages 435 - 440)
- (b) Requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality (Pages 441 - 446)

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Subject:	Notice of Motion – Together – Building a United Community Strategy
Date:	17th November, 2025
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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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

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Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

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No

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1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
	To bring to Members' attention a motion in relation to Together – Building a United Community Strategy, which the Standards and Business Committee considered at its meeting on 23rd October.
2.0	Recommendation
	<p>Members are asked to note that in accordance with Standing Order 13(i) that Notices of Motion which commit the Council to expenditure must be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and report.</p> <p>At this time, Members are only asked to note that the Notice of Motion has been received and that, if agreed, a subsequent report will be brought to Committee outlining a detailed consideration of the Notice of Motion and the potential costs implications.</p>
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 23rd October, referred the following motion to the Committee for consideration:</p> <p>'This Council recognises the commitment laid out in the Together: Building a United Community' (T:BUC) Strategy to remove all Interface structures by 2023. Recognises that a failure to remove the interface barrier in Alexandra Park would be a missed opportunity and commits to developing plans to ensure the complete removal of the interface structure as part of the Reconnecting Waterworks and Alexandra Park project.</p> <p>That a report is submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee detailing plans for the removal, alongside a programme of work with local stakeholders to establish support required to assist with the transition, including local detached youth and community relations provision, coinciding with significant investment in the park.</p> <p>That Belfast City Council engages with key stakeholders, including the Department of Justice Interface Programme, to identify any resources that can assist with the removal of the interface barrier.'</p> <p>Proposer: Councillor Sam Nelson,</p> <p>Seconder: High Sheriff, Councillor McAteer,</p>
3.2	The motion calls upon the Council to submit a report to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee detailing plans for the removal of the interface barrier in Alexandra Park. The

	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is responsible for Equality and Good Relations and oversight of the Shared City Partnership and the motion was therefore be referred to this Committee.
3.3	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None at this stage as there is no commitment to proceed with the Notice of Motion. Details of any financial and resource implications will be reported at a subsequent meeting.</p>
3.4	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>This motion, if agreed, may have potential equality, good relations and rural needs implications and should be subject to our normal screening process as appropriate.</p>
4.0	Documents Attached
	None

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Subject:	Notice of Motion –Parents’ Attendance Records at Council
Date:	21st November, 2025
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager

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Yes

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No

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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

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Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
	To bring to Members' attention a motion in relation to Parents' Attendance Records at Council, which the Standards and Business Committee considered at its meeting on 23rd October.
2.0	Recommendation
	<p>Members are asked to note that in accordance with Standing Order 13(i) that Notices of Motion which commit the Council to expenditure must be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and report.</p> <p>At this time, Members are only asked to note that the Notice of Motion has been received and that, if agreed, a subsequent report will be brought to Committee outlining a detailed consideration of the Notice of Motion and the potential costs implications.</p>
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 23rd October, referred the following motion to the Committee for consideration:</p> <p><u>Parents' Attendance Records at Council</u></p> <p>"That this Council, recognising the important contribution of parents to politics, will investigate ways in which new parents' attendance records reflect the fact that they may have missed meetings due to maternity or paternity for the first six months after having a baby."</p> <p>Proposer: Councillor Maghie</p> <p>Councillor: Councillor Abernethy</p>
3.2	The motion calls upon the Council to reflect new parents' attendance records reflect the fact that they may have missed meetings due to maternity or paternity. Democratic Services (under the remit of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee) is responsible for the recording of Members' attendance at meetings in accordance with the legislation - the motion was therefore referred to this Committee.
3.3	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None at this stage as there is no commitment to proceed with the Notice of Motion.</p> <p>Details of any financial and resource implications will be reported at a subsequent meeting.</p>

3.4	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u> This motion, if agreed, may have potential equality, good relations and rural needs implications and should be subject to our normal screening process as appropriate.
4.0	Documents Attached
	None

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Subject:	Schedule of Meetings 2026
Date:	21st November, 2025
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 40px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 									
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After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>								
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Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To advise the Committee of the dates and times of the meetings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee between January and December, 2026.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is requested to approve the schedule of meetings, as set out below, and to agree to the holding of additional special meetings, if required, to consider the rate-setting process, on dates to be determined in consultation with the Chairperson.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The monthly meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is normally held at 9.30 a.m. on the 3rd Friday of each month.
3.2	However, it is necessary on occasions to move some meetings to earlier/later in the month.
3.3	Members will also be aware that a special meeting is normally scheduled in January, in case it is required for the consideration of the rate-setting process.
3.4	There is always the possibility that additional meetings may be required for this purpose. If so, these meetings would have to be arranged at short notice. The Committee is being asked, therefore, to agree to the holding of such meetings on dates and times to be determined in consultation with the Chairperson.
3.5	<p>The following dates have been identified for meetings of the Strategic Policy Committee for the period from January to December, 2026:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friday, 16th January at 9.30 a.m. (Rate setting, if required) • Friday, 23rd January at 9.30 a.m. • Friday, 20th February at 9.30 a.m. • Friday, 20th March at 9.30 a.m. • Friday, 24th April at 9.30 a.m. • Friday, 22nd May at 9.30 a.m. • Friday, 19th June at 9.30 a.m. • No monthly meeting in July • Friday, 21st August at 9.30 a.m. • Friday, 18th September at 9.30 a.m.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friday, 23rd October at 9.30 a.m. • Friday, 20th November at 9.30 a.m. • Friday, 18th December at 9.30 a.m.
3.6	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	Documents Attached
	None

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Belfast
City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES
COMMITTEE

Subject:	Change of Date of Council Meeting in January and Schedule of Meetings 2026
Date:	21st November, 2025
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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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	To consider a change to the normal date for the monthly Council meeting in January.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is recommended to agree to move the Council meeting in January from Monday, 5th January to Thursday, 8th January, 2026.

3.0	Main Report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	<p>The Council's Standing Order 1 states that:</p> <p><i>“Monthly meetings of the Council will be held on the first working day of each month except in August. Monthly Meetings shall not, however, take place on a Bank or Public Holiday, Friday, Saturday or Sunday, but shall be held on the next following weekday instead.”</i></p>
3.2	In previous years, Members have commented that the date scheduled for the monthly meeting of the Council around the New Year period means that some cannot attend due to holiday commitments. The same can be said for officers, some of whom are also on holiday around that time.
3.3	In 2026, the January meeting of the Council is scheduled to be held on Monday, 5th, the first working day following the New Year public holidays. There would not be any difficulty in moving this meeting to Thursday, 8th January at 6.00 p.m., as no other meetings are scheduled for that date.
3.4	It is, therefore, proposed that the January meeting of the Council take place on Thursday, 8th at 6.00 p.m.
3.5	<p>If the Committee is minded to agree to this date, then the schedule of meetings of the Council for 2026 will be as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thursday, 8th January at 6.00 p.m. • Monday, 2nd February at 6.00 p.m. • Monday, 2nd March at 6.00 p.m. • Wednesday, 1st April at 6.00 p.m. • Tuesday, 5th May at 6.00 p.m.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monday, 1st June at 6.00 p.m. – Annual Meeting • Wednesday, 1st July at 10.45 a.m. – Special: Somme Commemoration • Wednesday, 1st July at 6.00 p.m. • No monthly meeting in August • Tuesday, 1st September at 6.00 p.m. • Thursday, 1st October at 6.00 p.m. • Monday, 2nd November at 6.00 p.m. • Tuesday, 1st December at 6.00 p.m.
3.6	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	Documents Attached
	None.

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Subject:	City Centre Byelaws
Date:	21 November 2025
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor / Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Russell Connelly, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer

Restricted Reports									
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After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
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1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • update Members on the results of formal public consultation on draft byelaws for the city centre and further engagement, • provide Members with revised draft byelaws for approval
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • note the contents of this report and appendices • approve the revised draft byelaws
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>Members will be aware of ongoing issues caused by noise and the display of graphic imagery in the city centre and the negative effect that this can have on social and economic activity. This primarily impacts the primary retail core but also extends more widely to those who work, live in and visit Belfast.</p> <p>The Council is empowered to draft byelaws under Part VI of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 (the “Act”) and in the absence of primary legislation to enforce such a nuisance, officers agreed to draft byelaws to address these issues.</p> <p>On 26 June 2023, Committee agreed to authorise officers to begin the formal public consultation process on a set of draft byelaws. This followed formal consultation and engagement with the Department for Communities and receipt of a legal opinion that addressed issues on human rights considerations that were raised by DfC.</p>
3.2	<p><u>Consultation and Engagement</u></p> <p>A public consultation was launched on 27 November 2023 on the Council’s online engagement platform YourSay Belfast. The consultation ran for a period of 14 weeks and ended on 4 March 2024.</p> <p>At the request of Elected Members, further workshops were held with stakeholders in May 2025.</p> <p>Party briefings have been carried out in the past few months.</p> <p>This report will give Members a high-level summary of the results of the public consultation and the workshops.</p>

	The proposed draft byelaws are attached to this report as Appendix 1 and the detailed Consultation Report is attached as Appendix 2 .
3.3	<p><u>Consultation Format</u></p> <p>The online survey contained a series of questions designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative information in relation to the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of agreement or disagreement with the introduction of a rules and regulations around the use of amplification devices and the display of promotional material (including graphic imagery) in the city centre • Level of usage of amplification and display of promotional material (including graphic imagery) in the city centre and for which purposes • Experience of the use of amplification and display of promotional material (including graphic imagery) in the city centre (positive, neutral or negative) • Extent of agreement or disagreement with the introduction of a permit scheme around the use of amplification devices and promotional literature (including graphic imagery) in the city centre • Extent of agreement or disagreement with standard conditions for a permit as listed in the draft byelaws • Extent of agreement or disagreement with the proposal that the Council may designate areas in which specific types of instruments or amplification is prohibited <p>Respondents were asked to declare their interest in Belfast in terms of whether they lived, worked, studied in Belfast, if they were a business owner in Belfast or a visitor. Respondents were also asked for feedback on equality of opportunity or good relations issues that they thought should be considered by the Council in relation to the draft byelaws.</p> <p>Standard monitoring questions for the categories of age, gender, community background, ethnic origin, disability and dependancy status were asked for the purpose of capturing data in relation to the Council's obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Just under three-quarters of respondents indicated that they would be happy to answer these questions.</p>
3.4	<p><u>Further Engagement</u></p> <p>At Members' requests, two further workshops with a range of stakeholders were held on 12 and 14 May 2025.</p> <p>These sessions were facilitated by an independent consultant and were attended by Elected Members from the DUP, the UUP, the Alliance Party, the Green Party and the TUV as well as representatives from the following organisations: The Committee on the Administration of</p>

	<p>Justice; Belfast Chamber; Linen Quarter BID; Crown Jesus Ministries; Socialist Party NI; TUV; PSNI; Belfast One and the Free Presbyterian Church.</p> <p>These sessions provided useful feedback, with general consensus being reached that there is nuisance created by amplified noise in the city centre.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Consultation results and analysis</u></p> <p>There was a total of 3,571 responses to the survey, with a combined total of 14,878 written comments.</p> <p>There was an extremely high level of engagement from varied sections of the public, who had a wide range of backgrounds, perspectives and opinions.</p> <p>Many of the written responses were nuanced, thoughtful, detailed, reasoned and complex. They provide a rich source of data in terms of how the city centre is experienced by individuals and groups from a wide range of backgrounds. Respondents stated in detail how amplified noise and /or the content of that amplified noise, as well as the display of graphic imagery have affected them personally, whether positively, negatively or both.</p> <p>An overriding theme amongst respondents' written answers is the importance that is attached to the (qualified) human rights afforded by the European Convention on Human Rights. The Consultation Report explores other themes in responses in more depth. Written submissions were received from a diverse selection of interested groups and organisations as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belfast & District Trades Union Council • The Committee on the Administration of Justice • HERe NI • Free Presbyterian Church • Northern Ireland Committee – Irish Congress of Trade Unions • NIPSA • UNISON NI • Rainbow Project • Socialist Party • Traditional Unionist Voice • WRDA • A joint response from People Before Profit on behalf of a range of political parties, activist groups, art collectives, and other organisations <p>A summary of these submissions is included as Appendix 3 to the Consultation Report.</p>

	<p>A total of 36 hard copy responses were received, which all expressed disagreement with the draft byelaws.</p> <p>High-level quantitative results from the public survey in the form of pie charts and bar charts are attached to this report as Appendix 3.</p>
3.6	<p><u>Summary of Content of Draft Byelaws</u></p> <p>The draft byelaws that were published for public consultation aimed to strike the balance between freedom of expression and the need to tackle the nuisance that can result when multiple individuals or organisations come together in busy pedestrian areas to share their views, ideas or performances, often using amplification devices.</p> <p>The draft byelaws contained a requirement for a permit for anyone wishing to use an amplification device in the city centre, including the primary retail core. This related to any situation where on-street amplification is used, such as busking, preaching and outdoor performances. The same rules applied for anyone wishing to place a stand, stall or vehicle carrying any form of promotional literature or other information, regardless of its purpose. This would include displays of graphic imagery.</p> <p>The draft byelaws further provided that a modest annual fee (to be determined) would be charged to cover the costs of administering the permit scheme.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Proposed Changes to Draft Byelaws Following Consultation</u></p> <p><u>Permits</u></p> <p>Feedback from the public survey and further engagement has indicated that whilst most respondents are in favour of regulating amplification in the city centre, a permit system is not considered to be the optimal way to achieve such regulation.</p> <p>Reasons for disagreement with a permit system ranged from concerns around any fee to be charged, potential interference with freedom of expression and the ability to undertake spontaneous performances, and the administration and enforcement of such a scheme. These are explored in more detail in the consultation report.</p> <p>Officers have therefore removed a permit system from the draft byelaws.</p> <p><u>Decibel limit</u></p> <p>The revised byelaws now provide for a maximum decibel limit of 70dB for performers wishing play music or operate amplifiers and similar devices in the city centre. This decibel limit is slightly louder than the ambient street noise and should ensure that performers can be heard, whilst not being excessively loud or intrusive.</p> <p><u>Graphic Imagery</u></p>

	<p>The draft byelaws presented for public consultation included provisions around the regulation of graphic imagery. Feedback from the public consultation indicates that the display of certain images in the city centre has a mixed reception. Whilst the majority of respondents in the public consultation indicated quantitatively that their experience was positive, the written comments of those not in favour of the display of graphic imagery (particularly with regards to abortion) expressed strong views to the contrary.</p> <p>Officers are aware that enforcing a ban on certain graphic images is difficult given the current lack of legislative framework in this area. It is therefore suggested that the provisions on graphic imagery are removed from the current draft of the byelaws and that a separate report is brought back as this issue is further considered.</p> <p><u>Special Events</u></p> <p>The revised byelaws now contain provisions relating to Special Events to be held in the city centre.</p> <p>Provision is made (i) for the restriction or prohibition of amplification in the city centre during Special Events and (ii) for the suspension contained within applicable Council byelaws for prohibition of consumption of alcohol in public places in certain areas of the city centre.</p> <p><u>Alcohol</u></p> <p>Whilst not directly addressed in the draft byelaws, the issue of on-street drinking was raised in the written comments during the public consultation and subsequently in the workshops.</p> <p>Members will note that a report on the Council's view of the proposed commencement of Articles 68-72 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 was presented at the People and Communities Committee on 9 September 2025 and subsequently ratified at Council on 1 October.</p> <p>The proposed commencement of these Articles would effectively extend the powers conferred on police officers requiring individuals to stop drinking alcohol in a designated area, and surrender any alcoholic drinks in their possession, to council officers. Anyone refusing will be committing an offence and may be issued with a fixed penalty notice. This is an 'opt in' power that the Council may choose to avail of.</p> <p>The Council has indicated broad support of the commencement of these provisions to DfC and has noted that they would complement the proposed byelaws to make Belfast a safe and welcoming place for all, in line with the Belfast Agenda.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Enforcement Mechanisms</u></p> <p>The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 provides a mechanism for officers to issue abatement notices in relation to noise, however, the current</p>

	<p>issues around noise in the city centre for the most part do not meet the threshold of a statutory nuisance.</p> <p>Members may be aware that Section 92 of the Act provides that penalties for the contravention of byelaws shall be in the form of a fine payable on summary conviction. The draft byelaws contain a provision whereby an authorised officer may issue a fixed penalty notice for an offence committed under the byelaws.</p> <p>Whilst the issuance of a fixed penalty notice via byelaws is not usual practice, the Department has indicated that it will consider the fixed penalty enforcement mechanism currently included in the draft byelaws.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Suggested next steps</u></p> <p>After considering feedback from the public consultation and workshops, officers have revised the draft byelaws that reflect the changes noted above. These are attached as Appendix 1 for Members' consideration and approval.</p> <p>Members are also advised that officers will continue to log and monitor all complaints about busking, preaching, or any other kind of street performance. Current statistics are included in the consultation report.</p> <p>Members will be aware that Section 91 of the Act requires byelaws to be approved by the Department for Communities before they can be adopted. Therefore, any revised draft byelaws will be subject to this process.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no financial or resource implications connected to this report. There will however be resource implications in enforcing the bye-laws if approved by DfC. This remains under consideration and more detail will be provided once a response is received from DfC.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>An equality screening was carried out on the draft byelaws that were presented for public consultation. The consultation provided useful feedback both on the draft screening form and more generally from Section 75 groups. Further screening will be undertaken as the byelaws progress to finalisation.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices - Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1: Proposed draft byelaws</p> <p>Appendix 2 & (a): Consultation report</p> <p>Appendix 3: High level quantitative survey results</p>

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BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

**BYE-LAWS FOR THE GOOD GOVERNANCE OF BELFAST CITY CENTRE
AND FOR THE PREVENTION AND SUPPRESSION OF NUISANCES IN BELFAST CITY
CENTRE**

Made by Belfast City Council :

**Confirmed by Department for
Communities :**

In operation on and from :

**BYE – LAWS
BELFAST CITY COUNCIL
FOR THE GOOD GOVERNANCE OF BELFAST CITY CENTRE AND FOR THE
PREVENTION AND SUPPRESSION OF NUISANCES IN BELFAST CITY CENTRE**

Bye-Laws made the _____ by Belfast City Council pursuant to Section 90 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 for the good rule and government of its City Centre and the prevention and suppression of nuisances in its City Centre at a meeting of the Council held on _____

INTERPRETATION

1. In these Bye-Laws -

‘Authorised Officer’ means any person employed by the Council or any other person authorised by the Council to carry out functions under these Bye-Laws for purposes of Section 93 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972.

‘City Centre’ means the area delineated in [colour tbc] in the map at Schedule One.

‘Council’ means Belfast City Council.

‘Perform’ means to engage in any type of public performance or exhibition with the reasonable expectation of attracting bystanders and / or receiving donations, and includes but is not limited to the playing of musical instruments, singing, circus-based skills, street theatre, reciting and public speaking and any other type of performance or exhibition not specifically listed but which would be similar in character. For the purposes of this Bye-Law this also includes preaching.

‘Performer’ means a person who engages in any activity described in the preceding paragraph in a Public Place.

‘Public Place’ means any area open to the public including any street, road, footpath, open space, park, cemetery, green space and amenity areas.

‘Special Event’ means a large scale event which is to take place in Belfast which is exceptional in nature and will attract a significant number of visitors to the city.

General Provisions

- 2.** These Bye-Laws apply to the City Centre as shown in the map at Schedule One.
- 3.** Notice of the effect of these Bye-Laws shall be given by signs placed in such positions as the Council may consider adequate to inform persons of their existence.

- a. No person shall, after being requested to desist by an Authorised Officer cause or permit any noise to be made above 70 decibels by
 - i. Playing a musical instrument; and/or
 - ii. operating or permitting to be operated any audio device, speaker, amplifier, or similar equipment of a similar type
4. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 3, where there are 2 or more Performers within 100 metres of each other and it appears to an Authorised Officer that there is a cumulative effect of the noise which is so loud or continuous as to give reasonable cause for annoyance to other persons either within places of work or in a Public Place, an Authorised Officer may ask the Performers to reduce their volume and/or to relocate to another place to perform.

Behaviour and Conduct of Performers

5. A Performer must not obstruct the public's access to and egress from any premises or interfere with the free and safe movement of pedestrians.
6. A Performer must comply with any Code of Conduct issued by the Council, which may be amended from time to time.

Exemptions

7. These Bye-Laws shall not apply to the following activities:
 - (a) Those activities taking place in a public place pursuant to an entertainment licence;
 - (b) Those activities taking place in a public place with the consent of Department of Infrastructure or the relevant landowner;
 - (c) Any procession which has been authorised by the Parades Commission;
 - (d) A cash collection in a public place which has been authorised by PSNI pursuant to The Charities Act (NI) 2008; and
 - (e) An official picket pursuant to Article 98 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (NI) Order 1995.

Offences

8. A person who fails, without a reasonable excuse, to comply with a reasonable request from an Authorised Officer pursuant to Paragraphs 3 or 4 will be guilty of an offence
9. Any person who contravenes any of these Bye-Laws shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 2 of the standard scale and in the case of a continuing offence, a further fine of £2 for each day on which the offence continues after conviction.
10. Where an Authorised Officer is of the opinion that a person is committing or has committed an offence under the preceding Bye-Law, the Authorised Officer may demand the name and address of such a person and if that demand is

refused or the person gives a name and address which is false or misleading, that person shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £500.

Fixed Payment Notice

11. Where an Authorised Officer has reason to believe that a person has committed an offence under these Bye-Laws, the Authorised Officer may give that person a notice offering the person the opportunity of discharging any liability to conviction for that offence by payment of a fixed penalty to the Council.
12. Where a person is given a fixed penalty notice under these Bye-Laws:
 - (a) no proceedings shall be instituted for that offence before the expiration of the period of 14 days following the date of the notice; and
 - (b) the person shall not be convicted of that offence if the person pays the fixed penalty before the expiration of that period.
13. A notice under this section must give such particulars of the circumstances alleged to constitute the offence as are necessary for giving reasonable information of the offence.
14. The Fixed Penalty Notice shall specify the name and address of the alleged offender and in general terms the nature of the contravention alleged to have been committed and the date and place of the alleged contravention.

Miscellaneous and Supplementary

Special Events

The Council may restrict or prohibit the use of amplification by Performers in certain areas of the City Centre when there is a Special Event due to take place in the city but only where it is considered necessary to do so for the purposes of facilitating or delivering the event. Any such restriction or prohibition may only be for the duration of the Special Event.

Where the Council proposes to restrict or prohibit the use of amplification for the purposes of a Special Event it shall place notice in 2 newspapers distributed in the city and on its website no less than 2 months prior to the Special Event.

The Council may suspend the prohibition contained within the applicable Belfast City Council Bye-laws prohibiting the consumption of alcohol in public places in certain areas of the city centre for Special Events. Any such suspension may only be for the duration of the Special Event and will be subject to consultation with PSNI and any other relevant stakeholders.

Where the Council proposes to suspend the prohibition contained within the Bye- Laws prohibiting the consumption of alcohol in public places in certain areas of the city centre for the purposes of a Special Event it shall place notice of the proposed restriction or prohibition in 2 local newspapers distributed in the city and on its website no less than 2 months prior to the Special Event.

Surrender of alcohol in designated places

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Consultation Report

Proposed City Centre Byelaws

November 2025

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Appendices

1. Draft byelaws
2. CAJ submission
3. Summary of written responses

1. Executive Summary

On 26 June 2023, the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee authorised officers to begin the formal public consultation process on draft byelaws for the city centre.

A consultation on the draft byelaws was launched on the Council's consultation platform, YourSay Belfast, on 27 November 2023 and ran for 14 weeks until 4 March 2024. This report sets out the findings from the online consultation survey and the various submissions that were received during the consultation period.

This report presents:

- the consultation background
- the process for developing and launching the consultation
- a quantitative report of the consultation survey responses and a qualitative analysis of text responses

The aim of this report is to give Elected Members as clear a picture as possible of the public response and issues raised in relation to the proposed byelaws. This will allow Elected Members to make an informed decision based on this evidence.

2. Background on the draft byelaws

The Council's power to make byelaws arises from Part VI of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 (the "Act"). Section 90 sets out the purposes for which the Council may make byelaws, which are:

- "(a) For the good rule and government of the whole or any part of its district;*
- (b) For the prevention and suppression of nuisances in its district;*
- (c) For any purpose for which bye-laws may be made by it under any other transferred provision."*

Section 91(1) of the Act confirms that byelaws made by the Council shall not have effect until they are confirmed by the relevant Department. Departmental guidance on drafting byelaws was issued in February 2015 and account of that has been taken in the development of the draft byelaws.

On 18 February 2022, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee authorised officers to undertake an initial informal consultation and engagement exercise with the Department for Communities (DfC). DfC subsequently highlighted a number of issues for further consideration:

- DfC observed that there may be the potential for the byelaws to interfere with rights under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the subsequent possibility for challenge.
- DfC commented that the power to confiscate property and dispose of it how they see fit is very powerful and may be better suited to primary legislation rather than Council byelaws. Save for the purposes for which bye-laws can be made, as set out in Section 80 of the 1972 Act, there is no restriction on the content of bye-laws, other than that "byelaws should not be made in respect of matters which are already dealt with in legislation". Ultimately, it is for the Council to decide if the existing law deals sufficiently with the matter at hand.
- DfC recommended that an exemption may need to be included for an official picket organised by a Trade Union under Article 98 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 ('the 1995 Order') which provides for peaceful communication of information.

A legal opinion was sought on the draft byelaws and an opinion was received on 10 March 2023. The opinion provided an analysis of Articles 9, 10 and 11 of the European Convention of Human Rights. Counsel advised that the draft byelaws may have an impact upon the right to freedom of expression pursuant to Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights. Counsel noted that this is not an absolute right, and interference with this right may be justified if the Court were to find there was a legitimate aim in doing so. Counsel also advised that it would be prudent to include reference to a peaceful picket organised pursuant to Article 98 of the 1995 Order in the language of the exemption.

After consideration of both the feedback from DfC and the legal opinion, the byelaws were amended to include an exemption for an official picket organised by a registered Trade Union (pursuant to authorisation granted in Article 98 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (NI) Order 1995). The title of the byelaws was amended to include “*And for the prevention and suppression of nuisances in Belfast City Centre*”.

Draft byelaws were brought to Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 26 June 2023 and the Committee authorised those draft byelaws to be issued for public consultation. These draft byelaws are attached to this report as Appendix 1.

A draft Equality Screening was conducted in relation to the draft byelaws, which was published alongside the consultation on the YourSay platform. The screening did not find there to be any likely impact of the draft byelaws on the nine grounds included within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (religious belief, political opinion, race, age, marital status, sexual orientation, men and women generally, disability and dependants).

Summary of Content of the Draft Byelaws

The draft byelaws provide that anyone who wishes to use an amplification device in the city centre, including the primary retail core, would require a permit from the Council. This would include any situation where on-street amplification is used, such as busking, preaching and outdoor performances.

The same rules would apply to anyone wishing to place a stand, stall or vehicle carrying any form of promotional literature or other information, regardless of its purpose. This would include displays of graphic imagery.

The byelaws provide that a modest annual fee will be charged to cover the costs of administering the permit scheme. This fee is yet to be determined.

European Convention on Human Rights

The articles potentially engaged by these draft byelaws are as follows:

- Article 9: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- Article 10: Freedom of expression
- Article 11: Freedom of assembly and association

These rights and freedoms provided are qualified rights; they may be interfered with or restricted in certain circumstances if necessary and for a legitimate aim.

Restrictions can be imposed provided any such restriction is:

- prescribed by law
- in pursuit of one or more legitimate aims specified in paragraph 2 of the Article in question
- necessary and
- proportionate

The 'legitimate aims' specified for each Article are as follows:

Article 9:

'in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.'

Article 10:

'in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.'

Article 11:

'in the interests of national security or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This Article shall not prevent the imposition of lawful restrictions

on the exercise of these rights by members of the armed forces, of the police or of the administration of the State.'

3. The Context of the Consultation

3.1 Belfast City Council Context

Belfast City Council recognises that it is important to support the role of the City Centre as a focal point of social and economic activity and protect the amenity of the area for those who visit, live and work there.

Significant issues have been raised over the past few years regarding the activities of buskers, preachers and various interest groups in the City Centre, primarily within the primary retail core. The Council recognises that busking can bring vibrancy to the area and should be facilitated. It is also recognised that street preaching and the ability to protest are important rights of expression in a democratic society and are protected under the European Convention of Human Rights. However, the Council must consider the context within which these activities are being undertaken, their cumulative impact and how this affects others.

Street preaching using significant amplification is occurring on a regular basis throughout the Primary Retail Core. This in turn attracts counter protests, usually but not exclusively at the weekend. In addition, protestors are regularly displaying images which cause significant distress to a variety of people for different reasons. For example, graphic images of abortions, animal experimentation and factory farming conditions. Since there are no restrictions on these activities, those protesting frequently use significant amplification to compete with each other. This in turn also appears to drive away those buskers who do not use amplification but may add to the vibrancy of the area.

Whilst the proposed byelaws would apply to the district as a whole, it is envisaged they will have a particular relevance to the city centre.

The Council has collated statistics on how many complaints have been received in recent years. Table 1 below demonstrates that whilst the total number peaked in 2020, the Council continues to receive complaints on the issues of loudspeakers and street performers in Belfast and in the city centre:

Table 1

	Loudspeaker Complaints in Belfast	Loudspeaker complaints in City Centre	Street performer complaints in Belfast	Street performer complaints in City Centre
2018	10	8	76	76
2019	17	14	78	78
2020	62	51	29	27
2021	24	22	34	34
2022	45	41	53	53
2023	29	27	22	20
2024	31	30	39	38
2025 (up to 11/11/25)	30	30	53	52

4. Consultation Design Process

Council officers within the Legal & Civic Services Department along with colleagues from Strategic Policy & Performance discussed the approach to be agreed for consultation and engagement.

Officers recognised that qualitative feedback was important to understand how the draft byelaws would be received, and therefore open-ended text response questions relating to various aspects of the draft byelaws were included in the online survey.

Recognising the importance of knowing who was contributing to the survey, respondents were asked to declare their interest in Belfast in terms of whether they

lived, worked, studied in Belfast or if they were a business owner in Belfast or a visitor. Respondents were also asked for feedback on equality of opportunity, good relations and rural needs issues that they thought should be considered by the Council in relation to the draft byelaws.

Standard monitoring questions were asked for the purpose of capturing data in relation to the Council's obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 for the categories of age, gender, community background, ethnic origin, disability and dependancy status.

5. Methodology

The public consultation on the draft byelaws was launched on the Council's consultation online platform, YourSay Belfast on 27 November 2023 and ran for 14 weeks, concluding on 4 March 2024. This online engagement platform provides the Council with several tools to support early, transparent and ongoing dialogue when undertaking consultation and engagement exercises and for reporting back on evidence received both in terms of quantitative and qualitative information. A hard copy format of the survey was made available upon request and responses received via hard copy have been read and considered for this report.

5.1 Pre consultation engagement sessions with stakeholders in relation to the draft byelaws

Relevant stakeholders from the city centre business community had attended the Strategic and Policy Resources Committee on 18 February 2022 to present their concerns about how persistent disruptive on-street activity, in the form of protests, street entertainers, preaching and lobbying, often involving the use of amplifiers, was increasingly creating difficulties for retailers and businesses operating in the general area of Cornmarket. It was noted that the impact of these activities was creating difficulties for retailers and businesses as well as having a detrimental effect on staff mental health and wellbeing.

6. Consultation Responses

6.1 Collation of statistics from surveys

As stated above, Council officers felt it appropriate to ask a series of open-ended questions to gauge opinion on various aspects of the draft byelaws. This quantitative feedback is summarised in Section 7 of this report. Statistical breakdowns of general sentiment in terms of level of agreement or disagreement is also included.

The combination of qualitative information and statistical information will give as comprehensive a picture as possible of the responses. It should be noted, however, that like other surveys conducted on the YourSay platform, no guarantee can be given that individual respondents have not filled in the survey multiple times. This is a known limitation in the analysis of public consultation data that is provided anonymously.

In the online survey, respondents were presented with questions based on various sections of the draft byelaws and were asked to state if they definitely agreed, somewhat agreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, somewhat disagreed or definitely disagreed. Percentages in relation to each question are given in tabular format with a discussion with some of the commentary and themes in written answers following on from this.

6.2 Consultation analysis

In addition to the statistical analysis of the responses to the survey, officers have reviewed written commentary submitted by the respondents. In many cases, comments were very complex with mixed feelings towards buskers, religious preaching and graphic imagery. General recurring themes have emerged from the comments and those are discussed in the analysis of the text comments for each question.

6.3 Written submissions

A number of written submissions were made during the period of the consultation. A substantial written response was submitted by the Committee for the Administration of Justice, which laid out concerns as to how the proposed byelaws could conflict with rights set forth in the European Convention on Human Rights, the most prominent issue being the risk that it would be an offence to have static protests in the city centre. A copy of this submission is included as **Appendix 2**.

Written responses were also received from the following organisations:

- Belfast & District Trades Union Council
- The Committee on the Administration of Justice
- HERe NI
- Free Presbyterian Church
- Northern Ireland Committee – Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- NIPSA
- UNISON NI
- Rainbow Project
- Socialist Party
- Traditional Unionist Voice
- WRDA
- A joint response from People Before Profit on behalf of a range of political parties, activist groups, art collectives, and other organisations

Several of these organisations endorsed the CAJ submission. A summary of these written submissions is attached to this report as **Appendix 3**.

6.4 Petitions

No petitions were received.

6.5 Email responses

There was a total of 5 emails received that commented on the consultation. These touched on various aspects of the draft byelaws and included criticism that the terms and conditions are ill defined and are arbitrary, and that whilst the city centre benefits from music and the ability to protest, hate speech that constitutes bullying and harassment is unacceptable.

6.6 Letter Response

One letter response was received, which cautioned against enacting the byelaws. The respondent felt that they would breach human rights by removing the opportunity to protest, gather, inform and peacefully campaign.

6.7 Responses to the survey (hard copy submissions)

A total of 36 hard copy responses were received, all of which expressed disagreement with the draft byelaws. These respondents commented on the importance of freedom of expression in relation to the heritage of open-air preaching (in particular by the evangelical Christian / Protestant community) and supported the display of graphic imagery in the city centre.

7. Breakdown of Responses

7.1 Overall responses to the online survey

There were 3,571 responses to the online survey and a combined total of 14,878 written comments.

The analysis of the written comments clearly shows that there is considerable strength of feeling and demonstrates that respondents took time to compose responses that in many cases were thoughtful and reasoned.

7.2 Responses to the Consultation Questions on the draft byelaws

The consultation presented a series of questions to allow respondents to give their opinion on the substance of the proposed byelaws. The consultation also collected monitoring data on respondents' age, gender, religious background (regardless of whether or not they practice), their national identity, whether or not they were impacted by a disability, their ethnic origin and whether or not they have dependants.

Respondents could fill in the questionnaire as many times as they wanted. None of the questions in the questionnaire was mandatory. There is not, therefore, an equal number of responses for each question.

Q1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council should introduce rules and regulations around the use of amplification devices and the display of promotional literature or other information (including the display of graphic imagery) in the city centre?

This question had a total of 3,540 responses (31 skipped)

	Percentage	Number
Definitely agree	39.7	1,404
Somewhat agree	4.8	171
Neither agree nor disagree	1.0	36
Somewhat disagree	3.8	133
Definitely disagree	50.7	1,796
Total	100	3,540

It is immediately apparent that the majority of respondents to this question (54.5%) either definitely disagreed or somewhat disagreed with the proposal to introduce rules and regulations around the use of amplification devices and the display of promotional literature or other information in the city centre. Only 1% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

Q2: Please provide any additional comments in the space below.

This question had a total of 2,215 written responses and allowed respondents to express why they agreed or disagreed with the introduction of rules and regulations as set out in Question 1.

This was a very broad and general question and it therefore elicited many broad and general responses. However, general themes were evident and are discussed in further detail below:

Themes in Responses – Definitely Agree / Somewhat agree

Too loud

Respondents who were in favour of the introduction of rules and regulations simply stated that the city centre is ‘too loud’, an ‘aural nightmare’ and that the noise of amplified voices and instruments is ‘intrusive’ and ‘unbearable’.

Cumulative Impact

A theme that emerged from the analysis of these comments is that the cumulative impact of amplification and ‘noise pollution’, can be ‘very very annoying to be bombarded by numerous buskers and preachers’, feels ‘out of control and unmanaged’ and has ‘ruined the experience’ of being in the city centre.

Negative Impact on City Centre

Respondents commented that current noise levels in the city centre from buskers and preachers does not create a ‘welcoming environment’ for both residents and tourists, makes the city centre feel ‘unsafe’, makes them feel ‘anxious’ and ‘annoyed’ and that they ‘avoid going to the city centre’.

Content of Speech

Some respondents noted that the content of some of the religious preachers’ speeches is ‘oppressive’, ‘hateful’, ‘hurtful’ and ‘damaging’. Respondents commented that buskers are sometimes ‘very loud’ and ‘intrusive’ and that there is ‘no need’ for amplification at all.

Decibel Limit

A suggestion that speakers should be kept at a 'reasonable level' and the imposition of a 'decibel limit' for any amplification was a further recurring theme.

Disability

Respondents commented that amplification makes the city centre 'extra difficult' for those with disabilities and neurodivergency disorders, such as Autism Spectrum Disorder and is 'harmful to wellbeing'.

It was also noted that unregulated speakers and performers who 'take up so much space' make the city centre 'less accessible' to those with physical disabilities who require a wheelchair or rollator.

Graphic Imagery

Respondents commented that images displayed by pro-life / anti-abortion groups are 'medically sensitive', 'highly triggering', cause 'stress', are 'disturbing', 'hugely traumatising for anyone that has been through a 'pregnancy loss' and 'should not be seen by children'. It was suggested that the use of 'very graphic images / contentious campaigns should only be used after 9:30 pm / similar to TV watershed', which would 'help balance equality with freedom of speech'.

Themes in Responses – Somewhat disagree / Definitely disagree

Freedom of Expression

Those respondents who disagreed with the introduction of rules and regulations stated that this was a 'blatant attack' on 'the fundamental right to free speech' and 'rights of assembly', that the byelaws would 'severely restrict the vibrancy' of the city centre and would 'silence the gospel message'. It was noted that the byelaws would constitute 'discriminatory behaviour' towards Christians and that 'religious liberty' is of 'vital importance', given the 'rich heritage of preaching' in Northern Ireland.

Questioning the Need

Respondents noted that the introduction of these byelaws should be as a 'measure of last resort', that they should be 'proportionate and reasonable', that there 'already laws' in relation to hate speech and that it's 'up to police' to deal with these issues. Respondents commented that the draft byelaws breach the Good Friday Agreement where it states that *'The parties affirm their commitment to the mutual respect, the*

civil rights and the religious liberties of everyone in the community ...the parties affirm in particular ...the right to freedom and expression of religion'. Respondents stated that existing legislation, for example, The Public Order Act, should 'suffice' to address these issues. It should be noted that respondents in some cases incorrectly cited legislation that does not apply in Northern Ireland.

Other City Centre Issues

Respondents commented that the Council should address 'way bigger issues' in the city centre such as 'drug paraphernalia', 'homeless sleeping in doorways', 'anti-social behaviour' and 'shoplifting' and that it should 'focus on cleaning the streets' before introducing these types of byelaws.

Council Process and Fee

Questions were raised about the Council process for granting permits citing 'huge concerns as to how this will be fairly and correctly monitored' and whether this could lead to 'subjective decisions' being made about who would or would not be granted a permit. Respondents were critical of the introduction of a fee, saying that this could be a 'barrier' that could disproportionately affect individuals.

Q3: In the past 12 months have you used an amplification device in the city centre?

This question had a total of 3,525 responses (46 skipped)

- Yes: 144 (4.1%)
- No: 3,381 (95.9%)

Q4: If the answer is yes, please indicate the activity you were participating in from the list below (select all relevant activities):

This question had a total of 141 responses (3,430 skipped)

	Percentage	Number
Busking	17.7	25
Street performance	14.9	21
Street preaching	57.4	81
Display of promotional literature or other information (including graphic imagery)	23.4	33

Other (please specify)	31.9	45

There were no written comments that addressed or specified the 'other' activities.

Q5: In the past 12 months have you displayed promotional literature or other information (including the display of graphic imagery) in the city centre?

This question had a total of 3,529 responses (42 skipped)

- Yes: 164 (4.6%)
- No: 3,365 (95.4%)

Q6: If the answer is yes please provide a description of the promotional literature or other information displayed (to include a description of any graphic imagery).

This answer had 154 text responses, which included the following descriptions:

- Anti-abortion / right to life imagery
- Vegan charity
- Prayer cards
- Religious literature including gospel tracts
- Environmental information
- Animal rights information
- Political causes e.g. Free Palestine, Gaza, support for refugees and asylum seekers
- LGBTQ+ information / Pride placards

Q7: What is your experience of the use of amplification devices in the city centre (i.e. speakers, public address system, loudspeaker, megaphone or any electronic device for the amplification of sound). You may select more than one option.

This question had a total of 3,512 responses (59 skipped)

	Percentage	Number
Very positive	32.0	1125
Positive	20.8	731
Neutral	12.8	448
Negative	13.3	466
Very negative	30.5	1071

Q8: Please explain your answer in the space below.

This question had a total of 2,690 written responses. It should be noted that many respondents wrote text responses which were partly positive and partly negative, for example in favour of music and busking but not in favour of the content of certain religious preaching, such as the following comment: “Very positive in terms of buskers/musicians. Very negative in terms of preachers and those using PA systems and megaphones to spread hatred in what is a growingly diverse city.” Another example of this viewpoint was a respondent who commented that their experience of amplification in the city centre has been ‘mixed’ and who stated that ‘the use of amplification must respect the views within our community, fostering a culture of respect and tolerance’.

However, as can be seen from the statistics, the majority of respondents have a ‘very positive’ or ‘positive’ experience of amplification in the city centre. Those responses are analysed in more detail below:

Themes in Very Positive / Positive responses

Positive Impact

Those who had a positive experience noted that they were ‘uplifted’ from listening to preachers and were ‘educated and informed’ by ‘organisations and demonstrations’. Respondents noted that amplified activities add to the ‘atmosphere and buzz’ and ‘vitality’ of the city centre.

Tradition of Preaching

Respondents noted that open air preaching has been a ‘force for good’ in society, that public preaching has a ‘long tradition’ in Belfast that is ‘part of our diverse culture’ and that to restrict it ‘would interfere with a long-term religious practice’. It was noted that freedom of expression is ‘paramount in a modern and free society’, that preachers are a ‘huge part of our culture which should be heard’ and ‘to shut that down is to oppose freedom of speech’.

Mix of Content

Respondents noted that amplification devices and buskers are a ‘welcome addition’ to the city centre and add to Belfast’s ‘atmosphere and character’. It was noted that

music adds to the 'vibrancy' of Belfast 'especially as a UNESCO City of Music' and is a 'traditional part of our culture and heritage, as well as something which can unite communities.' The 'diversity' of the city was commented upon in terms of a mixture of 'a busker in one corner and a street preacher in the other'.

Themes in Very Negative / Negative responses

Too Loud / Negative Impact on City Centre

A strong theme for those whose experience is negative is that the amplification is 'too loud', an 'assault' and 'out of control' for those visiting and working in the city centre and that the noise is 'off putting' which creates a 'disincentive to visit the city centre'. The cumulative impact of a lot of amplification was described as 'ridiculous', creating 'a very difficult atmosphere' and 'making the shopping experience unpleasant'.

The impact of high levels of noise was described as a 'cacophony' which is 'stressful' and it was stated that there is 'no need' for amplification devices, which were 'not designed for city streets'.

Disability

For those who declared themselves to be autistic or declared that they have dependants who are autistic, noise levels were described as 'painful to cope with', 'overwhelming' and 'overstimulating'.

Content of Speech

Respondents commented on experiencing amplified 'hate speech' and described this as being 'homophobic', 'transphobic', 'overtly offensive to the LGBT community', 'upsetting' and has 'no place in a modern society'.

Quality of Content

Respondents commented on the 'quality' of the content of what it being amplified', noting that there is 'no quality control', 'no standard in terms of quality of the performance' and that a performance can become an 'annoying nuisance'.

Q9: What is your experience of the display of promotional literature or other information in the city centre (including the display of graphic imagery)? You may select more than one option.

This question had a total of 3,517 responses (54 skipped)

	Percentage	Number
Very positive	29.3	1029
Positive	18.9	664
Neutral	21.5	755
Negative	12.9	452
Very negative	24.8	867

Q10: Please explain your answer in the space below.

This question had a total of 2,342 text responses.

Themes in Very Positive / Positive responses

Expression of Views

Those whose experience of graphic imagery was positive commented that it is 'important that Belfast is a space for inclusive views which allows everyone to express and share them freely and openly', that it 'offers a diverse range of information' and that 'it helps people understand'. Respondents commented on the importance of freedom of expression, noting that 'people should be free to promote or protest whatever images they want'.

Look Away

Respondents commented that if people don't like certain imagery, 'they don't have to look at it'. Although respondents acknowledged that some graphic imagery 'might be difficult to look at', it should not be 'censored' and that it is important for 'raising awareness'. It was also noted that such imagery is less 'intrusive' than loud noise.

Themes in Neutral Comments

Respondents noted that there is a 'variety of promotional literature' given out and questioned the 'criteria' for judging it. It was noted that 'a challenge lies in

establishing a fair and transparent process for determining what constitutes “graphic” content.

Themes in Very Negative / Negative responses

Upsetting

Those whose experience of graphic imagery was negative commented with regard to anti-abortion imagery that it is ‘disturbing’, ‘distressing’ ‘distasteful’, ‘triggering’, ‘upsetting’, ‘insensitive to those who have lost a child’, ‘grotesque’, ‘aggressively graphic and shocking’ ‘inappropriate in a shopping area’ and ‘offensive’.

Children

Respondents commented that this type of imagery ‘should be age appropriate’, that it is ‘inappropriate when children are present’ and ‘difficult for parents to explain’. It was further stated that some of the graphic abortion imagery would be ‘subject to age restrictions when in film and TV’ and that they ‘would be rated 18 in a movie’.

Tourists / Visitors

The impact of graphic imagery on tourists to Belfast was noted as ‘horrendous’, ‘uninviting’ ‘deeply embarrassing’ and ‘creating an unwelcome backdrop to their visit’.

Questions relating to the Permit Scheme

Q11: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council should introduce a permit scheme around the use of amplification devices in the city centre?

This question had a total of 3,443 responses (128 skipped)

	Percentage	Number
Definitely agree	31.9	1099
Somewhat agree	9.6	331
Neither agree nor disagree	3.1	108
Somewhat disagree	5.3	181
Definitely disagree	50.1	1724

Q12: Please provide any additional comments in the space below.

This question had a total of 1,894 text responses (1,677 skipped).

Themes in Responses – Definitely Disagree / Somewhat Disagree

Council Process / Fee

Those who disagreed with the introduction of a permit system commented that it may lead to ‘unintended consequences’ such as ‘subjectivity’ in the issuance of permits and a ‘financial barrier’ for those who do not have the means to pay for a permit, which could ‘silence important voices in the public sphere’. Concern was expressed that such a system could negatively impact the arts community if it was overly complicated or expensive.

Freedom of Expression

The theme of freedom of expression was once again apparent in the responses to this question. Respondents commented that the requirement of a permit ‘conflicts with the rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression (Articles 10 and 11 of the Human Rights Act), and the right to religious liberties (affirmed in the Belfast Agreement)’, ‘puts barriers up to free speech in the city’ and would ‘be seen as censorship by the back door’.

Administration and Enforcement

The process of how a permit system would be managed and administered was described as ‘cumbersome regulations’ that would ‘divert public resource’, ‘costing the public purse in administration costs’. Queries were raised about the criteria for the issuance of permits, how this ‘would be open to political influence and abuse’ and that it would be ‘very hard to police and make fair decisions on who does and who does not receive a permit.’

Ban Amplification

Respondents commented that instead of introducing a permit system, the Council should ‘ban amplification’ in the city centre.

Themes in Responses – Definitely Agree / Somewhat agree

Ban Amplification

Those who were in agreement with a permit system for amplification commented (similarly to those who disagreed with the permit system) that an overall ban on amplification ‘full stop’ would be preferable for ‘acoustic buskers only please’, stating that there should be ‘no amplification’ as ‘there is no requirement for it’, particularly

for small groups but instead allow amplification where it is 'necessary' for larger crowds.

Manage Amplification

Respondents commented that a permit system would help to 'limit' the 'out of control volume' and could specify a 'maximum level of amplification'.

Support for Buskers

It was noted that any fee for buskers should be 'reasonable' or 'low' so as not to 'deter' or 'discourage' them and concern was expressed that if a permit is 'overly complicated or expensive' to obtain, Belfast could lose a 'fantastic array' of buskers.

Comments on Process

Queries were raised about the process for rescinding a permit if its conditions were broken. Respondents also noted that such a system 'will be difficult to police' and queried 'how well will it be monitored?'

Q13: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council should introduce a permit scheme around the display of promotional literature or other information in the city centre (including the display of graphic imagery)?

This question had a total of 3,526 responses (45 skipped)

	Percentage	Number
Definitely agree	29.7	1047
Somewhat agree	9.0	318
Neither agree nor disagree	6.2	219
Somewhat disagree	6.1	215
Definitely disagree	49.0	1727

Q14: Please provide any additional comments in the space below.

This question had a total of 1,612 text responses (1959 skipped).

Themes in Responses – Definitely Disagree / Somewhat Disagree

The majority of written comments were from those who disagreed with the introduction of a permit system for the display of promotional literature or other information, including graphic imagery.

Censorship

Respondents commented that the Council should not act as a 'censor of content' and that any regulations should be 'clear, transparent and applied equally to prevent any form of discrimination or bias'. Respondents raised concerns about the Council 'shutting down' those with whom they disagree and noted that this is an 'overreach of authority', 'draconian', 'an attempt at censorship', 'partisan' and an 'infringement of freedom of speech and civil liberties'. It was also suggested that such a system would 'introduce a level of bureaucracy that would hinder those who want to preach in the city centre'.

Permit Hours

It was noted that a permit would not be granted before 11am, which would put a restriction on handing out literature to commuters coming into work. It was noted that there is a 'long standing tradition' of handing out literature in the city centre.

Subjective

In determining what constitutes 'graphic content', it was noted that decisions made by the Council must be 'guided by clear, objective criteria' and that this subject is generally 'subjective'. Respondents queried the 'unclear' term of 'graphic' and asked how that will be determined or defined by the Council.

Barrier

Concern was expressed that a permit system would 'slow down solidarity actions for international events' and would create 'barriers' for 'grassroots initiatives and community -led projects.'

Existing Legislation

Respondents suggested that existing legislation around harassment and anti-social behaviour may be 'sufficient' to deal with issues that may arise.

Themes in Responses – Definitely Agree / Somewhat Agree

Regulate Content

Respondents in favour of a permit commented that this would be a 'positive step' to ensure that content displayed in public places would be 'appropriate and sensitive to the diverse audience' in the city centre (including children) but queried how it would be enforced. It was noted that 'images that are designed to shock, upset or

discriminate are not acceptable' and that having regulation around what can be displayed will 'create much more of a welcoming environment' in the city centre.

Children

Concern was expressed for certain images relating to abortion that children may see in the city centre. It was stated that it is 'not appropriate' for children to see those images and that 'subjecting them to images like that shouldn't be permitted'.

Respondents noted that 'forcing graphic imagery' on people is 'completely unacceptable' and that the people sharing images 'can't control the age of the people who will see them.'

It should be noted that these comments seemed to assume that the content of graphic imagery would be regulated by the Council, but this is not the intention.

Q15: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the standard conditions listed within the proposed byelaws? (Answers range from definitely agree to definitely disagree)

PERMIT IS NOT TRANSFERABLE	Number
Definitely agree	1521
Somewhat agree	191
Neither agree nor disagree	226
Somewhat disagree	284
Definitely disagree	1245

PERMIT IS VALID FOR 1 YEAR	Number
Definitely agree	1614
Somewhat agree	294
Neither agree nor disagree	353
Somewhat disagree	465
Definitely disagree	697

PERMIT NOT NORMALLY GRANTED FOR 11PM – 11AM	Number
Definitely agree	1272
Somewhat agree	209
Neither agree nor disagree	342
Somewhat disagree	390

Definitely disagree	1261
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PERMIT APPLIES TO SPECIFIC LOCATION AND DURATION	Number
Definitely agree	1557
Somewhat agree	226
Neither agree nor disagree	233
Somewhat disagree	392
Definitely disagree	1063

PERMIT HOLDER CAN PERFORM FOR MAX 2 HOURS IN SPECIFIC LOCATION	Number
Definitely agree	1599
Somewhat agree	300
Neither agree nor disagree	284
Somewhat disagree	457
Definitely disagree	839

PERMIT HOLDER CAN PERFORM FOR MAX 1 HOUR IN PRIMARY RETAIL CORE	Number
Definitely agree	1658
Somewhat agree	290
Neither agree nor disagree	282
Somewhat disagree	345
Definitely disagree	902

MAX 1 PERFORMANCE TIME INCLUDES SETTING & PACKING UP	Number
Definitely agree	1851
Somewhat agree	359
Neither agree nor disagree	284
Somewhat disagree	207
Definitely disagree	785

PERMIT HOLDER MUST RELOCATE TO A DIFFERENT PLACE NOT WITHIN 100M OF PREVIOUS LOCATION	Number
Definitely agree	1717
Somewhat agree	296
Neither agree nor disagree	347
Somewhat disagree	336
Definitely disagree	781

Q16: Please provide any additional comments in the space below.

This question had a total of 1,531 text responses (2040 skipped)

The responses to this question were extremely broad ranging, given the various proposed permit conditions in the draft byelaws.

No Need

A general theme that emerged was that there should be 'no need' for a permit and that this was 'authoritarian', 'bureaucratic' and would 'impinge on human rights and freedom of expression'.

Disadvantage Musicians

Respondents commented that the time limits would 'overwhelmingly disadvantage musicians', be 'burdensome' and that the time spent setting up and packing up for buskers should be excluded. It was further noted that 'it's important to foster an environment where artists are given ample time to prepare and offer a high quality auditory experience'.

100 Metre Distance

Respondents commented that the distance of 100m is 'too short', 'still within earshot of amplifier' and may cause 'continued disturbance to a particular area'.

Enforcement

The issue of 'enforcement' was highlighted in the responses to this question. Respondents stated that it will be 'impractical to monitor', 'difficult to enforce' and that if the permit system 'isn't going to or can't be policed, it's pointless trying to do it at all'.

Permit Application

Several respondents made the point that if the permit applies to a person, rather than an event, this would 'add to the difficulty of simply being able to preach the gospel' and 'would discriminate against certain groups'.

Cost

Cost was mentioned in terms of the permit system being 'costly', 'an unnecessary drain on public expenditure' and a question of 'who would pay for such policing?'.

Q17: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council may designate areas in which specific types of instruments or amplification is prohibited?

	Percentage	Number
Definitely agree	31.7	1115
Somewhat agree	9.8	344
Neither agree nor disagree	6.2	218
Somewhat disagree	5.4	189
Definitely disagree	46.9	1646

Q18: Please provide any additional comments in the space below.

This question had a total of 1,137 text responses (2434 skipped)

Specific Places

Respondents who were in favour of a prohibition in designated areas suggested specific places, such as outside City Hall, Royal Avenue, the 'main pedestrian shopping and entertainment areas', 'near religious buildings, medical buildings or residential buildings' and 'outside of city centre offices.'

Encourage Residential Dwellers

It was stated that restricting the use of amplification in residential areas 'should go some way to encouraging people to dwell in the city centre'.

Ban Amplification

The theme of banning amplification emerged in the responses to this question with respondents saying that 'safe and quiet spaces are needed', there should be a

‘blanket ban on all amplification devices’, that amplification should be ‘prohibited entirely’ and ‘should be made illegal’.

Freedom of Expression and Right to Protest

Those not in favour of such a prohibition commented that it is ‘vital that these restrictions do not impinge upon the right to protest’, that ‘this is a dangerous path to be going down’ and that any such designation would ‘conflict with the rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression’. Respondents also commented that this is ‘overreach’ by the Council and it is ‘not the Council’s place to restrict freedom of expression’.

Equality Screening

Q19: Please provide any comments in relation to equality of opportunity or good relations issues that you feel should be taken into account by the council in relation to the proposed byelaws.

This question had a total of 1,303 text responses (2268 skipped)

Breach of Good Friday Agreement

A pro forma (83 submissions) recurring comment in response to this question was that the draft byelaws ‘breach the Good Friday Agreement, which states, ‘*The parties affirm their commitment to the mutual respect, the civil rights and the religious liberties of everyone in the community ...the parties affirm in particular ...the right to freedom and expression of religion*’ and that the proposals could ‘increase tensions between different groups if it appears the Council is discriminating between them by granting permits to one group but not another’. As part of this same comment, it was suggested that ‘the Council could then be responsible for damaging good relations across the city’ and a ‘full EQIA’ was requested.

Freedom of Expression

The right to freedom of expression was mentioned in response to this question with concerns being raised that ‘this is an attempt to circumvent the presumption of basic human rights’ and the Council’s potential ‘censorship’.

LGBT+ Community

Regarding the LGBTQ+ community, respondents commented that some of the preaching was 'homophobic', constituted 'hate speech' and that that community is 'constantly under attack' by 'these hate preachers.' It was noted that 'homophobia and transphobia has been going unchecked for far too long', that the LGBTQ+ community 'should not be forced to listen to hateful and insulting content' and that this group are 'often the targets of harassment and bigotry broadcast over loudspeakers'.

Disability

Disability was mentioned by respondents in the context of how noise levels in the city centre 'discourage or even prohibit' the use of it by those with 'auditory sensitivity or visual impairment'. It was noted that the 'current use of speakers and their high volumes directly affects those with sensory and auditory processing issues and leads them to feelings of anxiety and confusion'.

Respondents who declared themselves to be autistic or who declared that they have dependants on the autistic spectrum commented that amplification 'creates an uncomfortable environment' and that 'the city centre should be an accessible and reasonably predictable environment'. It was also commented that 'the city needs to view this as a 'disability rights / access issue' as the city centre has become a 'hostile environment' for those who are autistic or have sensory processing issues.

It was noted that the byelaws could have a 'positive impact' and 'would make the streets easier to navigate for people who use mobility devices', if permits favoured applications in an area with wider pavements.

Disproportionate Effect

A further theme that emerged from this question was the suggestion that these byelaws would have a disproportionate effect on evangelical Christians and would constitute 'religious discrimination'. Respondents commented that this is 'an attempt to stifle the religious expression of the Evangelical Protestant community', that 'this proposal indicates preachers are the target' and that 'freedom to preach the gospel with liberty will be denied'. It was noted that 'it is crucial for the council to

acknowledge and address any bias or discriminatory attitudes towards certain forms of expression, particularly open-air preaching’.

Equality Screening

There was some criticism of the draft Equality Screening in terms of its use of ‘anecdotal evidence’, however, the data provided by the consultation responses will be considered when finalising the byelaws.

7.3 Responses to Consultation Monitoring Questions: breakdown by type of respondent (individual or group), gender, community background, national identity, age, geographical location and relationship to Belfast

Q20: Are you responding as an individual (member of the public) or on behalf of a group or organisation?

- Individual (member of the public): 98.3%, 3463
- On behalf of a group or organisation: 1.7%, 59

Q21 (if responding on behalf of a group): What is the name of your organisation or group?

This question had 55 text responses.

Q22: We would like your permission to disclose your organisation name, your written comments, and to reference your organisation name in our analysis and feedback reports. Please indicate your preference for what we do with your organisation name.

- I agree you can share and publish my organisation name and any written comments submitted on behalf of my organisation (43.6%, 24 organisations)
- I agree you can publish my organisation name as responding to the consultation but keep our written comments anonymous (20%, 11 organisations)
- Do not share or publish my organisation name (36.4%, 20 organisations)

Q23: Please indicate which sort of group you are representing:

Type of Group	Number
Church or faith based group	30
Charity	17
Community or voluntary group	13
Other (please specify)	8
Business	6
Public body	4
School	2
TOTAL	80

(The survey ended at this point if the response was on behalf of a group.)

Q21 (if responding as an individual): **About you, please tick all that apply:**

Connection to Belfast	Number
I live in Belfast	1718
I am a visitor to Belfast	1352
I work or study in Belfast	1190
I am a business owner in Belfast city centre	74
Total	4334

Q22: Demographic and monitoring questions

73.1% of respondents indicated that they were happy to answer a series of demographic and monitoring questions (26.9% declined to answer).

Q23: What is your age?

What age are you?	Number	%
Under 18	10	0.4
18-24	193	7.6
25-34	566	22.4
35-44	571	22.6
45-59	713	28.2
60+	479	18.9
Total	2532	100

Q24: What is your gender?

	Number	%
Male	1400	55.3
Female	1054	41.6
Prefer not to answer	38	1.5
Use another term	40	1.6
TOTAL	2532	100

Q25: Do you consider yourself to be trans or transgender?

Trans can be used as an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, nor does it sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a variety of terms e.g. transgender, transsexual, gender- queer (QC), gender- fluid, non-binary, crossdresser, genderless. The use of trans as an umbrella term may not be acceptable to all transgender people.

Transgender is someone who intends to transition, is transitioning or has transitioned from the gender they were assigned at birth.

- **Yes:** 49 (2.0%)
- **No:** 2364 (94.7%)
- **Prefer not to answer:** 84 (3.4%)

Q26. Community background of respondents

Please indicate your community background	% Total
Member of the Protestant community	41.2
Member of the Roman Catholic community	26.4
Neither	32.4
Total	100

Q27: Ethnic origin is not about nationality, place of birth or citizenship. It is about the group to which you perceive you belong. How would you describe your ethnic origin?

The overwhelming majority of respondents, 94.4%, were white, with 2.8% of respondents selecting the “prefer not to say” option. 1.2% of respondents indicated that they came from mixed or multiple ethnic groups.

Q28: Do you have a long-term illness, health issue or disability that limits your daily activities or work that you can do?

The majority of respondents (81.8%) stated that their day-to day activities were not limited by a disability or illness, with 13.8% of respondents saying yes and 4.4% of respondents preferring not to say.

Q29. If yes, how does this disability or illness affect you?

Disability or illness	Number
Mental health (e.g. depression, anxiety, bipolar, schizophrenia)	143
Physical disability (e.g. wheelchair-user, artificial lower limbs, walking aids, Musculo-skeletal difficulties)	127
Neurodiversity (e.g. autism, ADD/ADHD, dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia)	103
Prefer not to answer	51

Other	39
Hearing loss: deaf, hearing loss, tinnitus	35
Communication difficulties: speech difficulties, e.g. stammer, slurred speech	16
Learning disability	13
Sight loss: blind, partially sighted	12
TOTAL	539

Q30: Do you have dependants or caring responsibilities for family members or other persons?

- **Yes:** 33.8%
- **No:** 66.2%

Q31: If yes, who do you have caring responsibilities for?

- A child or children: 72.2%
- An elderly person or persons: 27.7%
- A person or persons with a disability: 21.6%

(The survey ended at this point for those responding as an individual).

8. Summary and Comment on Responses

The examination of the data as presented above reveals a number of trends:

- There was a very high level of public engagement with the online survey and an extremely high response rate, not just to the statistical element of the survey but also in terms of written comments.
- This engagement came from a wide range of individuals in terms of age range, gender, community background and disability status, all of whom felt that the draft byelaws could potentially impact them in their leisure time, work time or both.
- Respondents displayed a strength of feeling in written comments for the most part in either positive or negative terms; there was little feedback from respondents who were 'neutral' on the subject.

- In addition to the public comments, there was a high level of engagement from a broad range of groups and organisations who feel vested in the draft byelaws.
- Respondents emphasised a general expression of support of the human rights that are protected under the ECHR.
- Respondents raised specific queries about how the byelaws may operate in practice.

8.1 Summary of Monitoring Data

The consultation monitoring data shows that the majority of respondents were men of White ethnic origin. The majority declared that they came from a Protestant background and were aged 45-59.

9. Conclusions

- This was a wide-ranging consultation for a full 14-week period that generated a very high level of engagement.
- Based on feedback received from groups and individuals, it is clear that further decisions will have to be taken on how to finalise the draft byelaws.
- Further engagement may be required with the CAJ and the Trade Unions for potentially creating an exemption in the byelaws for static protests.

Appendix 1: Draft byelaws



BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

**BYE-LAWS FOR THE GOOD GOVERNANCE OF BELFAST CITY CENTRE
AND FOR THE PREVENTION AND SUPPRESSION OF NUISANCES IN BELFAST CITY
CENTRE**

Made by Belfast City Council :

**Confirmed by Department for
Communities :**

In operation on and from :

**BYE – LAWS
BELFAST CITY COUNCIL
FOR THE GOOD GOVERNANCE OF BELFAST CITY CENTRE AND FOR THE
PREVENTION AND SUPPRESSION OF NUISANCES IN BELFAST CITY CENTRE**

Bye-Laws made the _____ by Belfast City Council pursuant to Section 90 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 for the good rule and government of its City Centre and the prevention and suppression of nuisances in its City Centre at a meeting of the Council held on _____

INTERPRETATION

1. In these Bye-Laws -

‘City Centre’ means the area delineated in [colour tbc] in the map at Schedule One.

‘Council’ means Belfast City Council.

‘Permit’ means a Permit issued by the Council in accordance with these Bye-Laws.

‘Permit Holder’ means a person who holds a Permit issued pursuant to these Bye-Laws.

‘Primary Retail Core’ means the area delineated in [colour tbc] in the map at Schedule One of these Bye Laws.

‘Prohibited Place’ means an area [tbc] [within 100 metres of any place of public worship or public entertainment or other place of public assembly in which person or persons so assembled, after being requested to desist by an authorized Council officer or police officer.

‘Public Place’ means any area open to the public including any street, road, footpath, open space, park, cemetery, green space and amenity areas.

‘Permit’ means a Permit issued by the Council to carry out the activities in the City Centre which are described in these Bye Laws.

General Provisions

2. These Bye-Laws apply to the City Centre as shown in the map at Schedule One.

3. Notice of the effect of these Bye-Laws shall be given by signs placed in such positions as the Council may consider adequate to inform persons of their existence.
4. A person may not conduct or take part in any amplified performance (whether vocal or instrumental), dance, concert or other such performance in a public place in the City Centre (including the Primary Retail Core) without a valid Permit issued by the Council.
5. A person may not use amplification devices in a public place, whether as part of a performance or otherwise, in the Primary Retail Core without a Permit issued by the Council permitting the use of said device.
6. A person may not erect, place, maintain or otherwise be responsible for a stand, stall, or vehicle with promotional literature or information (whether connected to a business, charity, political or any other non-commercial purpose) in a public place in the Primary Retail Core without a Permit issued by the Council. This provision does not apply to those vehicles which are within the said area solely for the purposes of delivery to or collecting goods from business premises.

Application Requirements

7. An application for a Permit must be accompanied by payment of the relevant fee and on the production of evidence of identity and address together with two recent photographs of the applicant.
8. The cost of a Permit will be [tbc].

Permit Conditions

9. The Permit will be subject to such conditions as the Council believes necessary and proportionate.
10. Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (9), the following standard conditions may be specified in a Permit issued by the Council to carry out the activities in the City Centre which are described in these Bye Laws —

- (a) Permits may only be used by the performer named on the permit, and shall not be used by, or transferred to, any other person.
 - (b) A Permit granted by the Council will be valid for one year from date of issue or such lesser period as may be considered appropriate by the Council.
 - (c) A Permit shall not normally be granted for activity between the hours of 11pm and 11am.
 - (d) A Permit will only allow the permitted activity in a specific location for a maximum of TWO hours. After this period the person must re-locate to a different place not within 100 metres of his/her previous location and may not return within 100 metres of any previous location until the following day.
 - (e) A Permit holder is only permitted to perform in the Primary Retail Core for a maximum period of ONE hour. After this period they must relocate to a different place not within 100 metres of their previous location and may not return within 100 metres of any previous location until the following day.
- 11.** The maximum performance periods set out in these Bye Laws shall include any time spent setting up and packing up.
- 12.** The Council may designate areas in which specific types of instruments or amplification is prohibited.
- 13.** A Permit Holder will comply with a request from an authorised officer to cease their activity or move on where in the opinion of the authorised officer the activity is endangering public safety or causing an obstruction.

Behaviour and Conduct of Permit Holders

- 14.** A Permit Holder must not obstruct the public's access to and egress from any premises or interfere with the free and safe movement of pedestrians.
- 15.** A Permit Holder must comply with the standard conditions of Permit and any Code of Conduct issued by the Council, which may be amended and reissued throughout the period of the Permit.

- 16.** The Permit Holder must also comply with any additional special conditions attached to their Permit.

Exemptions

- 17.** These Bye-Laws shall not apply to the following activities:

- (a) Those activities taking place in a public place which are organised by the Council;
- (b) Those activities taking place in a public place with the consent of Department of Infrastructure or the relevant landowner;
- (c) Any procession which has been authorised by the Parades Commission;
- (d) A cash collection in a public place which has been authorised by PSNI pursuant to The Charities Act (NI) 2008.
- (e) An official picket pursuant to Article 98 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (NI) Order 1995

Power to remove equipment, stalls, stand, vehicles etc.

- 18.** Where the Council is unable to identify and/or contact the owner or person responsible for an unattended equipment, stall, stand or vehicle after conducting reasonable enquiries, it may cause the said equipment, stall, stand or vehicle to be so removed.
- 19.** Where the Council has exercised its powers under Paragraph 18 it may recover from the owner and/or the person responsible for the said stall, stand or vehicle the costs reasonably incurred by the Council in removing and storing same.
- 20.** Any charges incurred by the Council in removing and storing the stall shall be payable by the owner before the return of the stall, stand or vehicle.
- 21.** Where it is not possible to contact the owner, the Council may dispose of the item after 28 days from the date of seizure.

- 22.** The provisions of Paragraph 18-21 are without prejudice to the power of the Council to take other enforcement action for any breach of the conditions of Permit arising from the failure to remove the item.

Revocation, Refusals and Appeals

- 23.** The Council may vary or revoke a permit where, in its opinion, a Permit Holder fails to comply with a condition of their Permit or a Code of Conduct issued pursuant to the provisions of this Bye Law.
- 24.** The Council may temporarily revoke a permit or restrict the area to which permits applies in order to facilitate the construction, development, maintenance or repair of a public place or part thereof or for other infrastructural work thereon or such work on adjoining private property or for other operational reasons.
- 25.** Where the Council refuses to grant a permit or revokes an existing permit the applicant may appeal that decision to [tbc] within 14 days of the decision.
- 26.** Where the Council has granted a permit with special conditions imposed upon the applicant, the applicant may appeal such special conditions to the Magistrates Court within 14 days of the granting of the permit.

Offences

- 27.** Any person who contravenes any of these Bye-Laws shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £500.
- 28.** A person who obstructs or impedes or refuses to comply with a request of an authorised person acting in the exercise of the functions conferred on an authorised officer shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £500.
- 29.** Where an authorised officer is of the opinion that a person is committing or has committed an offence under either of the two preceding bye-laws the authorised person may demand the name and address of such a person and if that demand is refused or the person gives a name and address which is false

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The foregoing Bye-Laws are hereby confirmed by the Department of Communities for Northern Ireland this day of 2023.

[job title]

Appendix 2: Copy of CAJ submission

Appendix 3 - Summary of written submissions

Written submissions were received from the following organisations:

- Belfast & District Trades Union Council
- The Committee on the Administration of Justice
- HERe NI
- Free Presbyterian Church
- Northern Ireland Committee – Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- NIPSA
- UNISON NI
- Rainbow Project
- Socialist Party
- Traditional Unionist Voice
- WRDA
- A joint response from People Before Profit on behalf of a range of political parties, activist groups, art collectives, and other organisations.

An overriding theme amongst written submissions is the importance that is attached to the (qualified) human rights afforded by the European Convention on Human Rights; in particular Article 10 relating to freedom of expression and Article 11 relating to freedom of assembly and association. In the context of the draft byelaws, these rights apply most frequently to open air preaching, street performances and static (sometimes spontaneous) protests.

Belfast & District Trades Union Council summary

- Belfast Trades Council would contend that this bye-law approach is over the top and has, intentionally or otherwise, spread the net far too widely and traps others who should not be caught up in its over-extensive scope.
- How would a union, community group or a number of solidarity campaigners, as opposed to one individual be considered as being in compliance with the proposed bye-law?
- Lacks clarity on what impact this bye-law would have on acts of solidarity in respect of protests of industrial action or how distribution of leaflets, fact sheets etc. by a trade union would be treated, or how amplification devices would be dealt with.
- These bye-laws have the potential to penalise citizens for no legitimate purpose and curtail or restrict legitimate activities on behalf of members, workers and the wider community.

- Setting an absolute restriction of two hours in each and every occasion takes no account whatsoever of the varied nature of some of the events which occur in the city. Such an imposition is petty, nonsensical and more than likely unenforceable.
- Belfast Trades Council is concerned that the Equality Screening for this public consultation has a flawed understanding of “political opinion” and this should be revisited and rectified before any further action is taken.

CAJ Summary

- The proposals engage human rights protected under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) relating, in particular, to freedom of assembly (Article 11) and expression (Article 10). ECHR rights are directly legally binding on the Council by virtue of the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA).
- CAJ has concerns that the proposed bye-laws will conflict with the ECHR and related human rights standards. In particular, the bye-laws as presented would risk creating an unprecedented *de facto* ‘authorisation’ regime for any static protest in the designated city centre retail area using any amplification device, and constitute a *de facto* ban, on pain of a fine, on such spontaneous protests. Permits would also limit the scope for protests in the precise area of the City Centre, where the right to protest is most frequently exercised.
- The relevant tests (legal certainty, legitimate aim, proportionality) that would need to be met for interference in ECHR rights to be considered justified and hence lawful.
- No permitted *legitimate aim* is expressly cited as the lawful basis for restrictions.
- The ‘standard conditions’ for permits would constitute a disproportionate restriction on the right to protest (with a loudhailer etc).
- If a particular concern is that some of the expression by preachers or others has included homophobic or other hate expression, the Council may wish to consider alternative interventions eg monitoring for breaches of the criminal law on stirring up hatred on grounds of sexual orientation that can be reported to the PSNI or public awareness campaigns and messaging tackling homophobia.
- Concern expressed that the proposed bylaws as they stand would constitute an unjustifiable restriction on rights to free assembly and expression for the reasons set out above. Should they be implemented, the Council is likely to face legal challenge on attempts to place restrictions on protected expressive activity, and in particular that relating to protest, that could be captured by the bye-laws

HERe NI response summary

- HERe NI is a women focused organisation within the NI LGBTQIA+ sector.
- Primarily concerned about anti-LGBTQIA+ messaging and anti-choice imagery within the primary retail district.
- Endorse the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) suggestion that the council should take further action to enhance the monitoring of street

preachers for breaches of the criminal law on stirring up hatred on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity that can be reported to the PSNI.

- Concerns about the impact that the proposed bye-laws will have on protestors, including infringing on their right to freedom of assembly outlined within Article 11 of the ECHR.
- Suggested amendments:
 - That the council should add static protests to their exemption list (which already includes trade union pickets and parades).
 - That there should be no cost attached to the scheme and that sum of £500 fine for performing without a permit be considerably reduced.
 - Risk impinging on freedom of assembly and the right to protest.

Free Presbyterian Church Response summary

- Concerned that open-air preaching should be seen as a nuisance. It is a long established and noble practice.
- We believe that these draft laws fail to strike the balance between freedom of expression which is enshrined in the European Court of Human Rights as well as freedom of assembly and the alleged nuisance from people using amplification devices which the council professes to be seeking.
- The requirement to obtain a permit will be a hindrance to freedom of expression because there can be no spontaneous open-air.
- Byelaws place an extreme hindrance on the use of amplification equipment or the display of stands of literature outside venues which may be the focal point for a protest or demonstration.
- Note that it is proposed that any permit is to be issued to a person and not for an event. Therefore, if a preacher at an open-air who has the permit goes down sick or cannot come at the last minute nobody would have permission to stand in for him.
- Permit conditions: gives the Council too broad powers; 11am start time is too late; 11 am also applies to distribution of literature - why?; measures in clause 12 are not reasonable or proportionate.

NIC-ICTU summary

- Serious reservations about some of the proposals being made by Belfast City Council (BCC), and echoes concerns made in finer detail from our trade union affiliate NIPSA, and our long-time allies the Committee on the Administration of Justice.

NIPSA Summary

- Notes a failure to address solidarity activity around industrial action / protest
- Belfast City Council needs to make explicit how, in future, it will ensure that its bye-laws do not in any way hinder Trade Union work as regards industrial action and the solidarity/campaigning work of affiliated groups, Trades Councils, and other activist groups (political parties, pressure/solidarity

groups) who might want to support Trade Union sponsored protest/campaigns in and around the city centre area.

- The proposed time limit of 2 hours would have a serious effect on protest(s) and rallies that might be the pattern on a day of industrial/civil society action and could have a serious adverse impact on the right to campaign and organise around a campaign given that “political purpose” is specifically, listed.
- Belfast City Council needs to assess and publicise how it will explicitly exempt such solidarity work
- This exemption will also be necessary for the purposes of its own industrial relations framework – to make clear that a Trade Union protest outside it - in relation to a policy/facility managed by the Council would not be treated as a “nuisance” in the context of these bye-laws.
- Major concerns about their associated Equality Screening. For example, while claims to examine what is the likely impact “in relation to the S75 category of political opinion” it states that this is “not applicable”. This is a serious error as it fails to recognise Trade Unionism as a “political opinion” in the context of anti-discrimination law i.e. on the illegality of discriminating on the basis of “religious or similar philosophical belief and political opinion” and the fact that the latter “is not limited...to Northern Ireland constitutional politics.” This needs to be rectified before the next steps in relation to them are fully considered.
- Questions why existing noise pollution/laws relating to obstruction, hate speech etc., - already available to legally challenge the activities the bye-laws seek to target, are not being used.
- The permit’s “application requirements” treat applications at an individual level rather than organisational level. This therefore begs the question of how this could be operated in the context of Trade Union/solidarity “activity”?

UNISON Summary

- Concerned that as the byelaws are currently drafted they could disproportionately interfere with the rights of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly that are at the core of trade union activity.
- Endorses the CAJ submission.
- UNISON, other trade unions and wider civic society groups regularly hold or attend rallies, protests and demonstrations that may involve the use of amplification devices for public speaking at public places within the areas identified in these proposed bye-laws. We would request clarity from Belfast City Council as to whether the area outside the front gate entrance of Belfast City Hall is included within the ‘primary retail core’ identified in Map 2 of the bye-laws, within which not only performances but the use of amplification devices without a permit is to be prohibited.
- It is unclear from these provisions how far in advance of the use of the amplification device the person seeking the permit must apply for it. This

should be clarified, given that protests and demonstrations can often be organised at very short notice, such as in response to significant events.

- By making the bye-law specific to the individuals involved, rather than the event, the Council opens up the possibility that some individuals who use an amplification device to speak at an event in the City Centre may be liable for breach of the bye-laws whilst others are not.
- We are concerned that the maximum performance periods (two hours or one hour, depending upon the location), particularly if they are to include the periods spent on setting up and packing up, will significantly affect the ability of trade unions to hold such rallies and demonstrations in Belfast City Centre and disproportionately restrict the rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression.
- It is unclear from these provisions the grounds that will be used by the Council to determine whether to approve the granting of a permit in the first place. The route of appeal also appears to be unconfirmed at this point. As with the provisions above, this again raises issues regarding a lack of legal certainty for those seeking such permits.

The Rainbow Project Summary

- The Rainbow Project is a LGBTQIA+ organisation working across Northern Ireland.
- It welcomes Belfast City Council's attempt to address the harassment, graphic imagery and amplified hate expression that has become prevalent and incessant in Belfast city centre, particularly from anti-choice and anti-LGBTQIA+ individuals and organisations.
- It is clear from our engagements within our communities that amplified preaching from those who are seeking to target and cause discomfort to particularly LGBTQIA+ has a direct impact on the ability of LGBTQIA+ residents and visitors to fully engage in the city and freely access the public space in the city centre.
- It is important to recognize and tightly define the issues that these Bye-laws are attempting to address, to ensure that the net is not cast too wide so as to unacceptably restrict ECHR rights including the right to freedom of expression (Article 10) and assembly (Article 11), particularly with regards to engaging in static protests, including those which are organised with short notice or spontaneously in response to a local, national or international event.
- What constitutes a "nuisance" is an extremely subjective question, and clearly and tightly defining this is vital to the compliance of these Bye-laws with the tests set out above.
- Agreement expressed with the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) in their submission insofar as these Bye-laws place restrictions on the freedom of association and assembly that is not proportional and does not meet the legitimate aims as set out in the Convention.
- The Rainbow Project proposes that the Byelaw should be revised to become a negative procedure rather than a proactive obligation placed on all those hoping to use amplification devices in the city i.e. wherein Council was

empowered to issue warnings or notices to quit to those individuals/groups who are amplifying persistent and consistent hostility for members of the public accessing the city centre, namely by occupying public space and loudly spreading hostility multiple times a week and for long periods of time.

- We would encourage a tightening of the scope of the requirement to seek a permit, which could be achieved either by expanding the “exemptions” list included at point 17 of the Bye-laws to include static protests and demonstrations, and/or by tightly defining the ‘nuisance’ these Bye-laws are addressing as individuals/groups who create a hostile and unwelcoming environment through the amplification of anti-LGBTQIA+ messages and/or displaying what is referred to as ‘graphic imagery’ in the consultation.
- We would also support closer monitoring by Belfast City Council of preachers and those occupying City Centre on a persistent basis for breaches of the “stirring up hate” offence, and would support more concrete action by the PSNI when these offences are reported.

Socialist Party

- These bye-laws could also be used to restrict spontaneous action by workers for example in response to health and safety concerns in workplaces, solidarity initiatives such as those organised by Unite last year to support striking workers, or information stalls to encourage workers to join a union. In other words: anything which contravenes the main purpose of the city centre, making money for the retail and hospitality sector.
- In the view of the Socialist Party what is necessary to take on LGBTQ+ phobic speakers or anti-choice groups is not legal restrictions but mobilising against them - as we and others have done on many occasions. Our experience is that protests, particularly those which demonstrate the limited support for these ideas in society, have been what is key in pushing these organisations back.

Traditional Unionist Voice

- Noted the absence of a Code Of Conduct.
- Gross invasion of freedom of expression.
- Permits issued to individuals rather than organisations exposes the real intent of these laws to make it much more difficult and at times impossible for individuals to articulate their views in the public square.
- How can one pass a judgement on these proposed laws and the full impact of their chilling effect on freedom of expression when the issue of cost is left up in the air?
- The proposed hours of 11am – 11pm will prevent someone who wants to hand literature to commuters outside Great Victoria Street station from doing so. TUV sees this as an unwarranted assault on freedom of expression.
- Glaring flaws in the Equality Screening document in terms of ‘anecdotal evidence’ and how there have been zero attempts by the council to constructively engage with those impacted before using the sledgehammer of these draconian laws.

WRDA response summary

- Endorses the CAJ response
- The byelaws would disproportionately harm other city-centre activity and most particularly impact on social justice movements seeking to organise static rallies, most particularly where the rally is organised relatively spontaneously in response to an unexpected incident, atrocity or crisis.
- Concerns around the need to apply for a permit – cost and time to process
- Concerns within the women's movement about the criteria by which such a permit application would be assessed and that some groups would be disproportionately impacted (cited examples of previous interactions with BCC in relation to protests)
- Concerned with breaches of Article 10 and Article 11 ECHR; significant impact on the ability to organise protests because of the way that the by-laws focus on amplification equipment.
- Urges the Council to consider the methods by which permits are granted, and how permits could be granted with a swift turnaround (for example, within 24 hours) in the case of rallies or meetings in response to an emergent situation.

Joint response from People Before Profit on behalf of a range of political parties, activist groups, art collectives, and more

- Proposed byelaws would undoubtedly breach Articles 10 & 11 ECHR.
- Would restrict the basic ability to intervene on issues of the day.
- Imposition of fines and the requirement for payment and proof of address to access permits are exclusionary and potentially discriminatory measures.
- The byelaws represent restrictions on the activity of people in the city in relation to performance, protest, outreach etc.

**Submission to Belfast City Council consultation on draft city centre Bye-laws
‘for the good governance of Belfast city centre and for the prevention and
suppression of nuisances in Belfast city centre’**

Consultation 27 November 2023 → 04 March 2024

1. The Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) is an independent human rights organisation with cross community membership, established in 1981, that works to ensure public authority compliance with obligations under international human rights law.
2. This is a response to the consultation by Belfast City Council on Bye-laws ‘for the good governance of Belfast city centre and for the prevention and suppression of nuisances in Belfast city centre’ which would introduce a Permit system in two designated areas of the City Centre, requiring a Council-issued Permit for ‘any amplified performance’, any use of ‘amplification devices’ and any non-commercial stand or stall.
3. The proposals engage human rights protected under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) relating, in particular, to freedom of assembly (Article 11) and expression (Article 10) on which CAJ has a significant body of work. ECHR rights are directly legally binding on the Council by virtue of the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA)
4. In summary, whilst understanding the issues the Council is seeking to address, CAJ has concerns that the proposed bye-laws will conflict with the ECHR and related human rights standards. In particular, the bye-laws as presented would risk creating an unprecedented de facto ‘authorisation’ regime for any static protest in the designated city centre retail area using any amplification device, and constitute a *de facto* ban, on pain of a fine, on such spontaneous protests. Permits would also limit the scope for protests in the precise area of the City Centre, where the right to protest is most frequently exercised. Take the following examples:
 - An offence would be committed by organising a static protest in the City Centre retail area using a loudhailer without first applying for a permit from the Council. This would constitute a de facto ‘authorisation’ regime for such protests (there are no notification requirements for such protests under NI law, there are notification, but not authorisation, requirements for parades).
 - The standard conditions envisaged for a Permit will not allow any such protests to take place before 11am on any day, and no such protest would be allowed to take place for more than two hours, with a 24hr ban on returning to the same location.
 - It would not be possible to hold any spontaneous static protest in the city centre retail area in response to a local or international event or atrocity, as first protest organisers would have to submit and await for approval from the Council for a Permit.

5. This submission will cover:

- Outline of Human Rights Framework.
- The issues the Council is seeking to address.
- The proposed bye-laws.
- Assessment of their compatibility with the ECHR

Outline of Human Rights Framework

6. As alluded to above, ECHR Article 11 protects the right to freedom of peaceful assembly as a fundamental right in a democratic society. Article 11 rights are closely linked to the right to freedom of expression (Article 10) and freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 9). There are also similar obligations under UN treaties.
7. The Council may find useful the following detailed guidelines on the scope of these rights:
- European Court of Human Rights: Guide on Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights: Freedom of assembly and association (2020).¹
 - European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly (3rd edition).²
8. None of the above rights are absolute and can be subject to restrictions under certain circumstances, when certain tests are met. In summary these are:
- **Legal Certainty:** restrictions must be “prescribed by law” which means not only a legal basis in domestic law, but also that the law is formulated with sufficient precision to be foreseeable, and hence avoid arbitrary application.
 - **Legitimate Aim:** restrictions can only be made in pursuance of one of a number of listed legitimate aims, namely, “the interests of national security or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.”
 - **Necessary in a Democratic Society (proportionality):** restrictions must answer a “pressing social need” and be proportionate to the “legitimate aim” pursued.
9. It is clear that the Council permit proposals engage and can interfere in the above ECHR rights, it is these tests that therefore would need to be met for that interference to be considered justified and hence lawful.

¹ [Guide on Article 11 - Freedom of assembly and association \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/t/Document/Article11/Freedom_of_assembly_and_association.pdf)

² [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2019\)017rev-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2019)017rev-e)

10. Most of the permitted legitimate aims are not relevant to the aims of the Council's policy aim of preventing 'nuisance.' The legitimate aim likely to be relevant is that of "protection of the rights of others". It should be noted that 'rights' of others is in reference to ECHR rights and other *rights* for which there is an imperative to include.
11. Other ECHR rights would include the positive obligations under Article 8 to protect persons from racist expression. The UN and Council of Europe have both held that sectarianism in NI is to be treated as a form of racism, and the European Court of Human Rights has also held that sexual orientation is also protected by Article 8.³ The duties under the ECHR, given further domestic effect by the HRA, therefore empower and place positive duties on Northern Ireland public authorities to take steps to tackle hate expression. These provisions should be read and interpreted in line with other relevant human rights standards. This would include Article 6 of the Framework Convention for National Minorities which obliges public authorities to: *'take appropriate measures to protect persons who may be subject to threats or acts of discrimination, hostility or violence as a result of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity'*.
12. Article 20 of the (UN) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which provides that: *"Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law"*. Incitement to hatred should be considered as a subset of and as the most serious type of hate expression, to be criminalised on the basis that it incites racial discrimination, hostility or violence in a public context. The ICCPR duties are further interpreted by the UN Rabat Plan of Action (on combatting incitement to hatred). Rabat sets out general principles that distinctions should be made between:
 - 1) Expression that constitutes a criminal offence.
 - 2) Expression that is not criminally punishable but may justify a civil suit or administrative sanctions.

³ The increased codification of Article 8 ECHR rights as providing for positive obligations for intervention to protect against actions that include being subjected to racist expression has been a feature of Strasbourg jurisprudence (see for example *Asku v Turkey* (app no 4149/04, 41029/04) 15 March 2012, and *Király and Dömötör v Hungary*, 2017). In relation to sexual orientation and gender identity falling within the ambit of Article 8, see *Bensaid v UK* (Application no. 44599/98) [47]. In 2011 the UN Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination made clear that "Sectarian discrimination in Northern Ireland [...] attract[s] the provisions of ICERD in the context of 'inter-sectionality' between religion and racial discrimination" (para 1(e) UN Doc CERD/C/GBR/18-20, List of themes on the UK). Later in the same year, the Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for National Minorities directly addressed the approach in the predecessor draft strategy, raising concerns that the Committee "finds the approach in the CSI Strategy to treat sectarianism as a distinct issue rather than as a form of racism problematic, as it allows sectarianism to fall outside the scope of accepted anti-discrimination and human rights protection standards". AC FCNM, Third Opinion on the United Kingdom adopted on 30 June 2011, ACFC/OP/III(2011)006, para 126. The UN Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination stated its position following representations from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission. The Commission had raised concerns that "policy presenting sectarianism as a concept entirely separate from racism problematically locates the phenomenon outside the well-developed discourse of commitments, analysis and practice reflected in international human rights law" and hence was not harnessing this framework to tackle sectarianism.

3) Expression that does not give rise to criminal, civil or administrative sanctions but still raises a concern in terms of tolerance, civility and respect for the rights of others.⁴

13. The duties to outlaw incitement to hatred are currently provided for under the 'stirring up hatred' and 'arousing fear' criminal offences in the Public Order (NI) Order 1987.⁵ This covers hate expression of a sectarian, racist, disablist or homophobic nature that reaches an incitement to hatred threshold. Reform and strengthening of this legislation has been recommended by the *Independent Review of Hate Crime Legislation in Northern Ireland*.⁶
14. The boundary between protected freedom of expression on one hand and prohibited advocacy of ethnic and religious hatred on the other has been debated internationally and locally for some time. ECHR jurisprudence has established that free expression is protected even when it "*shocks, offends or disturbs*"⁷ or is capable of "*creating a feeling of uneasiness in groups of citizens or because some may perceive them as disrespectful*".⁸ It does draw a distinction however between this and expression which "*spreads, incites, promotes or justifies hatred based on intolerance*"⁹ or matters such as "*the promotion of discrimination or ethnic division*".¹⁰
15. As alluded to below, part of the aim of the policy is to prevent the display of graphic materials. Should the Council wish to rely on the legitimate aim of 'morals' it should be noted that this has been interpreted narrowly.¹¹ Some 'graphic' material is of course already regulated by law.
16. In relation to a requirement for an authorisation procedure for a protest, it should be noted that this has only been held to be in keeping with the requirements of Article

⁴ Rabat Plan of Action, para 20, recommendations. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/outcome-documents/rabat-plan-action>

⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1987/463/part/III>

⁶ *Independent Review of Hate Crime Legislation in Northern Ireland*, final report 2020.

⁷ *Handyside v UK* 1976[49]

⁸ *Vajnai v Hungary* (2008) [57].

⁹ *Erbakan v Turkey* (1999) [57].

¹⁰ *Vona v Hungary* (application no. 35943/10) (2013) [66]

¹¹ OSCE/Venice Commission guidelines paragraph 142: *Protection of morals. On the face of Article 21, ICCPR and Article 11(2) ECHR the protection of morals may be invoked by States as a ground for imposing restrictions on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. In practice, however, the protection of morals should rarely, if ever, be regarded as an appropriate basis for imposing restrictions on freedom of peaceful assembly. As the UN Human Rights Committee has noted, 'the concept of morals derives from many social, philosophical and religious traditions; consequently, limitations [...] for the purpose of protecting morals must be based on principles not deriving exclusively from a single tradition [...] Any such limitations must be understood in the light of universality of human rights and the principle of non-discrimination. Any restrictions based on a narrow or exclusive conception of morality will thus be incompatible with relevant standards governing non-discrimination (at paragraphs 101 et seq. above) and content-based regulation (see paragraph 30). Moreover, States may not legitimately invoke morality as a ground for restriction in cases which concern facets of an individual's existence and identity (in particular, because these constitute the very essence of the right to freedom of expression).*

11(1) ECHR where required to ensure the peaceful nature of a meeting.¹² This limited exemption is therefore not applicable to the current Council policy.

17. It should be noted that there is a difference between an ‘authorisation’ requirement (whereby permission must be given before a protest takes place) and a ‘notification’ requirement whereby authorities must be *notified* in advance, but an ‘authorisation’ is not to be awaited. With or without a notification requirement, there can still be powers to impose restrictions on a protest. There are currently no authorisation requirements for protests in Northern Ireland.
18. Under the law in Northern Ireland at present, static protest (in law ‘open air public meetings’) have no notification requirements (with the exception of counter protests to parades). The legislation (Part II of the Public Order NI Order 1987) provides for a senior police officer to impose restrictions where there is a risk of ‘serious public disorder, serious damage to property, serious disruption to life of the community’ or when the purpose of the protest is for the intimidation of others from legitimate activity.¹³
19. Under Parades legislation (Public Processions NI Order 1998), there is a notification requirement for parades of 28 days, which can be waived where not ‘reasonably practicable’ (for example a moving protest called at short notice in response to a local or international event) in which case notice is to be given as soon as possible. Counter protest to parades have a similar 14 day notification requirement. The Parades Commission may then impose restrictions.¹⁴
20. More recent legislation has made provision for Safe Access Zones for premises providing abortion services to prevent the harassment or impeding of persons accessing abortion services within a designated zone in the vicinity of the premises.¹⁵

The issues the Council is seeking to address

21. The consultation document alludes to (but does not elaborate on) the issues the policy is seeking to address as follows:

The council has encountered issues in recent years relating to loud busking, religious preaching and various other activities involving the use of amplification devices and/or the display of graphic imagery in the city centre.¹⁶

22. The Equality Screening produced with the consultation sets out the objectives of the policy as follows:

¹² *Ziliberg v. Moldova*

¹³ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1987/463/part/II>

¹⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/2/contents>

¹⁵ Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Act (Northern Ireland) 2023 see [Safe Access Zones | Department of Health \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁶ <https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/consultation-on-city-centre-byelaws>

Significant issues have been raised over the past number of years regarding the activities of buskers, preachers and various interest groups in the City Centre, mainly within the primary retail core. Officers recognise that busking can bring vibrancy to the area and should be facilitated. It is also recognised that street preaching and the ability to protest are important rights of expression in a democratic society and are protected under the European Convention of Human Rights. However, it is important to consider the context within which these activities are being considered, their cumulative impact and how this affects others.

The proposed bye-laws will introduce rules and regulations around participation in amplified performances, public speaking, meetings and events, and the display of promotional literature or other information in the City Centre. The bye-laws are not intended to prevent street preaching or the promotion of any public interest causes. Rather, they are intended to reduce the overall ambient noise and unacceptable nuisance which is caused by the cumulative impact of these various activities in the City Centre.¹⁷

23. In recent years CAJ is aware of complaints alleging that some preachers have engaged in homophobic expression, and a stall by anti-abortion protestors has carried graphic images of aborted fetuses that have caused alarm and distress.
24. In order to demonstrate compliance with the 'pressing social need' test of restrictions on rights to freedom of assembly and expression, the Council would need to provide an evidence base to justify its proposed measures.

The proposed bye-laws

25. The proposed bye-laws would introduce a Permit system for particular activity in the City Centre. They create two zones – one an (outer) City Centre covering the whole City Centre and a second a more limited (inner) City Centre ("Primary Retail Core"). The main bye laws provide that:
 - A person may not conduct or take part in any amplified performance (whether vocal or instrumental), dance, concert or other such performance in a public place in the City Centre (including the Primary Retail Core) without a valid Permit issued by the Council.
 - A person may not use amplification devices in a public place, whether as part of a performance or otherwise, in the Primary Retail Core without a Permit issued by the Council permitting the use of said device.
 - A person may not erect, place, maintain or otherwise be responsible for a stand, stall, or vehicle with promotional literature or information (whether connected to a business, charity, political or any other non-commercial purpose) in a public place in the Primary Retail Core without a Permit issued by the Council. This

¹⁷ <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Documents/City-Centre-Bye-Laws-Equality-Screening>

provision does not apply to those vehicles which are within the said area solely for the purposes of delivery to or collecting goods from business premises.¹⁸

26. Permits will be available from the Council for a fee (to be determined).
27. An offence is created for contravening the bye- laws punishable by a fine of up to £500. The Council has powers to revoke a permit when conditions are not being abided by (with a right of appeal to a magistrates court), and powers to remove unattended stalls and stands.
28. The “Permit will be subject to such conditions as the Council believes necessary and proportionate” with a number of ‘standard conditions’ listed that may be specified in permits namely:
 - Permits may only be used by the performer named on the permit, and shall not be used by, or transferred to, any other person.
 - A Permit granted by the Council will be valid for one year from date of issue or such lesser period as may be considered appropriate by the Council.
 - A Permit shall not normally be granted for activity between the hours of 11pm and 11am.
 - A Permit will only allow the permitted activity in a specific location for a maximum of TWO hours. After this period the person must re-locate to a different place not within 100 metres of his/her previous location and may not return within 100 metres of any previous location until the following day.
 - A Permit holder is only permitted to perform in the Primary Retail Core for a maximum period of ONE hour. After this period they must relocate to a different place not within 100 metres of their previous location and may not return within 100 metres of any previous location until the following day.
 - The maximum performance periods set out in these bye-laws shall include any time spent setting up and packing up.
 - The Council may designate areas in which specific types of instruments or amplification is prohibited.
 - A Permit Holder will comply with a request from an authorised officer to cease their activity or move on where in the opinion of the authorised officer the activity is endangering public safety or causing an obstruction.
29. A number of exemptions are listed to the bye-laws. In summary these are:
 - Activities in a public place organised by the Council, or with the consent of the Department of Infrastructure or other relevant landowner.
 - A parade “authorised” [sic] by the Parades Commission.
 - Cash collections authorised by PSNI under the Charities Act (NI) 2008.

¹⁸ <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Documents/Bye-laws-for-the-good-governance-of-Belfast-city-c>

- Trade union pickets, under Trade Union and Labour Relations (NI) Order 1995.

Assessment of their compatibility with the ECHR

30. There are a number of significant concerns that the bye-laws will infringe ECHR rights, the most prominent is the risk for static protests.
31. It is not entirely clear if the aim of the policy is to capture protests and related protected expressive activity, reference is made, without elaboration, to 'meetings' in the equality screening of the policy aims. It appears the bye-laws are not intended to capture protests, as only those using loudhailers or amplification equipment will fall within scope.
32. However, many such protests rely on such equipment and take place in the vicinity of the inner city centre and often City Hall. The bye-laws provide an exemption for parades and trade union *pickets* (presumably as already otherwise regulated) but not for static protests ('open air public meetings'), regulated by public order legislation.
33. In conflict with the ECHR, the bye-laws essentially constitute a de facto authorisation process for any static protest in the designated zone in which a loudhailer or similar equipment is used. Furthermore, they would preclude any spontaneous such protest as a permit would have to be applied for in advance.
34. It would also require a prior-authorisation for anyone erecting a table or stand with promotional literature or information for a non-commercial purpose, raising similar issues.
35. No permitted *legitimate aim* is expressly cited as the lawful basis for restrictions. This is also expressly the case in relation to the 'conditions' which make general reference to proportionality, but do not cite a legitimate aim.
36. The 'standard conditions' for permits would constitute a disproportionate restriction on the right to protest (with a loudhailer etc). For example, the stipulation that no protests can be held before 11am or last for more than two hours in the same place.¹⁹

¹⁹ OSCE/Venice Commission Guidance at paragraph 146. **Restrictions on 'time' or 'duration'**. Restrictions imposed on the time or duration of an assembly must be based on an assessment of the individual circumstances of each case. The touchstone established by the European Court of Human Rights is that demonstrators ought to be given sufficient opportunity to manifest their views. In some cases, the protracted duration of an assembly may itself be integral to the message that the assembly is attempting to convey or to the effective expression of that message.

OSCE/Venice Commission Guidance at paragraph 147. **Restrictions on 'place'**. At the core of the right to freedom of assembly is the ability of the assembly participants to choose the place where they can best communicate their message to their desired audience.²⁸² It would be disproportionate if authorities categorically excluded places suitable and open to the public as sites for peaceful assemblies. The use of such suitable sites must always be assessed in the light of the circumstances of each case. The fact that a message could also be expressed in another place, is by itself insufficient reason to require an assembly to be held elsewhere, even if that location is within sight and sound of the target audience....

37. Any reliance on the rights and freedoms of others as a legitimate aim should specify which rights of others are engaged in relation to restrictions.²⁰
38. If a particular concern is that some of the expression by preachers or others has included homophobic or other hate expression, the Council may wish to consider alternative interventions. Such alternative methods may include monitoring for breaches of the criminal law on stirring up hatred on grounds of sexual orientation that can be reported to the PSNI or public awareness campaigns and messaging tackling homophobia.
39. In relation to 'graphic images' other areas of legal regulation may also be relevant.
40. It should be noted that content-based restrictions on assemblies are not permitted where *protected* expression is concerned.²¹
41. The requirements for a permit regulating 'amplified performances' appear more designed to regulate cultural activity and in general are less of a concern in ECHR terms than the other bye-laws. There is a risk, however, that this provision may capture expressive activity on a protest and in other formats in the absence of any exemption.
42. Overall, we are concerned that the proposed bylaws as they stand would constitute an unjustifiable restriction on rights to free assembly and expression for the reasons set out above. In a practical sense, should they be implemented, the Council is likely to face legal challenge on attempts to place restrictions on protected expressive

²⁰ OSCE/Venice Commission Guidance at paragraph 143. **Protection of the rights and freedoms of others.** Assemblies potentially impact on the rights and freedoms of those who live, work, shop, trade and carry on business in the same locality. However, balancing the right to assemble and the rights of others should always aim at ensuring that assemblies may proceed, unless they impose unnecessary and disproportionate burdens on others. Rights that may be claimed by non-participants affected by an assembly include, among others: the right to privacy (protected by Article 17 of the ICCPR and Article 8 of the ECHR), the right to peaceful enjoyment of one's possessions and property (protected by Article 1 of Protocol 1 to the ECHR), the right to liberty and security of person (Article 9 of the ICCPR and Article 5 of the ECHR), and the right to freedom of movement (Article 12 of the ICCPR and Article 2 of Protocol 4 to the ECHR). Some degree of disruption with respect to these rights must be tolerated if the essence of the right to peacefully assemble is not to be deprived of any meaning. Furthermore, as also noted at paragraphs 48 and 62, neither temporary disruption of vehicular or pedestrian traffic, nor opposition to an assembly, are of themselves legitimate reasons to impose restrictions on an assembly. Where a State restricts an assembly for the purpose of protecting the rights and freedoms of others, the relevant public authority should explain in detail:

- which specific rights and freedoms of others are engaged in the particular circumstances;
- the extent to which the proposed assembly would, if unrestricted, interfere with these rights and freedoms;
- how any restrictions on the proposed assembly would serve to mitigate these interferences, and why less restrictive measures would not lead to the envisaged success.

The authorities should be allowed a margin of appreciation when assessing these issues. In particular, despite the fact that no violent act or crimes have occurred during an assembly, the intimidating character of the rallies may be taken into account by the authorities. What matters is that the repeated organisation of the rallies was capable of intimidating others and therefore of affecting their rights, especially in view of the location of the parades.

²¹ See para 30 OSCE/Venice Commission Guidance.

activity, and in particular that relating to protest, that could be captured by the bye-laws.

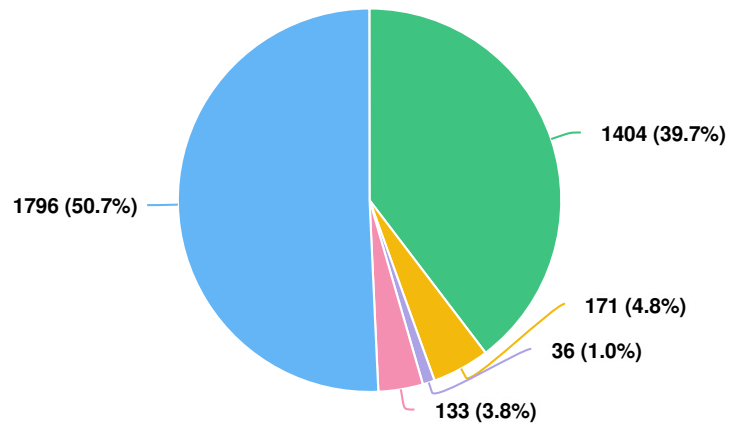
February 2024

Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ)
1st Floor, Community House, Citylink Business Park
6A Albert Street, Belfast, BT12 4HQ

Tel: +44 (0)28 9031 6000

Website: www.caj.org.uk

Q1 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council should introduce rules and regulations around the use of amplifica...



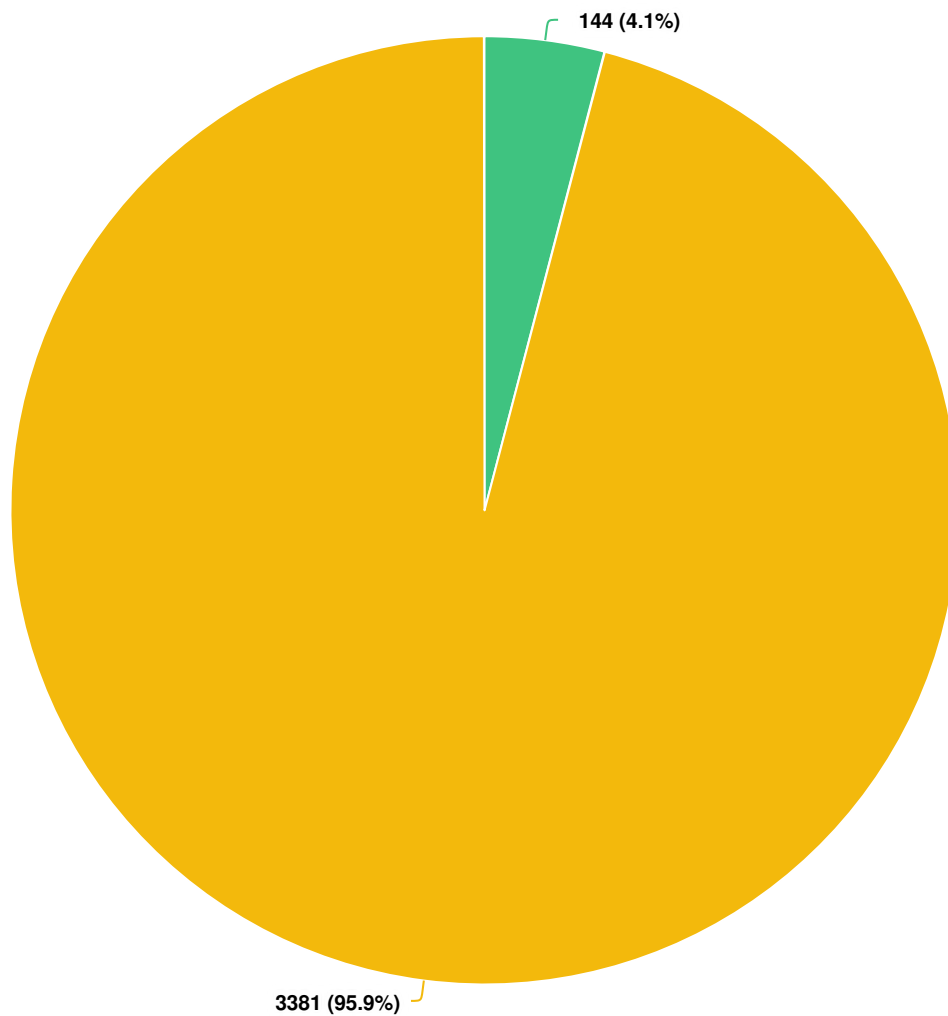
Question options

Definitely agree Somewhat agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Definitely disagree

Optional question (3540 response(s), 31 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

Q3 In the past 12 months have you used an amplification device in the city centre?



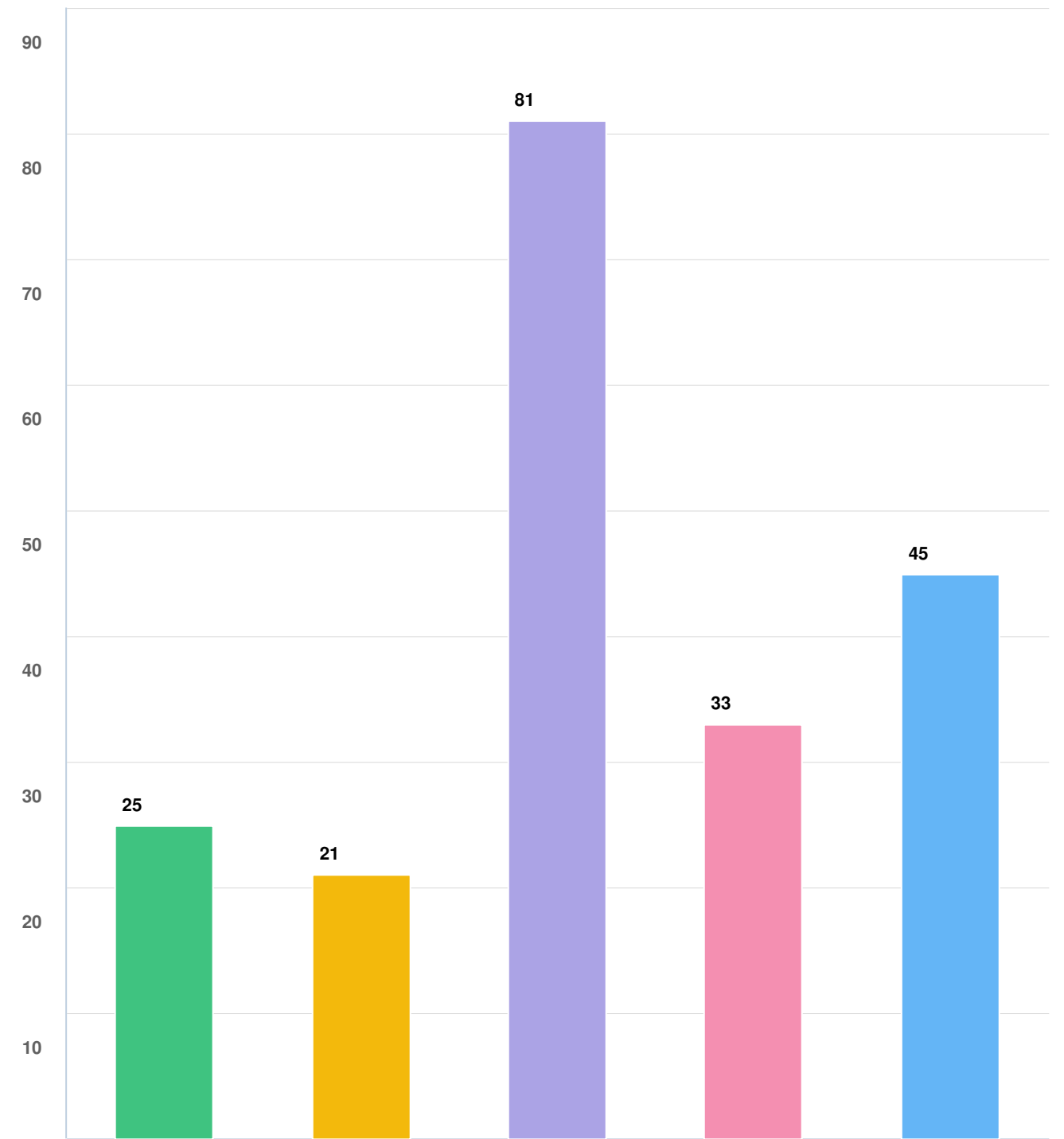
Question options

☒ Yes ☐ No

Optional question (3525 response(s), 46 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

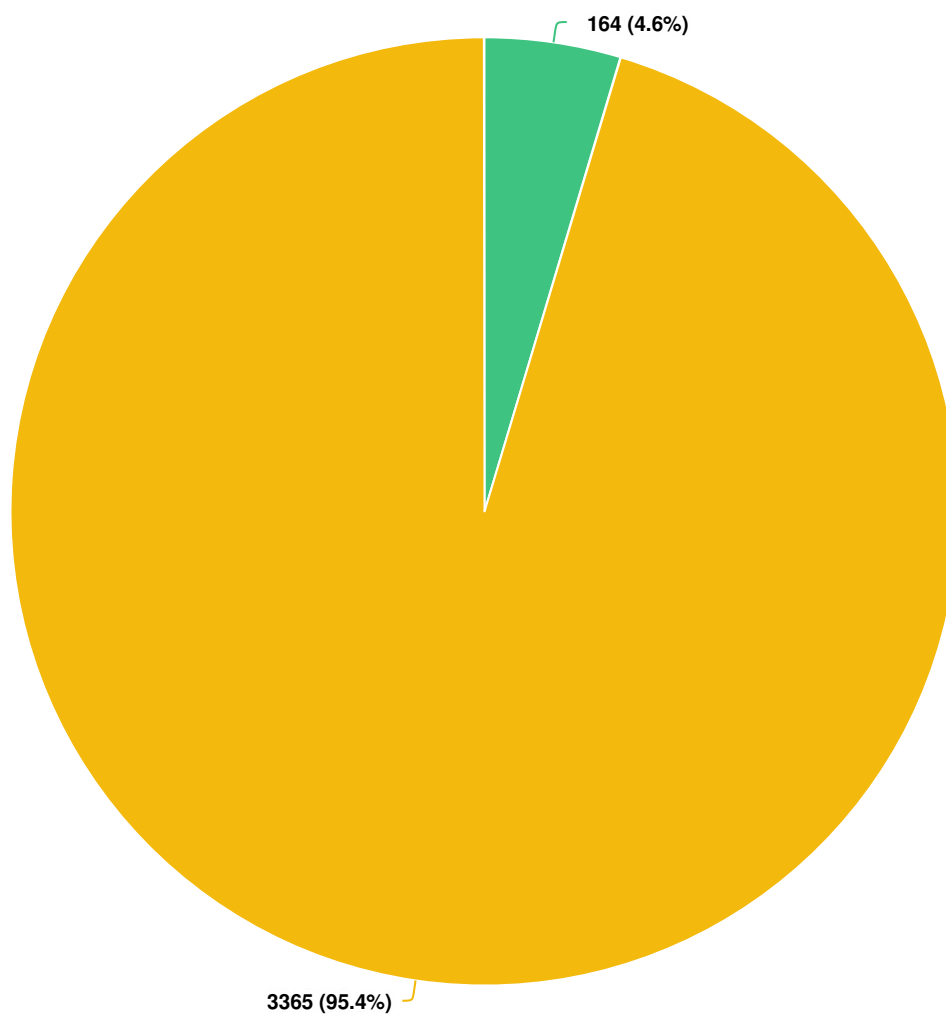
Q4 If the answer is yes, please indicate the activity you were participating in from the list below (select all relevant activities).



- Question options**
- Busking
 - Street performance
 - Street preaching
 - Display of promotional literature or other information (including graphic imagery)
 - Other (please specify)

Optional question (141 response(s), 3430 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question

Q5 In the past 12 months have you displayed promotional literature or other information (including the display of graphic imagery) in the city centre?



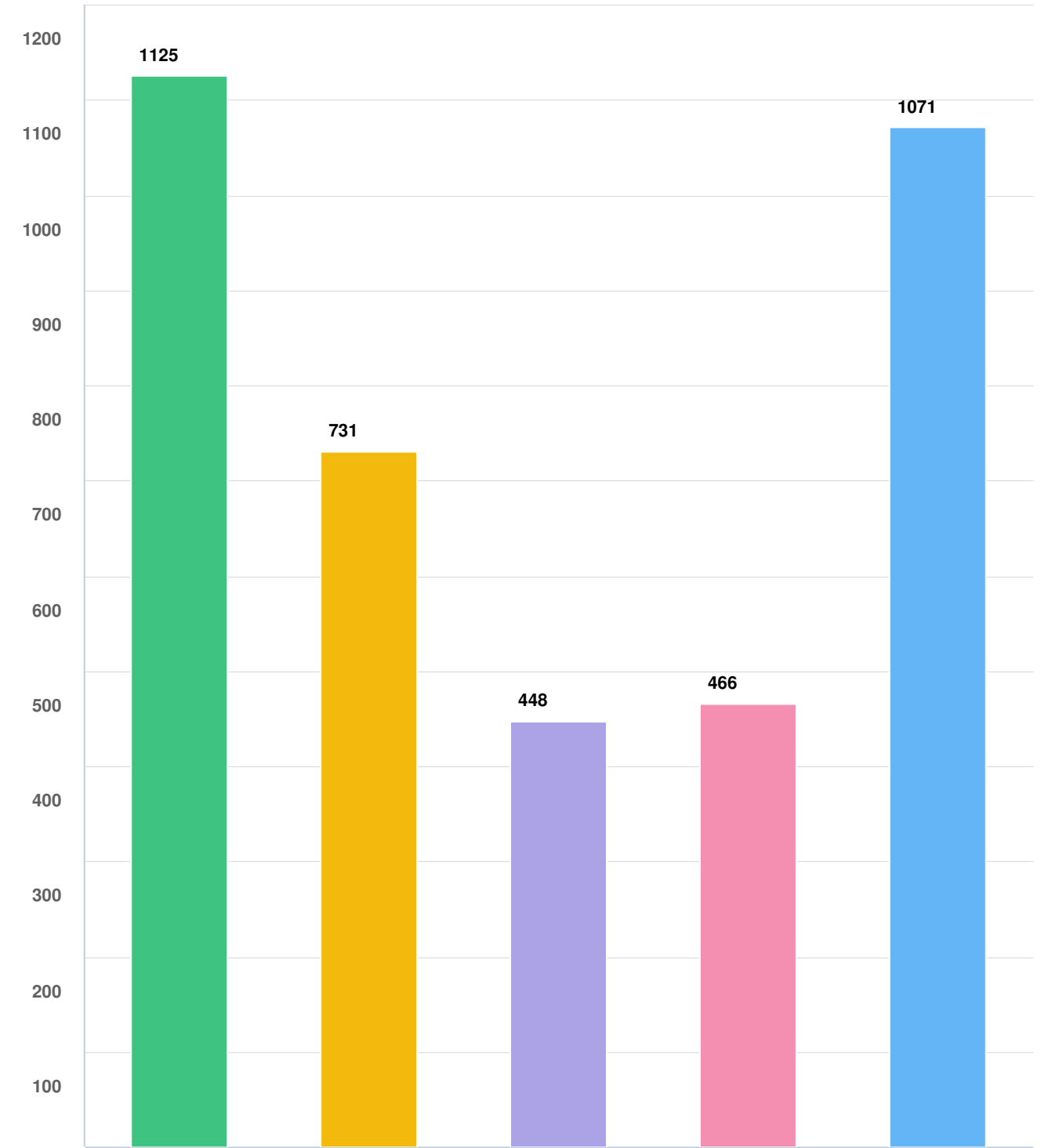
Question options

● Yes ● No

Optional question (3529 response(s), 42 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

Q7 | What is your experience of the use of amplification devices in the city centre (i.e. speakers, public address system, loudspeaker, megaphone or any electronic device for the amplification of sound)? You may select more than one option.

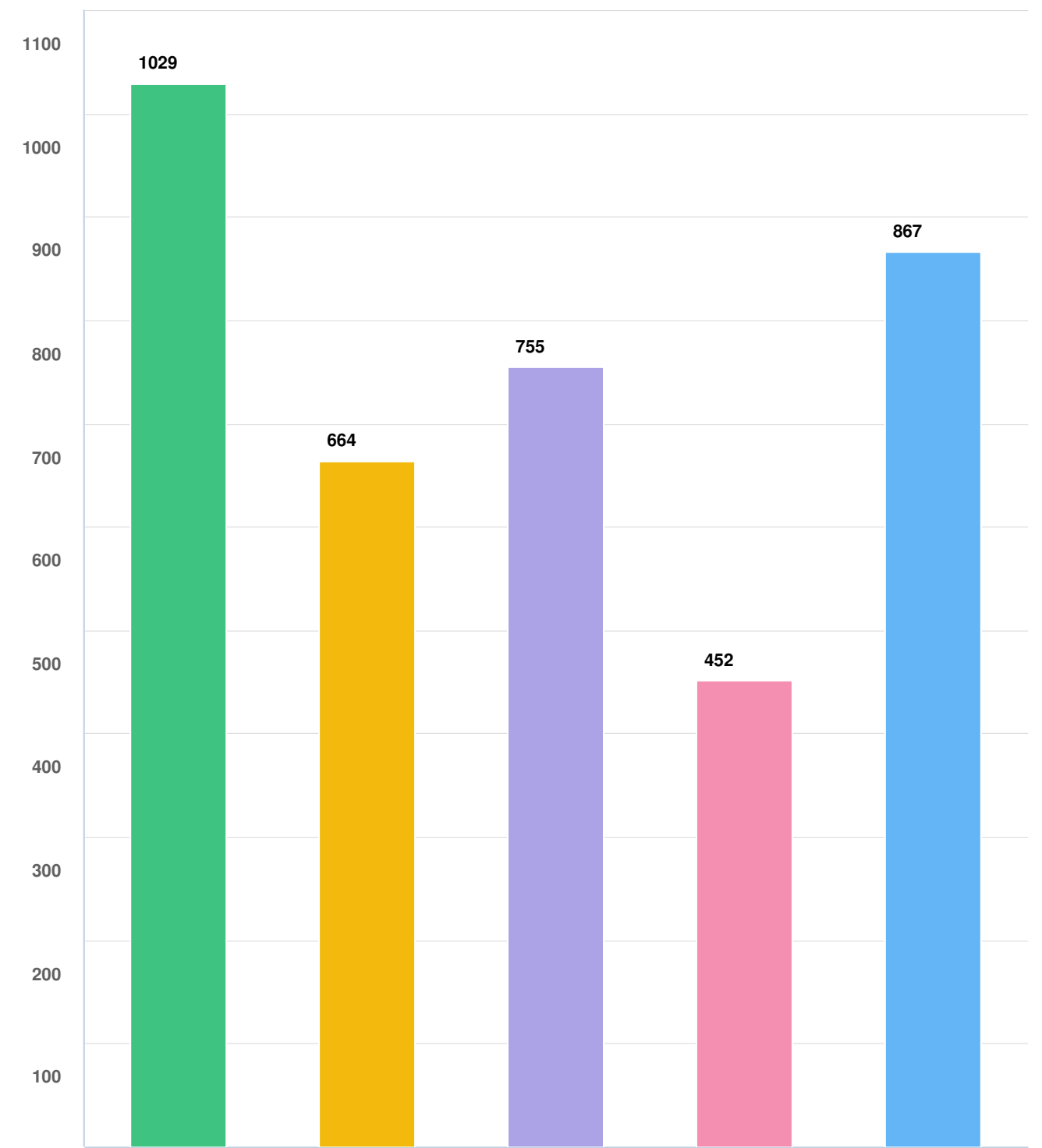


Question options

Very positive Positive Neutral Negative Very negative

Optional question (3512 response(s), 59 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question

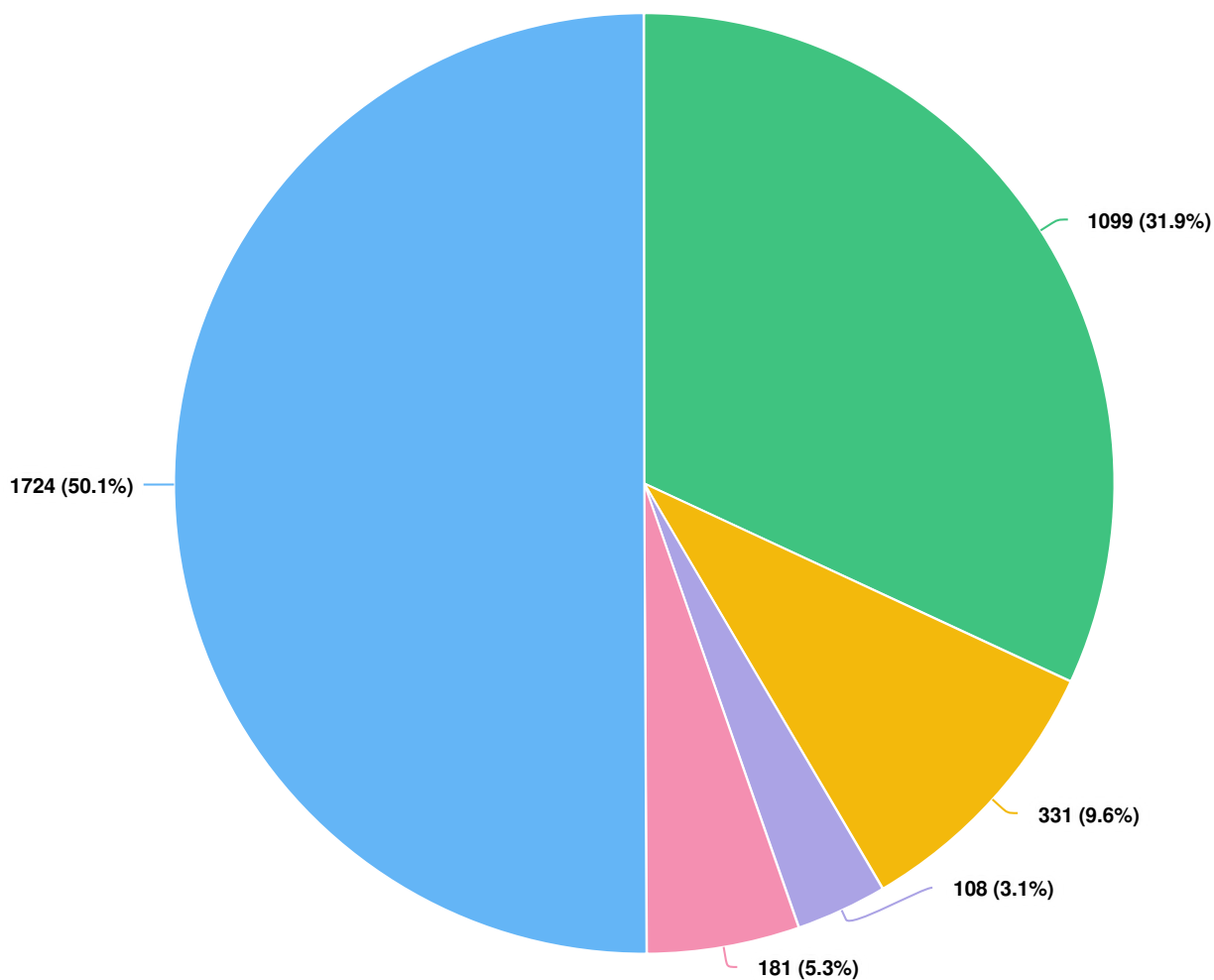
Q9 | What is your experience of the display of promotional literature or other information in the city centre (including the display of graphic imagery)? You may select more than one option.



Question options
Very positive Positive Neutral Negative Very negative

Optional question (3517 response(s), 54 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question

Q11 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council should introduce a permit scheme around the use of amplification devices in the city centre?



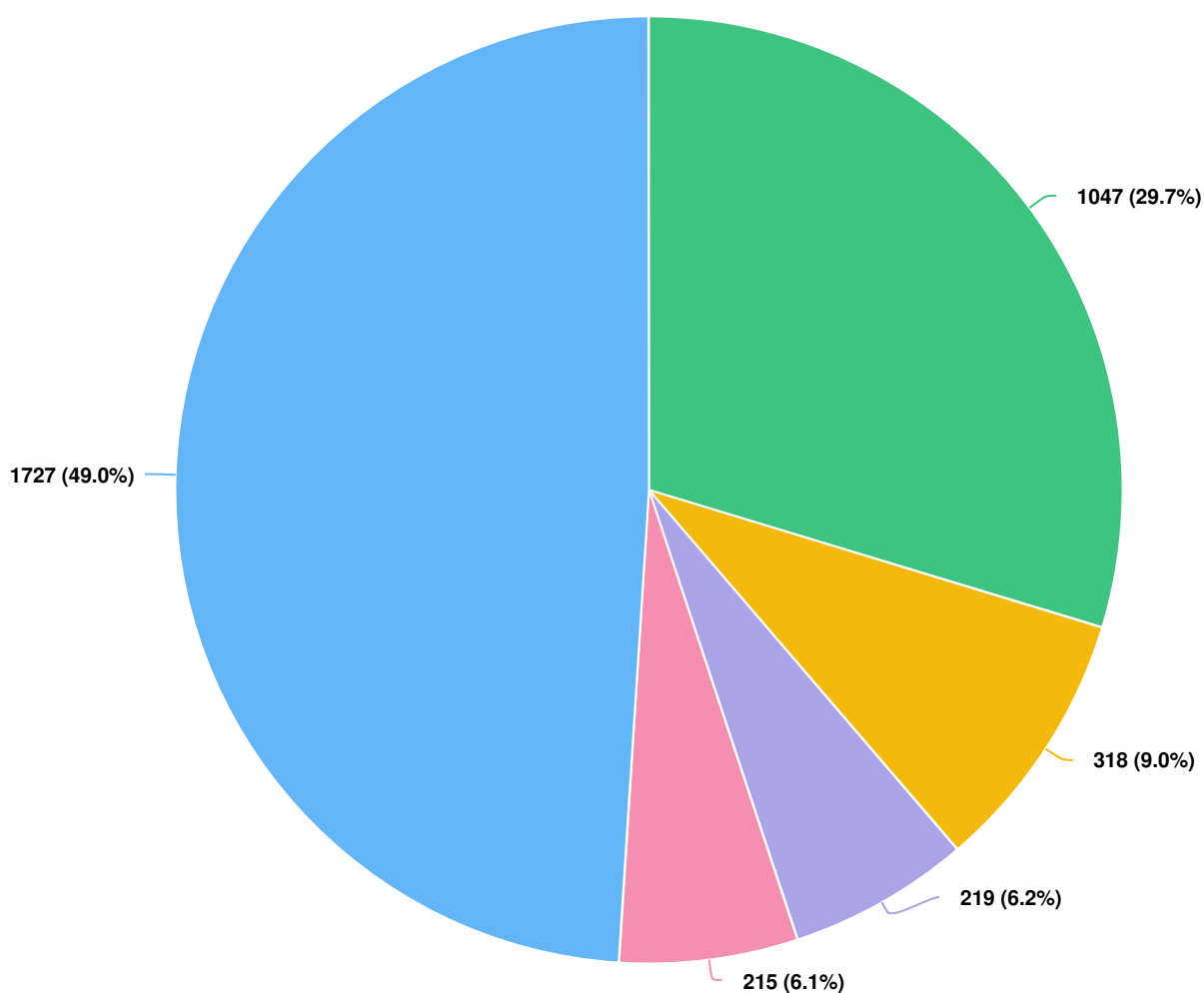
Question options

Definitely agree Somewhat agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Definitely disagree

Optional question (3443 response(s), 128 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

Q13 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council should introduce a permit scheme around the display of promotional literature or other information in the city centre (including the display of graphic imagery)?



Question options

Definitely agree Somewhat agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Definitely disagree

Optional question (3526 response(s), 45 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

Q15 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the standard conditions listed within the proposed byelaws? (Answers range from definitely agree to definitely disagree)

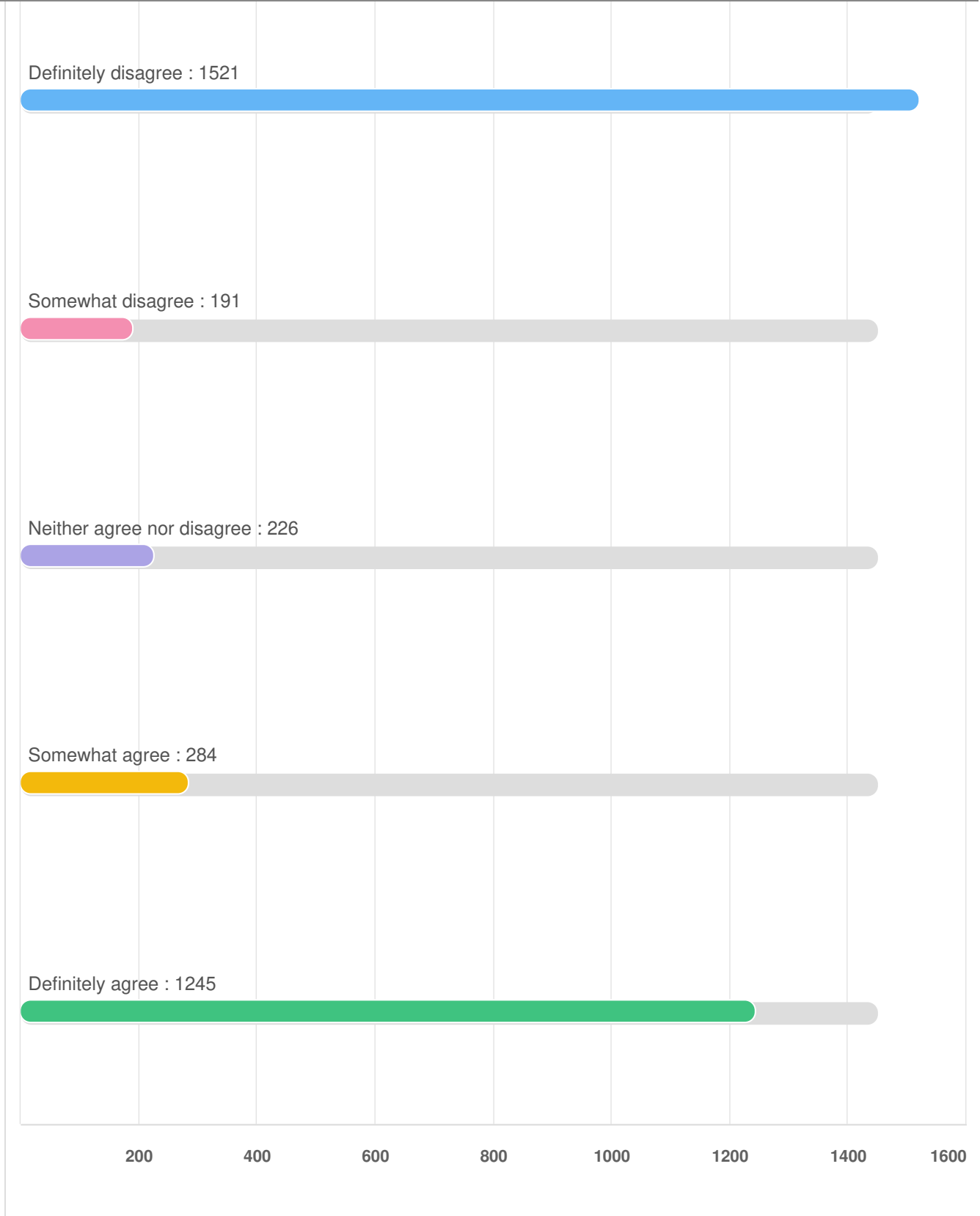


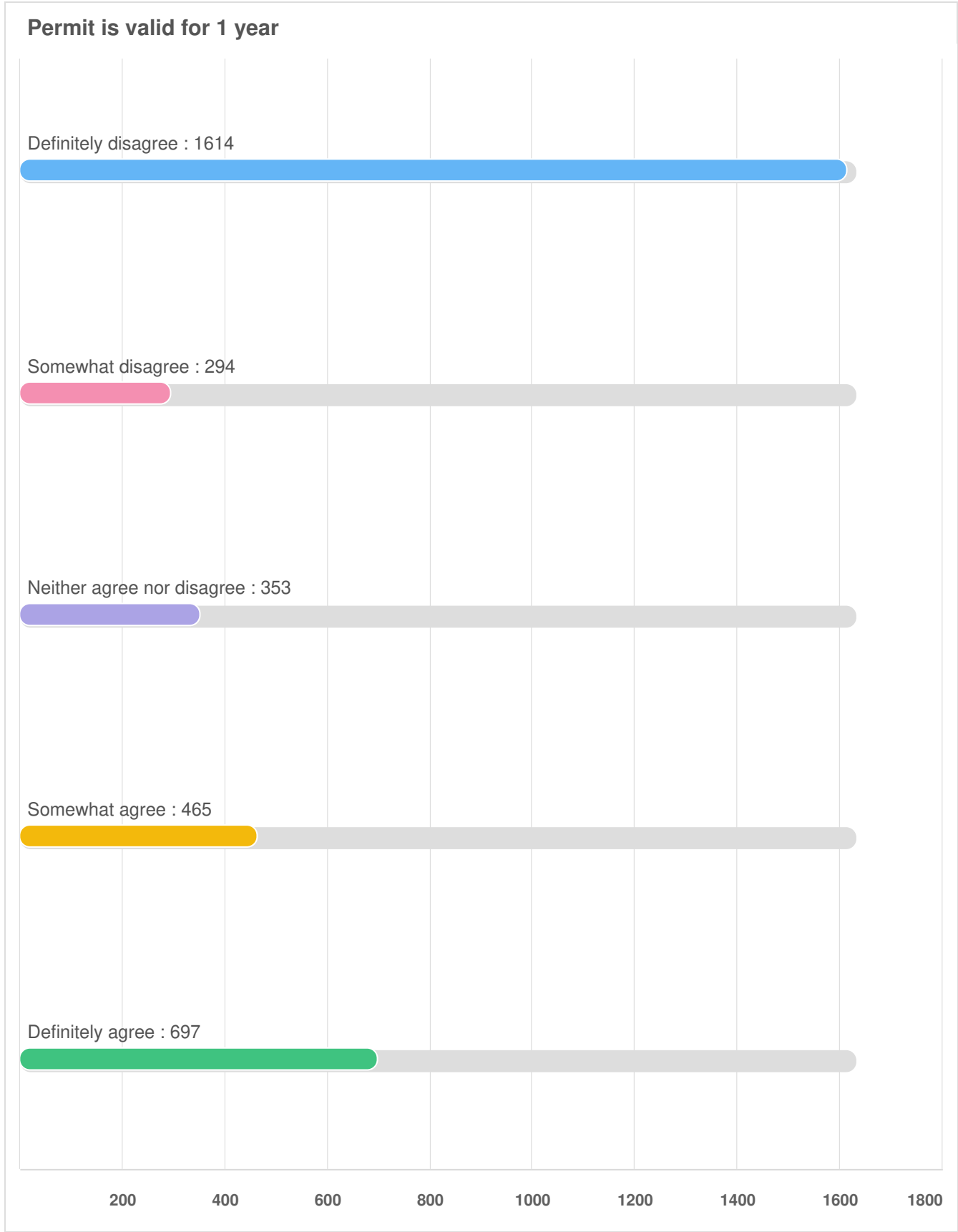
Optional question (3502 response(s), 69 skipped)

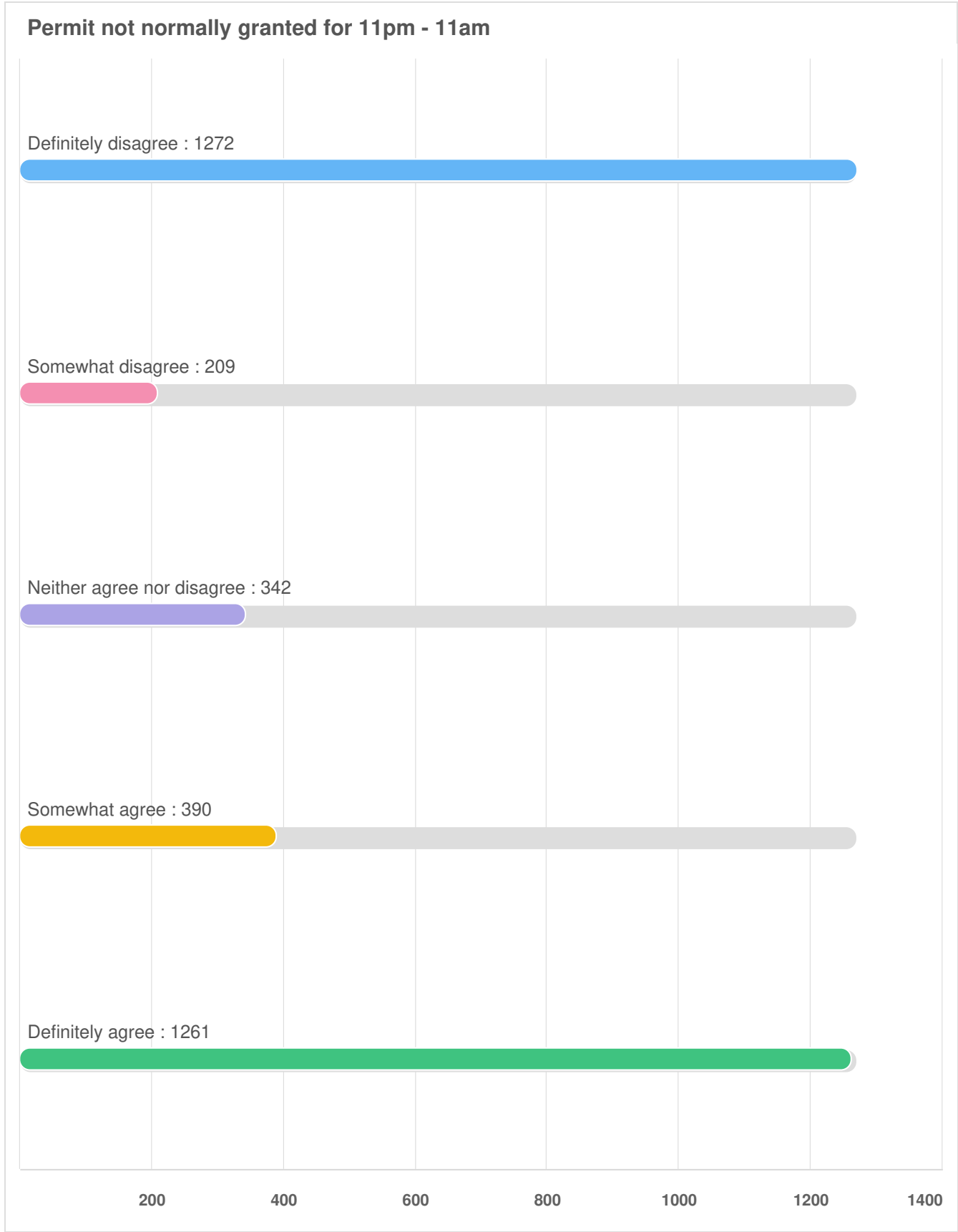
Question type: Likert Question

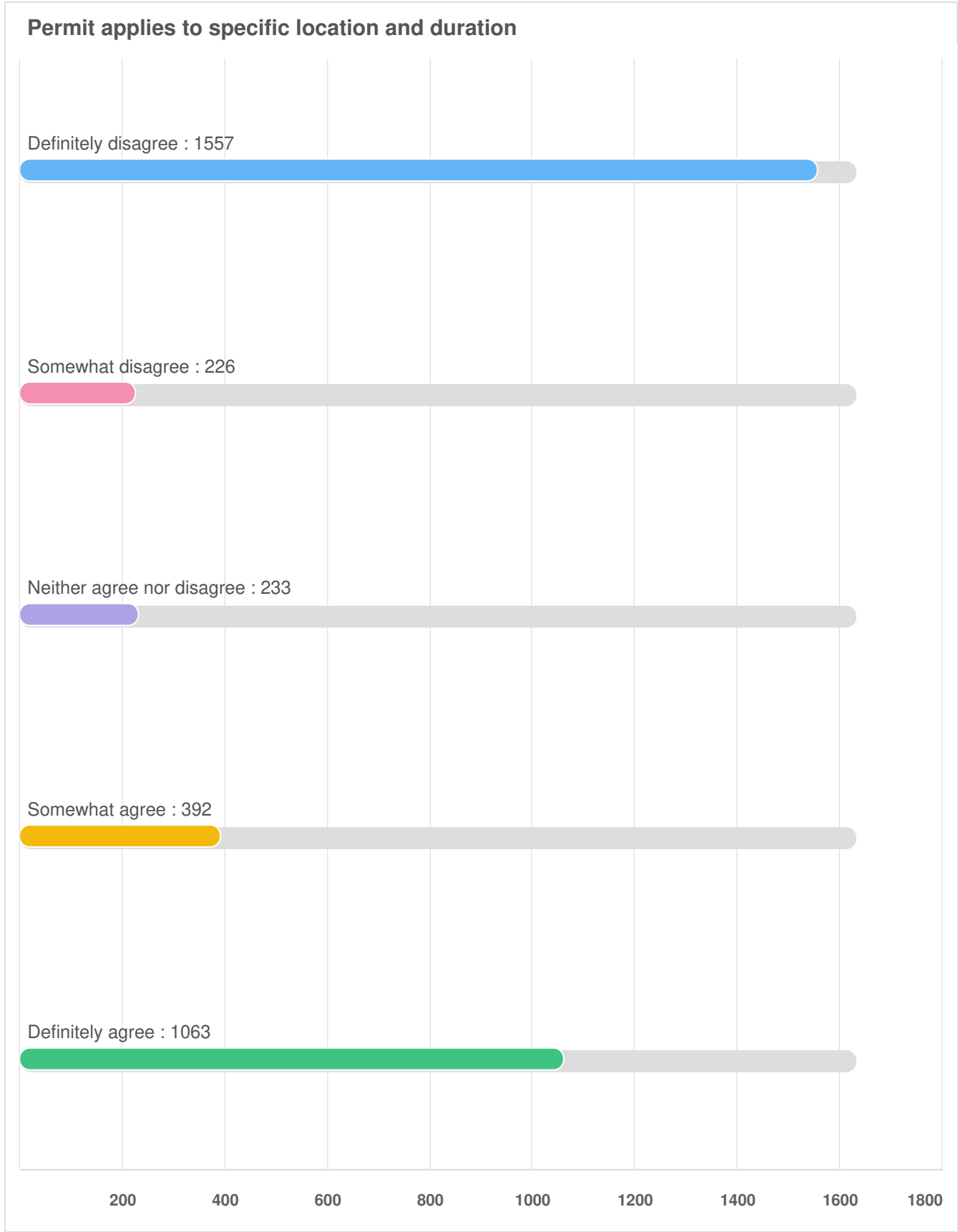
Q15 | To what extent do you agree or disagree with the standard conditions listed within the proposed byelaws? (Answers range from definitely agree to definitely disagree)

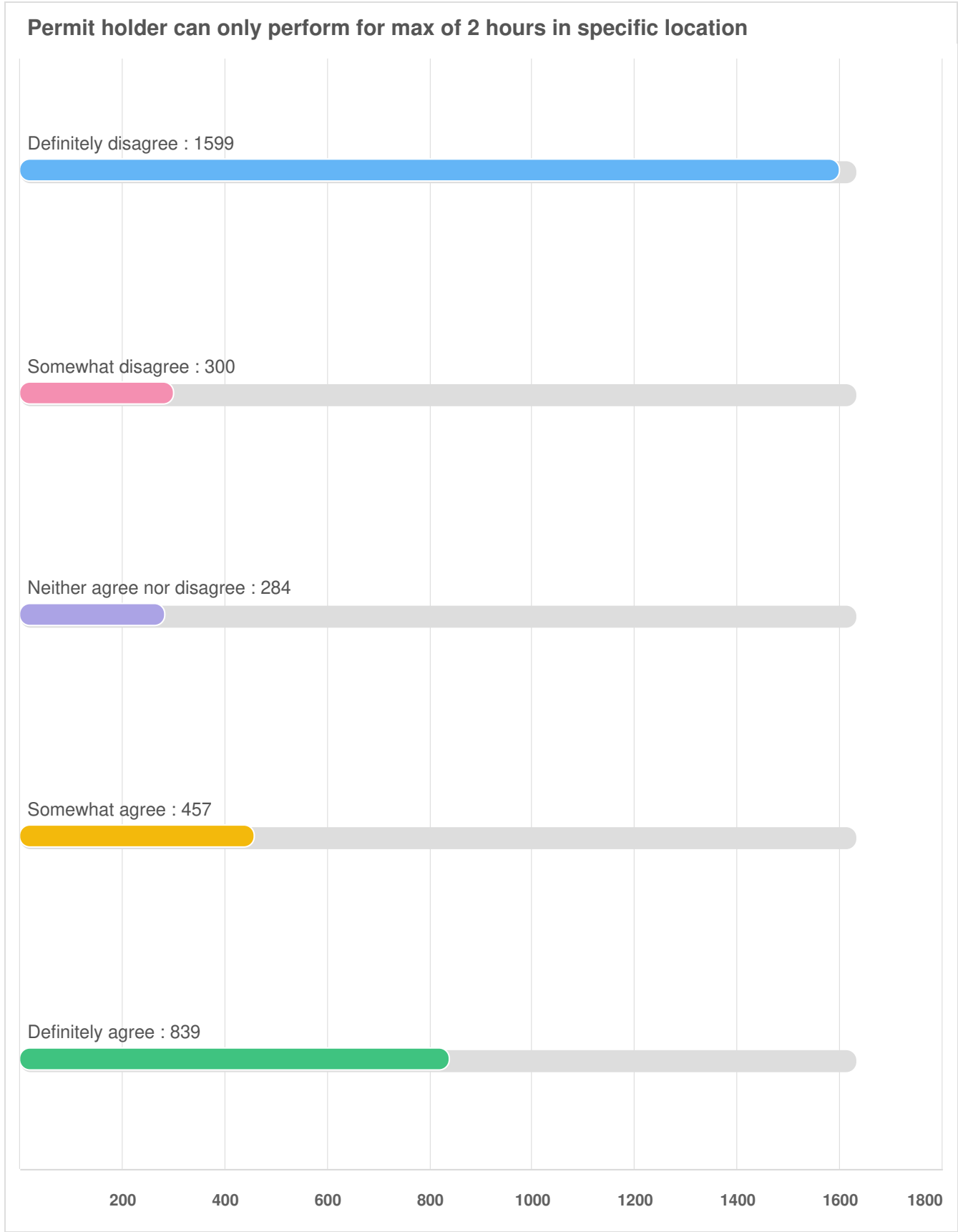
Permit is not transferable

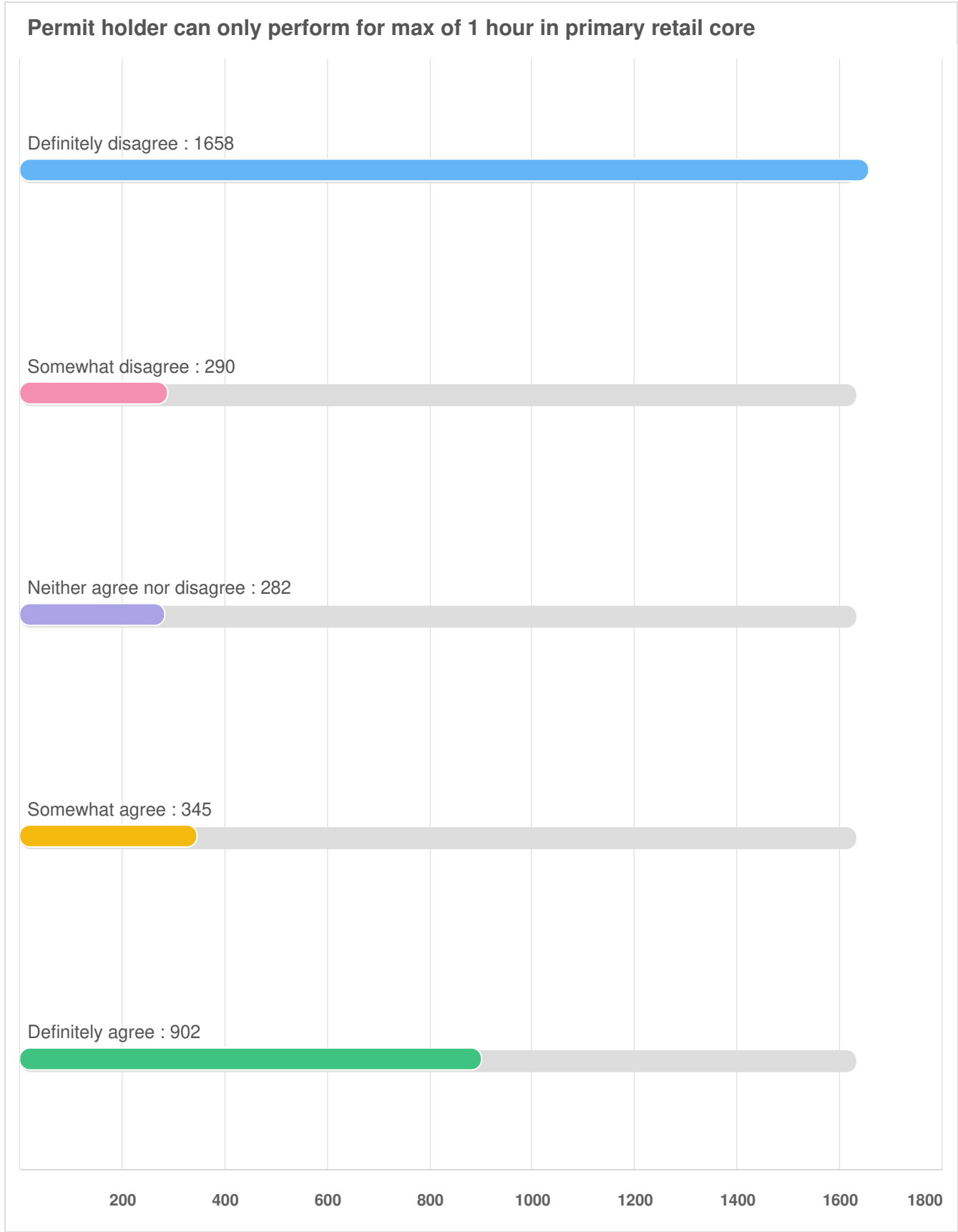


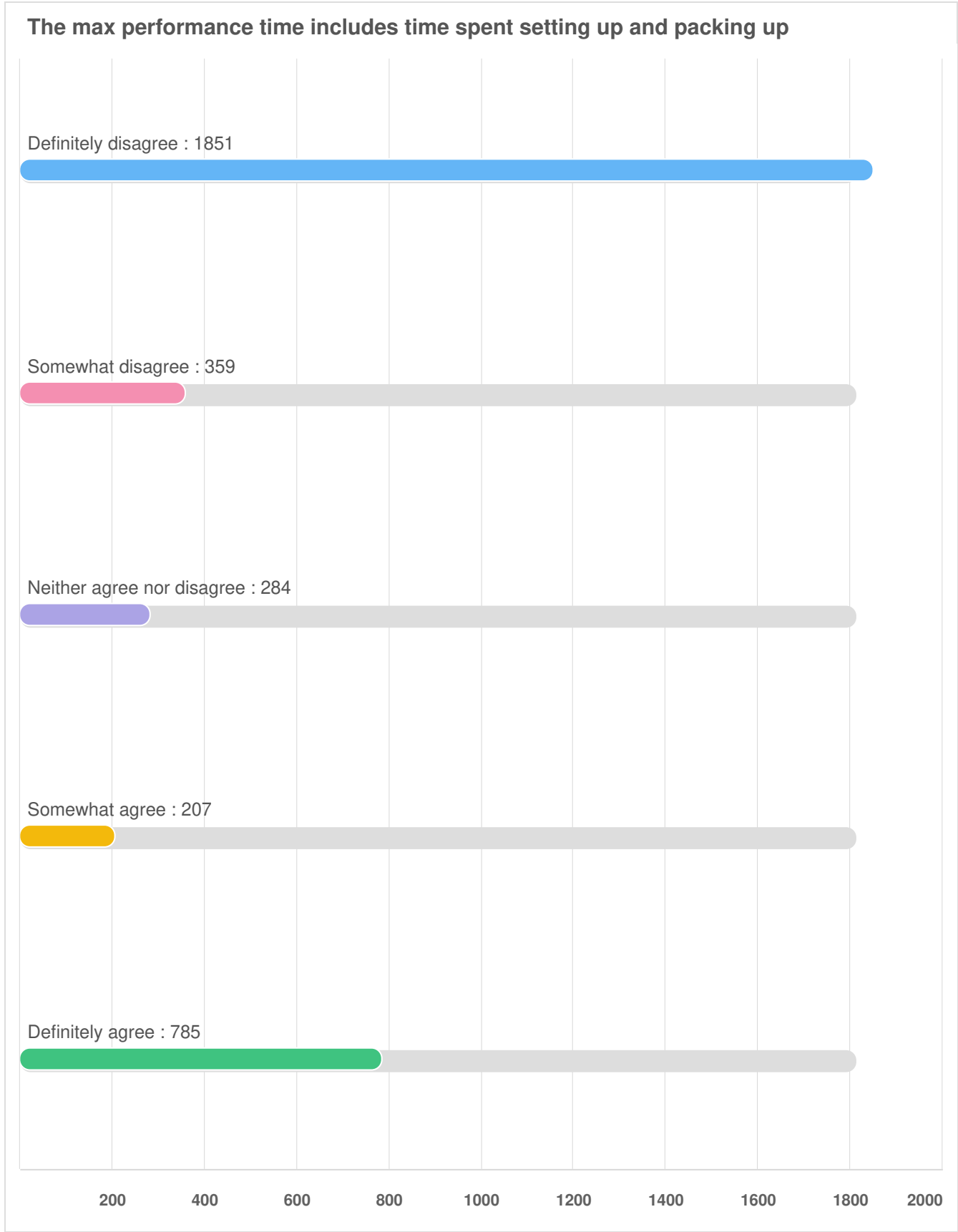






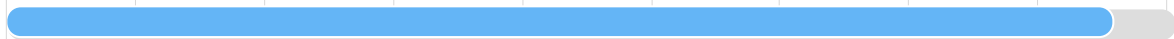




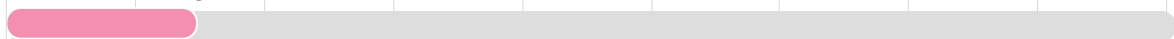


Permit holder must re-locate to a different place not within 100 metres of previous location

Definitely disagree : 1717



Somewhat disagree : 296



Neither agree nor disagree : 347



Somewhat agree : 336



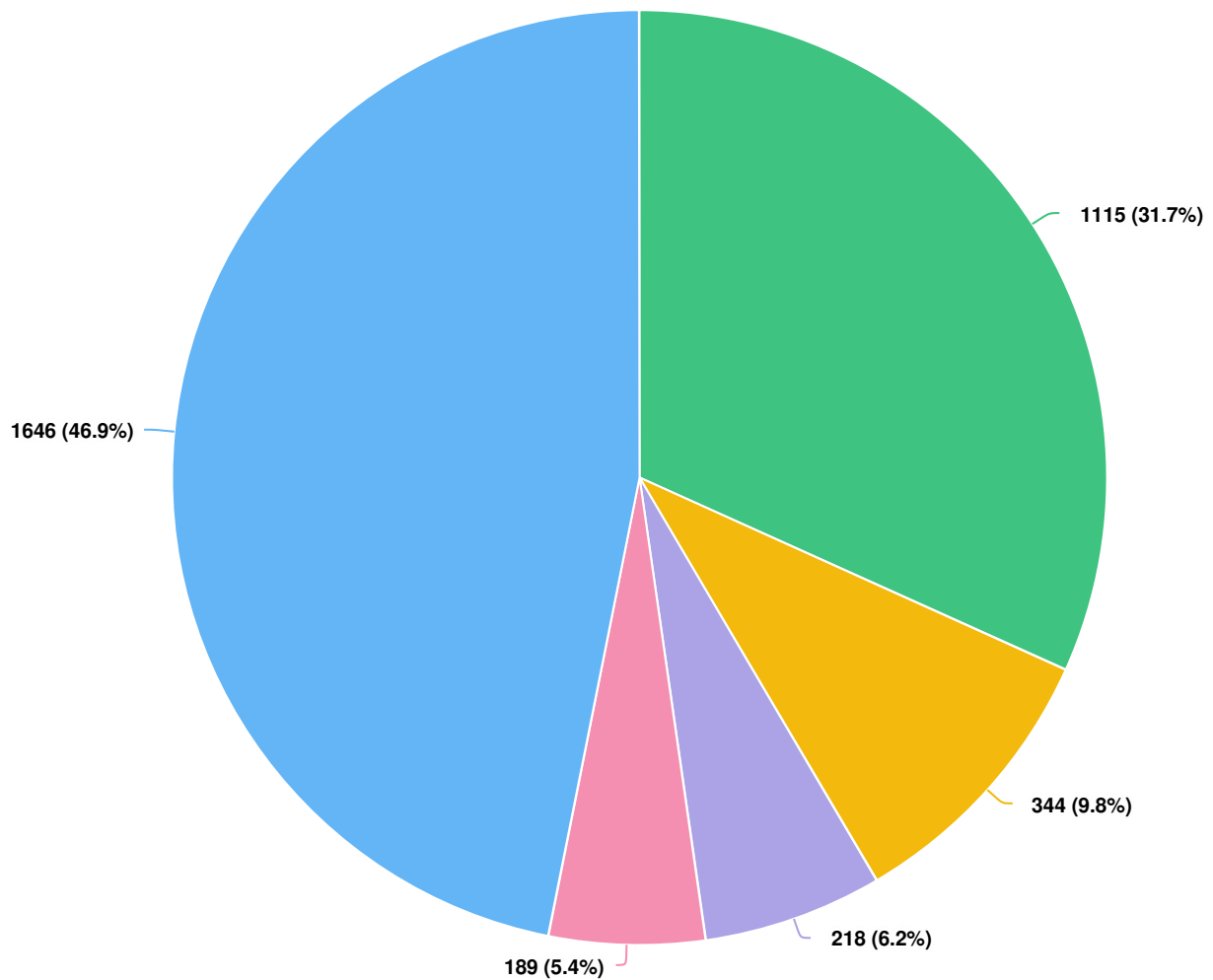
Definitely agree : 781



200 400 600 800 1000 1200 1400 1600 1800 2000

Q16 Please provide any additional comments in the space below.

Q17 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council may designate areas in which specific types of instruments or amplification is prohibited?



Question options

Definitely disagree Somewhat disagree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat agree Definitely agree

Optional question (3512 response(s), 59 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

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Subject:	Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayors Challenge
Date:	21 November 2025
Reporting Officer:	Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Corporate Services
Contact Officer:	Mark McCann, City Innovation Manager Stephen Leonard, Director of Resources, Fleet, Transport & Open Spaces and Street Scene Brenda Murphy, Innovation Broker

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
1.1	To update Members on the final submission to the Bloomberg Philanthropies' Mayoral Challenge competition.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the ongoing work on the Bloomberg alleyways transformation proposal 2. Note Bloomberg's final funding decision will be shared with Members at the following Committee meeting. 3. Note the invitation to the second Belfast: Inclusive Futures event on Monday, 24 November from 16:00 in the Great Hall. The guest speak is Dr Nell Watson, a national AI expert and advisor to Google.
3.0	Main report
	Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayoral Challenge 2025
3.1	Following Member approval, Belfast City Council applied to Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayoral Challenge in April 2025 with an outline concept <i>'to re-imagine Belfast's network of alleyways'</i> .
3.2	<p>Belfast was one of only 100 cities (from 640 applications worldwide) selected to further develop this concept into a more detailed proposal. Belfast was subsequently one of only 50 cities awarded \$50,000 to support local engagement and to carry out research to develop the proposal into a funding bid. This bid was submitted to Bloomberg on 17 October. Bloomberg are currently assessing the final 50 applications, of which only 25 will be awarded \$1 million each to deliver their projects. This decision is expected in the next few weeks.</p> <p>The Belfast bid</p>
3.3	The bid builds on existing work over the years by communities, Members, and council services on a series of successful alleyway transformations that have had a positive impact on the lives of local people. The challenge for the city going forward is how we can scale and replicate such successes across many more parts of the city and do in ways that are sustainable and community-led. Bloomberg are particularly interested in how the Council will design an approach that is bottom-up and directly engages our residents and impacts their lives.
3.4	The Belfast proposal therefore seeks to establish, over a two-year period, a city programme that can support the sustainable development of up to 25 miles of transformed alleyways. These projects might range from quite modest interventions to much more radical transformations, depending local circumstances and on the interest of each community. The programme would seek to harness our services in an integrated way and work directly with communities and with other public bodies (such as DfI, DfC and NIHE) and utilise digital and data tools, co-design techniques and innovative funding models. The bid outlined a concept that included: a single 'alleyway service commitment' that is responsive to local needs; develop local resource hubs

	with inventories recycled from our waste stream; digital tools for advice and volunteering; and a micro-grant scheme.
	Next steps
3.5	A decision from Bloomberg is expected in the next few weeks. They had previously indicated that cities need to be ready to commence work on their programme almost immediately and advised that shortlisted cities should begin making preparations ahead of any decision. Given the challenging timeframe, and time of year, council officers have thus begun work on a detailed programme and resourcing plan and engaging with local stakeholders.
3.6	Members are asked to note the ongoing work on the Bloomberg proposal, the nature of the bid, and that the Bloomberg's final decision will be shared with Members at the next immediate Committee.
3.7	Belfast Inclusive Futures In May 2025 Members approved a series called ' <i>Belfast: Inclusive Futures</i> ' brings together city leaders (private, public and community) and senior policymakers to build understanding and consensus about the challenges and opportunities that digital technologies represent for our city's shared commitment to inclusive growth.
3.8	The first event which had over 80 attendees welcomed Professor Kate Devlin, Chair-Director of the Digital Futures Institute, King's College, who explored the implications of AI across a broad range of social and economic policies associated with 'inclusive growth'.
3.9	The second event is planned for Monday, 24 November from 16:00 in City Hall . The guest speak is Dr Nell Watson, a national AI expert and advisor to Google. Nell will be helping Members and senior decision-makers in the city explore the implications for inclusive public services, particularly related to health. A follow up panel discussion will include the NI Chief Scientific Officer Helen McCarthy and Mark Lawler, Professor of Digital Health at Queen's University. Members will have received an invitation via Democratic Services and are encouraged to come along.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.10	Resources for these initiatives have been identified within the existing departmental budgets.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.11	None at present. A successful Bloomberg proposal will be subject to an Equality screening.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None.

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Subject:	Horizon Cities@Heart Project update
Date:	21 November 2025
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
Contact Officer:	Kevin Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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 <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the progress of the Horizon Europe Cities@Heart project and to seek agreement to approve the final agreed Consortium Agreement.

2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee are asked to note the contents of this report and agree that the Council signs the final agreed Consortium Agreement required for its participation in the Cities@Heart project.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	Members will recall that at its meeting on the 18 April 2025, the Committee agreed that council officials work with QUB and Belfast Healthy Cities to input to a joint funding submission to the Horizon Europe Innovative Health Initiative grant funding call. The intention was to develop an overall €15million funding bid across seven cities (named Cities@Heart) to enable work to be undertaken with the WHO Healthy Cities Network and innovative technology with the aim of reducing recognised cardiovascular risk factors in order to more effectively manage risk and prevent future cardiovascular events.
3.2	The Cities@Heart proposal focuses on obesity, hypertension, dyslipidaemia and diabetes as key drivers of cardiovascular disease and poor health. The intention is to identify effective public health activities which offer potential to scale-up. The project will also seek to develop and deploy strategies to leverage engagement and citizen empowerment, raise awareness of cardiovascular disease, effective prevention, early detection and optimal management to improve outcomes.
3.3	<p>The bid involves a range of representatives including public sector, academia and industry experts from across seven municipalities including Izmir (TR), Belfast (NI), Łódź (PL), Cork (IE), Udine (IT), Birmingham (EN) and Utrecht (NL). Each have diverse communities and a commitment to deploy multi-disciplinary health strategies. Working together with citizens and industry experts, each city would intend to apply a structured, multi-sector methodology which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. City-level approaches to reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease; ii. A digital ecosystem that will power the development of European health technology and economic growth; iii. Integration of health policy and health economics to deliver cost-effective city-level solutions; and iv. Sustainability at its core using an implementation framework that can apply across the 1800+ cities in the WHO European Healthy Cities Network.
3.4	It is intended that the Cities@Heart project would build connections and capacity across a broad array of stakeholders, including citizens, patients, municipalities, healthcare providers, policymakers and industry experts, and support the next generation of health technology to address critical barriers in cardiovascular disease across Europe. Members will be aware of the significant health challenges, including cardiovascular disease, impacting on people across the

	<p>city and will also be aware that addressing health inequalities has been identified as a key priority set out in the Belfast Agenda.</p> <p><u>Current position</u></p>
3.5	<p>Following Committee agreement, council officials continued to work alongside colleagues from QUB and Belfast Healthy Cities to explore a possible role for Belfast and Council in the emerging Cities@Heart project proposal. Officers have also engaged with representatives from the other cities working on the development of the project proposal and exploring the opportunities and benefits which can be realised for Belfast through participation in Cities@Heart. Some early opportunities identified include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Awareness: City-wide campaigns to raise understanding of CVD risks, targeting communities with highest inequalities. ▪ Prevention: Building on strong partnerships to tackle obesity, inactivity, smoking, and poor diet; share and learn from other cities. ▪ Detection: Expansion of early identification of hypertension, diabetes, and dyslipidaemia in high-risk groups through community outreach and digital tools. ▪ Inequalities: Strengthen and improve knowledge of available services and support across Belfast, focusing on deprived populations with the highest premature CVD mortality.
3.6	<p>Ultimately, through the participation in the project, Belfast has a real opportunity to understand the deep rooted and multi-faceted issues impacting on people's health and to design and bring forward innovative solutions to deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A reduction in premature cardiovascular disease deaths (currently 35.8 per 100,000 vs 26.9 NI average) ▪ Narrow the inequality gap between deprived and affluent wards (communities and neighbourhoods) ▪ Create a healthier, more active and sustainable city through prevention, active travel and behavioural change ▪ Position Belfast as a model city for equitable cardiovascular health and system-wide prevention
3.7	<p>Pending notification of the Cities@Heart bid being successful, the organisations across the seven cities making the joint bid for funding are required to enter into a Consortium Agreement to specify the rights and obligations of each party and set out inter alia project management, governance, confidentiality etc between the parties. As a prerequisite to participation in the project, the Council is required to enter into the Collaboration Agreement. The draft Agreement has been reviewed by the relevant Council officers including Legal Services who</p>

	have provided comments to the project administrators to inform the terms of the final Consortium Agreement.
3.8	<p>In terms of specific areas which have been initially identified whereby Council can provide support as the Cities@Heart programme progresses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project management • Communication, dissemination and engagement • Civil society representative • Prototyping and demonstration • Public procurer of results
3.9	<p>Members will note that discussions are underway with Belfast Healthy Cities (BHC) in terms of how they can support these areas of work from a Belfast perspective. The Council will be required to enter into a formal Grant Agreement with the IHI JU in respect of the funding being awarded under the Cities@Heart bid and alongside this, the Council shall enter into a MOU with Belfast Healthy Cities to set out how both parties will work together on the project.</p> <p>It is understood that the combined budget for the Council and Belfast Healthy Cities for the overall administration of the programme is in the region of €75,000 for 3 years.</p>
3.10	<p>It is further understood that additional project-specific funding awards would be allocated to Belfast, if successful, in securing delivery of projects within the overall Cities@Heart funding award. Any such opportunities would be presented to Committee for review.</p>
	Financial and Resource Implications
3.11	<p>There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Officer time will be required to help shape the emerging bid and programme of work.</p>
	Equality and Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.12	<p>There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications arising directly from this report.</p>
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	None



Subject:	Update on Hardship Programme 2025/26
Date:	21 st Nov 2025
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy Kevin Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty
Contact Officer:	Chris Tubridy, Hardship Programme Coordinator Brian Carr, Portfolio Manager Nicola Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager Margaret Higgins, Lead Officer, Community Services

Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 40px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 									
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Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members following the direction provided at the October SP&R meeting to write to the Minister for Communities seeking funding support for the continuation of the Hardship Programme in the 2025/26 financial year.
1.2	The report also provides a reminder on the current budget position for delivery of a Hardship Programme in 2025/26. Members should note that the impact of this will be significantly less than previous years without further allocation of funding.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Note the contents of this report including the recent correspondence issued to the Minister for Communities on 10 November. ii. Note the vastly reduced budget position of £75,000 for the development and delivery of a Hardship Programme in 2025/26, which members have agreed should be allocated to Family Support Hubs to help support families and children.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Members will recall the update provided to members in October 2025 on the positive impact of the £1.1m Hardship Programme, which was implemented between December 2024 and June 2025. Members will be aware that while the Council fully funded this year's programme, it had previously been funded by DFC in 2023/24.
3.2	At the meeting in October, Members had been informed that whilst some underspend from previous years was available to support a Hardship Programme in 2025/26, the amount available was £75,000 which is significantly lower than previous years.
3.3	As agreed by Members, the Council issued correspondence to the Department for Communities requesting them to consider providing funding support for the continuation of the Hardship Programme in 2025/26. Additionally, the letter advised the department that we would welcome exploration of a recurrent multi-year funding model to enable more strategic long-term efforts in tackling poverty and hardship at the local level. A copy of the letter is attached at Appendix 1 . Officers will update members again once feedback from DFC has been received.
3.4	<p>Hardship Programme Support 2025-26</p> <p>Members were advised in October that there is a current budget of £75,000 from previous years underspends available to support a Hardship programme for 2025-26. This is significantly lower than previous years and unless any additional funding is secured the impact will be greatly reduced.</p>

3.5	Whilst highlighting the need for and absence of any significant funding, Members agreed to utilise the available budget of £75,000 for 2025/26 to support 11 Family Support Hubs. This proposal had been discussed with the Members Cost-of-Living Working Group who felt this was a pragmatic approach given the limited budget and to ensure a good geographical spread through the 11 Family Support Hubs to help support children and families in immediate emergency need.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.6	The current available budget for a 2025-26 Hardship Programme is £75,000
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.7	None.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Correspondence from Council to Department for Communities issued on 10 Nov 2025

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Your reference

Our reference: JW/emcm

Date: 10 November 2025

Minister Gordon Lyons
Department for Communities

By email: Gordon Lyons MLA, private.office@communities-ni.gov.uk

Dear Gordon

Re: Request for Funding to Support the Delivery of a Hardship Programme in 2025/26

I am writing to request your consideration of funding support for the continuation of the Hardship Programme in the 2025/26 financial year. This request follows direction from our elected members, who remain deeply committed to alleviating the impacts of poverty and hardship on our most vulnerable residents.

As you will be aware, the Department for Communities has previously provided valuable funding in this area, including a Hardship Grant of £724,600 in late 2022/23. Combined with underspends from the Covid Support Grant, this enabled the Council to implement a £1m Hardship Programme for the 2023/24 financial year. In the absence of funding from the Department for 2024/25, the Council demonstrated its ongoing commitment by allocating £1.1m on a one-off basis from VAT receipts, ensuring the programme's delivery despite challenging circumstances.

This sustained investment from Council reflects our dedication to supporting those most affected by the cost-of-living crisis over recent years. The programme has focussed on high-impact initiatives, enhancing the capacity of established organisations to assist key cohorts, including children and families, vulnerable individuals in emergency need, and older people.

The impact of this funding has been substantial. In 2024/25 alone, over 50,000 individuals across Belfast received support through various projects, with resources distributed based on need and evidence indicating strong reach into areas of highest deprivation. A summary of the programme's outcomes and impact is appended to this letter for your reference. Feedback from delivery partners underscores the unprecedented and year-round demand for such assistance, highlighting the programme's critical role in addressing ongoing hardship.

However, the Council faces significant financial pressures, which limit our ability to sustain this level of support independently. Without additional external funding, the scope and impact of any future Hardship Programme would be considerably reduced, potentially leaving many vulnerable residents without essential aid.

Council recognises the support which the Department provides through the Social Supermarket Fund in 25/26. £777,811 is being directed to support 19 social supermarket projects across the city. However, the evidence from delivery of the 24/25 Hardship programme shows that there is a need for additional support through other approaches

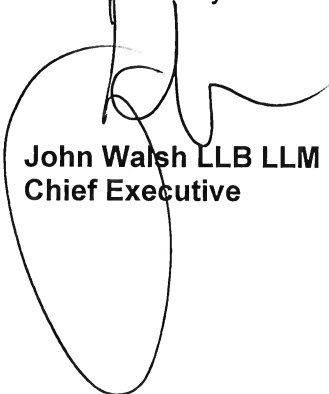
including targeted support for fuel poverty and initiatives focused on specific cohorts such as older people and children and young people.

The department also provides significant funding for a range of advice services across the city which Council also contributes to; these services are crucial in enabling access to independent advice and there is co-ordination across the Hardship, Social Supermarket and Advice programmes to increase the impact of each approach. However, there remains a need to support the most vulnerable in the city through additional support which the Belfast Hardship Programme has successfully provided in previous years.

In light of these challenges, and recognising the budgetary constraints faced by the Department, I kindly request that you and your officials give strong consideration to providing funding for a Hardship Programme in 2025/26. Could you please advise whether a Hardship Grant or similar initiative will be available for this financial year? Additionally, we would welcome exploration of a recurrent multi-year funding model to enable more strategic, long-term efforts in tackling poverty and hardship at the local level. We firmly believe that collaborative working between the Department and local councils will provide better outcomes for our communities.

To allow us to update our elected members I would be grateful if you could respond at your earliest convenience. I would also be pleased to discuss this matter further with you or your team.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John Walsh', written over a large, loopy oval shape that serves as a decorative element or part of the signature.

John Walsh LLB LLM
Chief Executive



Belfast
City Council

Subject:	Planning Information
Date:	21 November 2025
Reporting Officer(s):	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control
Contact Officer(s):	Ed Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management)

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 40px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 									
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Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To provide an update on Major planning applications and applications that have been determined by the Planning Committee.

2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The report is for notation.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	The Committee received an update on Planning Performance at its meeting on the 27 th August 2024. At that meeting and previously, the Committee sought a regular update on Major applications and applications that have been determined by the Planning Committee, especially those where a Decision Notice has yet to be issued.
3.2	All Major applications must be determined by the Planning Committee. The Key Performance Indicator (given in weeks) is calculated from when an application is considered to be valid to when the Decision Notice ("Green Form") is issued. This means that any delays either pre- or post- committee will impact on the KPI. The target for determining a Major application is 30 weeks.
	<u>Major applications</u>
3.3	Appendix 1 sets out the Major applications that are currently with the Council to determine. Details are given on the location, proposal, the validation date and target date for determination (using the 30 week target set out in the Key Performance Indicator) as well as a status update.
	<u>Applications determined by Committee</u>
3.4	Appendix 2 sets out the applications that have been determined by Committee since February 2022 which are yet to issue. For completeness information is also given on those applications determined by Committee which have had their Decision Notice issued. Details are given on the time taken (in weeks) to bring the applications before Committee and where decisions are yet to be issued, information is given relating to the main reason for the delay.
3.5	Following further discussion at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in May 2025, this table has now been amended to include a new non statutory target date and to give more detailed reasons for any delays in determination.
	<u>Conclusion</u>
3.6	This report will be brought to each Planning Committee and to each Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for information on an ongoing basis.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.7	There are no financial or resource implications associated with this report.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.8	There are no equality or good relations / rural needs implications associated with this report.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached

	Appendix 1 – Major planning applications at November 2025
	Appendix 2 – Applications determined by Committee at November 2025

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Live Major Applications not previously considered by Committee @ 04.11.25

Number	Application No.	Category	Location	Proposal	Date Valid	Target Date	Status
1	LA04/2023/2633/F	Major	St Teresa's GAC, 2 Glen Road Heights, Belfast BT11 8ER	Proposed extension to existing clubhouse to provide indoor sports hall, changing rooms, reception, and fitness suite. Proposed relocation of grass pitch and new 4G training pitch with integrated ball walls. Proposed annex building with club store and matchday shop. Site works including increased parking, fencing, catch nets, floodlighting, dugouts, paths, and other associated amenities.	14-Mar-23	10-Oct-23	Under Consideration
2	LA04/2023/3799/F	Major	Vacant lands (partial site of the former Wolfhill Flax Spinning Mill) located to the south, of Wolfhill Manor, north of Wolfhill Grove and west of Mill Avenue, Ligoniel Road, Belfast, BT14 8NR	New single storey 10-class based primary school, separate nursery school accommodation and school meals accommodation to facilitate the relocation of St. Vincent De Paul Primary School and Nursery from existing site on Ligoniel Road, Belfast. Proposal includes new pedestrian and vehicular accesses onto Mill Avenue, car parking, covered cycle storage area and hard play areas. Hard and soft landscaping including wildlife walkway, fencing, retaining walls, underground drainage system to include the reinstatement of underground storm sewer and headwall into adjacent DFI River wayleave. Includes temporary contractors compound and all associated site works.	09-Oct-23	06-May-24	Under Consideration
3	LA04/2023/4181/F	Major	Lands comprising the existing Sydenham Wastewater Pumping Station west of Park Avenue, Connswater River and King George V Playing Fields, to the south of the Sydenham By-Pass, east of The Oval football stadium, north and east of Parkgate Gardens and north of Parkgate Crescent, Parkgate Parade and Mersey Street, Belfast	Demolition of existing Wastewater Pumping Station (WwPS) with reinstatement of site as a landscaped area. Construction of a replacement WwPS including associated control building and hardstanding, the raising of site levels, in-channel works, provision of new rising main, other ancillary buildings, the creation of an access road on lands within the King George V Playing Fields to serve the facility, landscaping and other ancillary works. Provision of a temporary working area on lands within the King George V Playing Fields, the creation of a temporary access road from Mersey Street to facilitate construction traffic on lands to the rear of 1-35 Parkgate Gardens, the creation of a temporary footway adjacent to 88 Park Avenue and other ancillary development and landscaping restoration works.	14-Nov-23	11-Jun-24	Under Consideration
4	LA04/2024/0015/F	Major	Lands at Cabin Hill, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast BT4	Erection of 53 residential units (including 43 dwellings and 10 apartments) including creation of access, internal roads, landscaping and associated works (amended description and plans).	22-Dec-23	19-Jul-24	Under Consideration
5	LA04/2024/0569/O	Major	Stormont Hotel, 587 Upper Newtownards Road BT4 3LP and adjacent properties at Castleview Road (nos. 2, 4, 6, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28 & 30), Summerhill Parade (nos. 18, 20 & 22), and Summerhill Park (nos. 37 & 39) and rear of 160 Barnetts Road, Belfast (amended address)	Outline planning permission with all matter reserved for independent living (Use Class C1) units and up to 62no. assisted living units (Use Class C3), associated internal access roads, communal open space, revised access from Castleview Road, associated car parking, servicing, amenity space and landscaping.	04-Apr-24	31-Oct-24	Under Consideration
6	LA04/2024/0570/F	Major	Stormont Hotel, 587 Upper Newtownards Road BT4 3LP and adjacent property 37-39 Summerhill Park, Belfast.	Change of use of from hotel, conference centre and offices (sui generis) to a 97-bed care home (Use Class C3(b) and 1,559sqm diagnostic medical facility (Use Class D1(a), associated access, car parking, landscaping and open space.	04-Apr-24	31-Oct-24	Under Consideration
7	LA04/2024/0910/F	Major	70 Whitewell Road, Newtownabbey, BT36 7ES Site at Hazelwood Integrated College	Redevelopment of Hazelwood Integrated College to include demolition of existing building and development of new school campus, new sports pitch, outdoor play areas, car parking, hard and soft landscaping and retention and refurbishment of the Listed Building (Graymount House) and other associated site works including a temporary mobile village during the construction process.	23-May-24	19-Dec-24	Under Consideration

8	LA04/2024/1836/F	Major	Lands between Ballygomartin Road and Upper Whiterock Road and to the west (rear) of Moyard Parade and New Barnsley Crescent, Belfast Co. Antrim BT13 3QZ	Proposed development of new walking trails linking Black Mountain Shared Space Project building (approved under LA04/2022/0853/F) on the Ballygomartin Road with the Upper Whiterock Road and Moyard Parade. Proposal to include gated accesses, stockproof fencing, seated areas, information signage, landscaping and associated site works.	25-Nov-24	23-Jun-25	Under Consideration
9	LA04/2024/2024/RM	Major	Royal Ulster Agricultural Society, the Kings Hall, 488-516 Lisburn Road, Belfast, BT9 6GW	41no. retirement living apartments at Plot 6, parking and landscaping in accordance with outline planning permission LA04/2020/0845/O, seeking approval of layout, scale, appearance and landscaping details	18-Dec-24	16-Jul-25	Under Consideration
10	LA04/2024/2134/F	Major	Site of the former Dunmurry Cricket Club, Ashley Park, Dunmurry, Belfast BT17 0QQ, located north of 1-10 Ashley Park and south of 1-20 Areema Grove and Areema Drive, Dunmurry.	Mixed use scheme for new community recreational facilities, including basketball court, parkland and residential development comprising 37no social/affordable housing units with landscaping and associated works.	21-Dec-24	19-Jul-25	Under Consideration
11	LA04/2024/2145/F	Major	Lands at North Foreshore / Giant's Park Dargan Road, Belfast, BT3 9LZ	Creation of a new Adventure Park comprising a community / visitor hub building including café, creche, flexible exhibition / community space, ancillary office space and maintenance yard. Development includes community gardens, bmx track, crazy golf, dog park, walking/running/cycle paths, outdoor amphitheatre, bio diversity zones, and recreational facilities. Associated landscaping and infrastructure (drainage, lighting, car / coach parking, WC block etc).	15-Jan-25	13-Aug-25	Under Consideration
12	LA04/2025/0012/F	Major	Lands at the Waterworks Park, located off the Cavehill Road; and lands at Alexandra Park, located between Castleton Gardens and Deacon Street; extending along Castleton Gardens and Camberwell Terrace to the road junction approximately 30 metres to the north west of 347 Antrim Road, Belfast, BT15 2HF	<p>Refurbishment and safety work to the Waterworks upper and lower reservoirs, and Alexandra Park Lake reservoir, to be complemented with wider environmental, landscape and connectivity improvements.</p> <p>The reservoir works comprise of a new overflow structure with reinforcement and protection of the return embankment parallel to the by-wash channel at Waterworks Upper reservoir. Repairs to the upstream face of Waterworks Lower reservoir with the addition of wetland planting to reduce the overall capacity of the reservoir. Removal of an existing parapet wall and embankment reinforcement at the Alexandra Park Lake reservoir.</p> <p>Improvements at Waterworks Park comprise the demolition of the existing Waterworks Bothy and replacement with a new building to include public toilets, Changing facilities, multi-purpose community room and kitchenette. Extension to existing Cavehill Road gatehouse building. Entrance improvements, new events space including multipurpose decking; resurfacing of footways; new pedestrian lighting along key routes; a dog park; replacement platforms and viewing area. New 3-on-3 basketball court; replacement surface to existing small sided 3G pitch; and upgrades to existing Queen Mary's playground.</p> <p>Improvements at Alexandra Park include the resurfacing of footways; new pedestrian lighting along key routes; new reinforced grass event space; new lake viewing area; new public toilets and changing places; entrance improvements. 2no existing bridges replaced; new pedestrian entrance; reimagined peace wall; new multi-sport synthetic surface with cover; and upgrades to existing play parks.</p> <p>Streetscape improvements along Camberwell Terrace and Castleton Gardens include resurfacing of footways with new kerbs; resurfaced carriageways and new tactile paving at pedestrian crossings; and all associated works.</p>	20-Dec-24	18-Jul-25	Under Consideration

13	LA04/2025/0088/F	Major	Lands adjacent and south west of Monagh By-pass, north west of Nos. 17, 19 and 22 Black Ridge Gardens and c.150 metres south east of Nos. 38 to 70 (evens) Black Ridge View (part of the wider Glenmona mixed-use development), Belfast	Proposed mixed use development (in lieu of the previously approved employment zone under LA04/2020/0804/F) comprising a three storey building of 36 no. Category 1 (over 55's) social housing apartments and 7 no. single storey Class B1/B2 Business/Light Industrial Units. Development includes 2 no. access points, car parking, landscaping and all associated site works	17-Feb-25	15-Sep-25	Under Consideration
14	LA04/2025/0184/O	Major	38-52 Lisburn Road, Malone Lower, Belfast, BT9 6AA	Seven storey building (39.3m AOD) mixed use development comprising of Use Class B1 (c): Business, Research & Development and Use Class, D1: Community and Cultural Uses, including landscaping, parking, and servicing (Amended Description).	10-Feb-25	08-Sep-25	Under Consideration
15	LA04/2025/0574/F	Major	Surface level car park at lands to east of Lanyon Place Station Mays Meadow, Belfast, BT1 3NR	Erection of eight storey building comprising seven floors of grade A office accommodation, ground floor retail / business units together with car parking (15 no. spaces), cycle parking and plant areas: and public realm improvements including dedicated drop-off area to front of building	17-Apr-25	13-Nov-25	Under Consideration
16	LA04/2025/0974/F	Major	Site to the south of the former Knockbreda High School. Lands bounded by the A55 Upper Knockbreda Road to the south and south-east, Wynchurch Road to the north-east, Knockbreda Primary School to the north and Knockbreda Park to the west.	Development of a new primary school building for Forge Integrated Primary School. including development of a nursery unit, hard and soft play areas, landscaping, car parking, internal drop-off areas and new access arrangements onto the A55 Knockbreda Road via a new signalised junction; demolition of no. 138a Knockbreda Park and associated site works	04-Jun-25	31-Dec-25	Under Consideration
Page 209	LA04/2025/1272/F	Major	Harberton North Special School 29a Fortwilliam Park, Belfast, BT15 4AP	Erection of temporary mobile classroom village to facilitate future refurbishment and extension of existing Harberton North Special School, comprising 3 no. 2-storey blocks of temporary classroom accommodation, temporary hard play areas, temporary staff and visitor parking areas, tree removal and landscpaing.	31-Jul-25	13-Nov-25	Under Consideration
Page 209	LA04/2025/1525/F	Major	Units 2a and 2b 38 Boucher Road, Belfast, BT12 6HR	Removal of condition 9 of LA04/2024/0714/F (Removal of fuel storage tanks)	09-Sep-25	23-Dec-25	Under Consideration

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Planning Applications Discussed at Committee Between 01 Apr 2019 and 04 Nov 2025

Decision Description		Totals
		21
Application Withdrawn		
Consent Granted		2
Consent Refused		
Permission Granted		4
Permission Refused		2
Total		29

Application No.	Location	Proposal	Category	Date Valid	Statutory Target Date	Statutory Target Weeks	Current number of Weeks	Committee Date	Weeks between Valid date and Comm date	Weeks Since Committee	Previous New Non-statutory Target Date	New Non-statutory Target Date	Reason decision not issued
LA04/2022/2059/F <div>Page 571</div>	Lands south of 56 Highcain Drive Belfast BT13 3RU Site located at junction between Highcain Drive and Dunboyne Park Belfast.	Social Housing Development comprising of 12 no. 3p/2b semi-detached dwelling houses with incurtilage parking and associated site works. (amended description and site location plan)	LOC	04-Nov-22	17-Feb-23	15	157	29/06/2023	33	122	31/10/2025	31/12/2025	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement - land ownership issues on the applicant's side
LA04/2021/2016/F	21-29 Corporation Street & 18-24 Tomb Street Belfast.	Demolition of existing multi-storey car park and the erection of 298no. build for rent apartments (19 storey) including ground floor commercial unit (A1/A2), car/cycle parking provision along with associated development. (Further information received).	MAJ	26-Aug-21	24-Mar-22	30	219	16/01/2024	124	94	31/10/2025	30/11/2025	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement - wording of clauses and CoT finally agreed. S76 sent to applicant for signing

LA04/2024/0483/F	34-44 Bedford Street and 6 Clarence Street, Belfast	Proposed change of use from Office (B1) and restaurant (Sui Generis) to Hotel comprising of 88 no. bedrooms, two storey rooftop extension, restaurant and bar offerings, gym facilities, including new dormer windows on roof, internal and external refurbishment and alterations, and all associated site works.	MAJ	19-Mar-24	15-Oct-24	30	85	15/10/2024	30	55	Unknown	Unknown	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement - issues to be resolved on the applicant's side
LA04/2024/0480/DCA	34-44 Bedford Street and 6 Clarence Street, Belfast	Part demolition of existing buildings (stripping back of roof, shopfront and other external alterations to facilitate change of use and extension of buildings to hotel use.	LOC	29-Mar-24	12-Jul-24	15	84	15/10/2024	28	55	Unknown	Unknown	See above
LA04/2024/0369/F	Lands at Former Monarch Laundry site, and Broadway Hall Site, No's 451 - 457 Donegall Road, Belfast, BT12 6HD.	Proposed Specialist Nursing and Residential Care Facility comprising approximately 158 no. beds, day/dining rooms, treatment rooms, staff rooms, office/store rooms, including car parking provision, cycle parking, refuse storage, landscaping, and associated site and access works.	MAJ	08-Feb-24	05-Sep-24	30	91	12/11/2024	39	51	31/10/2025	Unknown	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement and new contamination issues - development commenced without planning permission and updated contaminated land survey submitted by applicant. Currently being reviewed by Environmental Health

LA04/2023/2557/F	Lands East of Meadowhill, North of Glencolin Court, North and East of Glencolin Rise, East of Glencolin Grove, North and West of Glen Road Rise, and North of Glen Road Grove. Belfast.	260 no. dwellings, children's play area and other ancillary and associated works.	MAJ	24-Feb-23	22-Sep-23	30	141	10/12/2024	93	47	Unknown	Unknown	Unable to agree terms of Section 76 agreement with applicant - specialist legal advice sought
LA04/2024/0626/F	1 Havelock House Havelock Place, Ormeau, Belfast, BT7 1EB .	Erection of 104no. social rented residential units (comprising a mix of General Social Housing and Category 1 over 55's accommodation) across two detached blocks [ranging between 3 and 5 storeys], landscaping, communal and private amenity space, ancillary cycle and car parking provision, and other associated site works	MAJ	17-Apr-24	13-Nov-24	30	81	18/03/2025	47	33	Unknown	30/11/2025	Holding direction issued by DfI in March 2025 released - Pre-Determination Hearing and reconsideration of application scheduled for November Committee
LA04/2024/0675/F	The Arches Centre 11-13 Bloomfield Avenue / 387-389 Newtownards Road, , Belfast, BT5 5AA	Change of Use of first and second floor to 39 No. apartments; extension to second floor for 6 No. apartments and erection of new third floor for 19 No. apartments (all social housing dwellings, 64 No. in total), and ancillary/associated works. Solar panels on roof (amended plans and description).	MAJ	13-May-24	09-Dec-24	30	77	15/04/2025	48	29	Unknown	07/11/2025	Awaited Section 76 Agreement - Certificate of Title outstanding from applicant for several months. Issue finally resolved, s76 agreement signed and decision to be issued

LA04/2024/0058/F	68 Fortwilliam Park, Belfast BT15 4AS	Demolition of existing 31 no. bed private nursing home and erection of 20 no. sheltered housing units (3 storey building) for the elderly; warden accommodation; communal facilities; landscaping; car parking and site works.	LOC	20-Dec-23	03-Apr-24	15	98	13/05/2025	72	25	31/10/2025	07/11/2025	Outstanding waste management issue finally resolved. Decision to be issued
LA04/2023/4543/F Page 234	885 Shore Road, Belfast, BT36 7DH	Proposed new changing pavilion, enhancing grounds entrances including turnstiles, ancillary facilities and upgrade to existing car park. Proposed 3G surfacing to existing grass pitch with flood lighting.	LOC	01-Feb-24	16-May-24	15	92	17/06/2025	71	20	Unknown	Unknown	DAERA NIEA recently provided its consultation response - advising that bat surveys required
LA04/2024/1036/F	Lands to the east of the River Lagan located between Lagan Gateway Phase 1 and Belvoir Park Forest, running adjacent to the west of Belvoir Park Golf Club and approximately 120 metres to the east of Newtownbreda Water Treatment Plant, Galwally Ave, Belfast BT8 7YA.	Lagan Gateway Phase 2 – Proposed greenway connection extending between Lagan Gateway Phase 1 at Annadale Embankment to Belvoir Forest Park. Comprising compacted gravel paths; a new elevated (4-5 meter high) timber boardwalk (approximately 85m long); landscaping works, new cycle stands, bollards, seats and bins; and all associated works	LOC	10-May-24	23-Aug-24	15	78	17/06/2025	57	20	31/10/2025	Unknown	Further information requested from applicant following request from DAERA NIEA

LA04/2024/0267/F	11 Friendly Way, Belfast, BT7 2DU	Change of Use from Dwelling to 6no bed/6person HMO (amended description)	LOC	15-Feb-24	30-May-24	15	90	17/06/2025	69	20	31/10/2025	30/11/2025	June Committee resolved to delegate authority to refuse, decision notice being finalised
LA04/2024/1592/F	Marlborough House at no. 28-32 Victoria Street, Belfast and no. 8 and 10-12 Marlborough Street; 11 Prince's Street and 2-4 Prince's Court, Belfast, BT1 3GG	Residential development comprising the demolition of no. 8 Marlborough Street, partial demolition of existing Marlborough House, and the refurbishment of existing Listed Building (Princes Court) (3 storeys), for the erection of 103 no. apartments (mix of 1-bed, 2-bed and 3 bed units) (8 storeys), with provision of private amenity, and internal and external communal amenity spaces; and associated site and infrastructure works. (amended description)	MAJ	20-Sep-24	18-Apr-25	30	59	17/06/2025	38	20			Permission Granted

LA04/2024/1761/RM	Land forming Plot 9 of the Kings Hall development as approved by LA04/2020/0845/O.	Application for approval of reserved matters application for a medical facility in accordance with outline planning permission LA04/2020/0845/O, seeking approval of layout, scale, appearance and landscaping details	MAJ	15-Oct-24	13-May-25	30	55	17/06/2025	35	20			Permission Granted
LA04/2025/0535/F	Lands West of Monagh By-Pass South of Upper Springfield Road & 30-34 Upper Springfield Road & West of Aitnamona Crescent & St Theresa's Primary School. North and East of 2-22 Old Brewery Lane, Glanaulin, 137-143a Glen Road & Airfield Heights & St Mary's CBG School Belfast	Variation of conditions 1, 2, ,3, 4 ,5, 11, 14, 17, 18, 19, 36, 37 and 41 of approval LA04/2023/2390/F and LA04/2020/0804/F to facilitate removal of 31 previously approved dwellings and retaining structure along northern boundary of site adjacent to Upper Springfield Road. Retention of existing sloping ground levels and landscaping at this location.	MAJ	27-May-25	23-Dec-25	30	23	17/06/2025	3	20	31/10/2025	30/11/2025	Awaiting final DFI Roads response and conclusion of S77 agreement (amendment to S76 agreement)

LA04/2024/2044/F	Lands at 39 Corporation Street, Belfast, BT1 3BA	Erection of 895 room Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) across 9-20 storey building blocks with communal facilities, internal and external communal amenity space including landscaped courtyard and roof terraces and ancillary accommodation. With additional use outside term time (no more than 50% of the rooms) as short-term let accommodation and (no more than 50% of the rooms) accommodation for use by further or higher education institutions	MAJ	05-Dec-24	03-Jul-25	30	48	12/08/2025	35	12			Permission Granted
LA04/2024/1654/F	432 Falls Road, Belfast, BT12 6EN	Change of use from a 7-bedroom dwelling house (C1) to a 7 bed/ 9 person House of Multiple Occupancy (Sui Generis)	LOC	21-Oct-24	03-Feb-25	15	54	12/08/2025	42	12	31/10/2025	30/11/2025	Preparing decision notice for issuing
LA04/2024/1865/O	Land between No 22 Squires View and Nos 57 & 59 Squires Hill Road, Belfast.	3no. detached dwellings part 2 storey part 3 storey (amended plans)	LOC	28-Oct-24	10-Feb-25	15	53	12/08/2025	41	12	31/10/2025	30/11/2025	Late objections received. Planning Service requested additional information from applicant in respect of land instability issue

LA04/2025/0122/F	Lands Between 14 and 16 Lancedean Road, Belfast, BT6 9QP	Demolition of 4 no garages and erection of 2 no. semi-detached dwellings, part 2 storey part 3 storey (amended description) (additional plans)	LOC	28-Jan-25	13-May-25	15	40	12/08/2025	28	12			Permission Refused
LA04/2024/2077/F	Adelaide Business Centre 2-6 Apollo Road, Belfast, BT12 6HP	Proposed change of use from office space (B1) and storage or distribution (B4) to Bowling Alley, Restaurant, Indoor Golf, Children's Soft Play, VR Zone & Amusements, Smoking Area, Car Parking and Associated Site Works. Proposal includes changes to elevations. (Amended Plans Received).	MAJ	29-Jan-25	27-Aug-25	30	40	12/08/2025	27	12	30/11/2025	30/12/2025	Late objection received from neighbouring premises. Officers working through issues. Application will need to be reported back to the Committee for reconsideration
LA04/2025/0311/A	Telegraph Building, 124-144 Royal Avenue, Belfast BT1 1DN	Street Art directly on facade of Donegall Street Elevation.	LOC	18-Apr-25	01-Aug-25	15	29	12/08/2025	16	12			Consent Granted
LA04/2024/1466/F	41 Rosetta Road, Belfast, BT6 0LR	Ground floor extension and alterations to provide 1 No. retail unit. Two storey rear extension. Rear dormer. Change of use of first & second floor level & part of ground floor level to 6 bed / 6 person HMO (amended description and plans).	LOC	30-Aug-24	13-Dec-24	15	62	12/08/2025	49	12			Permission Refused

LA04/2024/0948/F	Derelict lands at and to the rear of no.s 34-36 The Mount, Belfast, BT5 4NA	Redevelopment of listed buildings and lands to the rear for a residential development comprising 20no. townhouses and 6no. apartments with associated landscaping, parking and site works	LOC	03-Jun-24	16-Sep-24	15	74	16/09/2025	67	7	N/A	31/10/2025	Awaiting s76 agreement
LA04/2024/0955/LBC	34-36 The Mount, Belfast, BT5 4NA	Restoration of external features with a new rear projection to no. 34 The Mount and new partitioning walls in both buildings to facilitate use for 6no. apartments	LOC	03-Jun-24	16-Sep-24	15	74	16/09/2025	67	7	N/A	31/10/2025	Awaiting issuing
<div>Page 209</div> <div>LA04/2025/0607/F</div>	5 Squires Hill Road, Belfast, BT14 8FJ	Amendments to previously approved application(LA04/2023/4093/F). Proposal includes raising of ridge, fenestration changes to side and juliet balcony to front.	LOC	09-Apr-25	23-Jul-25	15	30	16/09/2025	22	7	31/10/2025	07/11/2025	Awaiting issuing
LA04/2025/0976/LBC	35-39 Royal Avenue, Belfast, BT1 1FD	Alterations to shopfront	LOC	19-Jun-25	02-Oct-25	15	20	16/09/2025	12	7			Consent Granted
LA04/2025/1140/F	35-39 Royal Avenue, Belfast, BT1 1FD	Alterations to shopfront	LOC	08-Jul-25	21-Oct-25	15	17	16/09/2025	10	7			Permission Granted

LA04/2025/0613/F	23 Everton Drive, Belfast, BT6 0LJ	Single storey rear extension with fenestration changes. Creation of new patio areas and garden studio. Attic conversion and the creation of a rear dormer. Partial demolition of existing side and rear elevations. Demolition of existing patio areas and shed. Removal of existing rear roof to facilitate attic conversion.	LOC	15-May-25	28-Aug-25	15	25	14/10/2025	21	3	N/A	07/11/2025	Awaiting issuing
<div>Page 280</div> <div>LA04/2022/0809/F</div>	"Lands to the south and west of Woodland Grange to the north of Blacks Gate and to the east of Moor Park Mews Belfast."	Amendments to approved schemes ref. Z/2008/0993/F (erection of 53 No. dwellings) & ref. Z/2013/0120/F (erection of 46 No. dwellings); to reduce overall density from 99 No. dwellings to 94 No. dwellings and associated and ancillary works.	MAJ	21-Apr-22	17-Nov-22	30	185	14/10/2025	181	3	N/A	30/11/2025	Awaiting resolution of issues identified by DfI Roads



Subject:	Consultation on Review of Planning Fees
Date:	21 st November 2025
Reporting Officer:	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control
Contact Officer:	Ed Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management)

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 40px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 									
<p>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) is consulting on its review of planning fees, namely the proposed introduction of fees for the following types of application:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-Material Changes • Discharges of Condition
1.2	DfI is also seeking views on whether any other application types, which are currently not charged for, should also attract a fee.
1.3	This report was noted by the Planning Committee at its 11 th November 2025 meeting. The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is asked to agree the Council's response to the consultation.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree to the Council's response to the consultation as set out in this report including the additional comments provided by the Planning Committee (summarised at paragraph 3.28).
3.0	Main report
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	Most planning applications submitted to the Council attract a planning fee, however, several application types currently do not, even though they can be quite time consuming and costly for the Council to process.
3.2	<p>DfI is proposing to introduce a flat rate planning fee of £115 for the following types of application, for which there is currently no charge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-Material Changes • Discharges of Condition
3.3	<p>In addition, the consultation is asking whether there are any other planning application types which are not currently charged for, but which should attract a fee, including but not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree Preservation Order • Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) • Pre-application discussions
3.4	The introduction of fees for applications for Non-Material Changes and Discharges of Condition would be made through amendments to the Planning (Fees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.

3.5

The public consultation opened on 1st October 2025 and closes on 23rd December 2025. A copy of the public consultation document is provided at **Appendix 1**. This committee report (if agreed) will be provided as the Council’s consultation response rather than completing the form as provided as all questions are addressed in the sections below.

Assessment

3.6

Belfast City Council is one of several NI councils that have advocated the introduction of planning fees for Non-Material Change (NMC) and Discharge of Condition (DOC) applications for many years. This is in the context of the not insignificant resources that councils expend on processing such applications each year.

3.7

DfI is proposing to introduce a flat rate fee of £115 for both application types, equivalent to the minimum fee charged for such applications in some UK jurisdictions. **Table 1** below shows the number of NMC and DOC applications that the Council has received over the last three years.

Application type	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
NMC	65	78	77	220
DOC	239	235	245	719
Total	304	313	322	939

Table 1: volume of NMC and DOC applications received by Belfast City Council

3.8

Table 2 below shows the income that would have been received by the Council over the last three years had the proposed fee of £115 been applied retrospectively. This would have amounted to around £36k per annum. However, this projection is caveated by the fact that the introduction of a fee for Discharge of Condition applications may result in more discharge of condition requests to be grouped under a single application, to save costs. This could result in fewer Discharge of Condition applications and lower overall fee income.

Application type	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
NMC	£7,475	£8,970	£8,855	£25,300
DOC	£27,485	£27,025	£28,175	£82,685
Total	£34,960	£35,995	£37,030	£107,985

Table 2: Projected fee income if the proposed fee of £115 was retrospectively applied

	<u>Non-Material Change applications</u>
3.9	Section 67 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (“the Act”) permits the Council to approve a “non-material change” to a planning permission to facilitate relatively minor and inconsequential amendments to an approved scheme. This dispenses with the requirement for applicants to submit a whole new planning application, therefore, saving time and costs for both applicants and the council. This provision also permits the imposition of new conditions as well as to remove or alter existing conditions. Where approved, the NMC amends the original planning permission; it does not create a new standalone permission.
3.10	There is no legal definition of a “non-material change”. Guidance is provided by DfI’s Development Management Practice Note 25: Non-Material Changes .
3.11	As shown in Table 1 above, the Council receives around 70 applications for Non-Material Changes each year. The complexity of the amendments proposed by NMC applications can vary considerably and can be time consuming for the Council to deal with, especially where the proposals relate to largescale Local and Major applications (depending on the scale and nature of the proposed changes). The Council is also responsible for processing applications for Non-Material Changes to regionally significant permissions granted by DfI. Therefore, the principle of a charge for NMC applications is welcomed.
3.12	<p>However, officers have the following concerns about the proposal to introduce a flat rate £115 fee for all NMC applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firstly, it is considered unreasonable and disproportionate that the fee to amend more complex applications, such as permissions for Major and large-scale Local proposals, is the same as the fee for amending a householder or minor applications. • Secondly, planning fees in NI should work towards increased cost recovery and a flat rate fee of £115 would not cover the Council’s costs in processing NMC applications. DfI acknowledges that further work should be undertaken by councils and DfI around increased cost recovery to inform more appropriate fees across the board.
3.13	Consideration should be given to separate rates for NMC applications for householder, Local and Major planning permissions, with an increasing scale of charges respectively, Alternatively, consideration could be given to the NMC fee being a percentage of the original application fee.

	<u>Discharge of Condition applications</u>
3.14	<p>Section 52 of the Act enables a council to impose conditions on a planning permission. Guidance on the use of condition is provided by DfI's Development Management Practice Note 20: Use of Planning Conditions. The Council may only impose a condition where it meets all of the six tests, namely that the condition is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. necessary; 2. related to planning; 3. relevant to the development permitted; 4. enforceable; 5. precise; and 6. reasonable in all other respects.
3.15	<p>Some conditions require submission and approval of further information to the Council before a specified trigger point being met, typically prior to commencement of development or occupation. This process is referred to as the “discharge of conditions”.</p>
3.16	<p>Examples include the submission and approval of the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • details of external materials (e.g. brick, stonework, render and roof tiles) • landscaping details (e.g. tree planting and boundary treatment) • a final remediation strategy to deal with contaminated land • details of the precise window specification to ensure appropriate sound-proofing if the development is next to a busy road or other noise source.
3.17	<p>As a general principle, the Council's Planning Service seeks to avoid the use of DOC conditions where possible by front-loading the submission of the information as part of the original application. This saves time and costs later down the line; however, this approach is not always possible as often the information will only be available – or the developer is only willing to provide it – post-decision once the planning permission is in place.</p>
3.18	<p>Like NMCs, DfI is proposing to introduce a flat-rate £115 fee for DOC applications.</p>
3.19	<p>Officers have similar concerns to the proposed flat-rate fee of £115 for NMC applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the charge for the DOC application is the same, irrespective of the scale and complexity of the development and nature of the conditions. For example, a

	<p>householder would pay the same fee for approval of external materials for a domestic extension as a developer would pay for the discharge of a series of complex conditions (such as land contamination, archaeology and drainage) associated with a Major development. This is considered unfair, particular as the proposed fee would represent a third (33%) of the original planning fee for a householder application. In comparison, for a largescale Major application, the fee might represent only 0.1% of the cost of the original application.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in a similar vein, it is proposed that the same fee applies irrespective of the number of conditions that require to be discharged; therefore, a DOC application to discharge a single condition on a householder permission would attract the same fee as a DOC application to discharge a dozen conditions relating to a complex Major permission. • in practice, the Council deals with very few DOC applications for Householder permissions and it would be more appropriate to waive the fee for such applications, with a higher charge rate proposed for discharging conditions associated with more complex proposals. • the flat rate fee of £115 would not cover the Council's actual costs in processing such applications and would not represent anywhere near cost recovery. • the DOC process often requires engagement with consultations for their expert technical advice, such as the Council's Environmental Health service or Government Departments such as DfI Roads, DfI Rivers, DfC HED and DAERA NIEA. This consultation process can be very involved and time consuming for consultees and the proposal does not address income for consultees to cover their staff costs in assessing the information and advising the Council on its suitability. Officers are of the clear view that a service should only be charged where a responsive and quality service is provided. The current fee proposal does not address consultee resources and would not speed up the DOC process. Informal feedback to the Council from agents is that applicants would generally be prepared to pay a higher fee if it would guarantee a quicker decision.
3.20	Similar to the NMC fee proposals, further work should be undertaken by councils and DfI around increased cost recovery to inform more appropriate fees for DOC applications.
3.21	Officers recommend that there should be no charge for DOC applications relating to householder permissions. A fee higher than £115 should be introduced for DOC applications for Local permissions (excluding householders) with a higher fee for Major applications. A fee should be introduced per condition rather than a flat rate fee irrespective

	<p>of the number of conditions. Correct adherence to the six tests for conditions (see par. 3.14) would ensure that the system is not abused with conditions unnecessarily added.</p> <p><u>Other application types</u></p>
3.22	<p>In addition, DfI is asking for views on whether fees should be introduced for the following application types, which are currently not charged.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) – the Council receives about 130 applications for works to trees each year. Officers are concerned that the introduction of a fee could deter tree owners from making such applications or to not undertake necessary tree maintenance works because of the cost of making an application. Therefore, it is recommended that there continues to be no fee payable for an application for works to a protected tree (i.e. a tree subject to a TPO or within a Conservation Area). • Proposal of Application Notices (PANs) – legislation requires applicants for Major development to submit a PAN to the Council that sets out the applicant’s proposals for Pre-Application Community Consultation. Councils have 21 days to assess the proposals, advising of any necessary further steps. There are both administrative and professional costs associated with the assessment of PAN applications and an appropriate flat-rate fee could be introduced to recover typical costs. • Pre-Application Discussions (PADs) – the Council already charges for PADs (as a discretionary service) and has been doing so since 2017. It similarly charges for Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) – a project management tool used to support the efficient and timely handling of more complex planning applications. BCC would not want to see standardisation of such costs across all councils as the resources attributed to such discussions and how each PAD is treated will be at the discretion of each Planning Authority.
3.23	<p>The DfI consultation also asks if there are any other application types that currently do not attract a planning fee for which councils recommend that charging is introduced. Officers advise that fees could also be introduced for the following application types:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EIA screening – where an applicant asks the Council to give a formal “screening” opinion as to whether a proposal is “Environmental Impact Assessment” (EIA) development. Applications for EIA development are required to be supported by an Environmental Statement and normally only relate to very large-scale and complex development proposals. The EIA screening process invariably involves engagement

	<p>with internal and external consultees and can be a complex and time-consuming technical process to complete.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EIA scoping – where it is accepted that a proposal is “EIA development” and the applicant asks the Council to give a formal “scoping” opinion as to the required content of the Environmental Statement that will accompany the planning application. Similarly, the EIA scoping process invariably involves engagement with internal and external consultees and can be a complex process. • Discharge of planning obligations contained in a Section 76 planning agreement (MDPA) – there is currently no charge for the Council assessing information required by a Section 76 planning application, such as the submission and approval of a Travel Plan, open space management plan or Employability and Skills Plan. It is similar to the process of discharging conditions and should be charged.
3.24	<p>Applications for Listed Building Consent and Conservation Area Consent (DCA) are historically not charged for in NI, England and Wales. Like applications for works to trees, it is assumed that the reason is not to deter applicants from making such important applications. Nevertheless, the processing of these applications does have costs implications for the Council. Further targeted consultation should take place with a range of stakeholders should DfI consider introducing planning fees for Listed Building Consent and Conservation Area Consent applications.</p> <p><u>Other matters</u></p>
3.25	<p>It is proposed that councils should be able, if they so wish, to set their own fees for Non-Material Change and Discharge of Condition applications. This recognises that the costs associated with the processing of such applications will vary from council to council, particularly for a large built-up urban area such as Belfast where issues such as land contamination are prevalent.</p>
3.26	<p>The Council would express its disappointment that DfI did not carry out any pre-consultation with councils ahead of publication of the consultation. As can be seen from this report, whilst the principle of charging for NMC and DOC applications is accepted, there are a range of concerns about the specific proposals and factors that will need to be considered. These could have been addressed, and more developed proposals consulted on, had there been prior engagement with councils and wider development industry (planning agents, architects and developers).</p>

3.27	For the reasons set out in this report, it is considered that the proposals to charge for NMC and DOC applications should be developed further before charging is introduced.
	<u>Consideration by the Planning Committee</u>
3.28	The Planning Committee noted the report at its 11 th November 2025 meeting. During the discussion there was particular support for the waiving of fees for Discharge of Condition applications for householder proposals. In addition, the Planning Committee agreed that DfI should be asked to consider increasing fees for retrospective applications, to act as a deterrent to those who may consider carrying out development or works without the necessary permission or consent. This could also lead to reduction in unauthorised development or works, reducing complaints and lessening the pressure on the Council's planning enforcement function.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.29	The NI Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee reports (2022) recognise the financial unsustainability of the NI planning system. Planning Authority costs typically outstrip planning income through planning fees by a significant margin. The introduction of charging for Non-Material Change and Discharge of Condition applications is welcomed in principle, however, the proposals do not represent actual cost recovery. Further work is required by councils and DfI, with input from consultees and the development industry, to refine the proposed charging model for these and all other application types.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.30	No adverse impacts have been identified.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – DfI public consultation document

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Department for

Infrastructure

An Roinn

Bonneagair

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PUBLIC CONSULTATION

REVIEW OF PLANNING FEES

Date: October 2025



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Responding to this consultation document

How to Respond

The Department for Infrastructure would like to invite views from the public and stakeholders on potential changes to The Planning (Fees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 as set out in this document.

Comments should reflect the structure of the document as far as possible with references to question numbers and paragraph numbers where relevant.

Responses can be submitted to the Department no later than 23 December 2025 in one of the following ways:

1. Where possible online via Citizen Space:

<https://consultations2.nidirect.gov.uk/dfi-1/public-consultation-review-of-planning-fees>

2. By e-mail to:

Legislation.planning@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

3. By post to:

Public Consultation
Review of The Planning (Fees) Regulations (NI) 2015
Regional Planning Governance and Legislation
3rd Floor, James House
2-4 Cromac Avenue
The Gasworks
Belfast
BT7 2JA

Copies in other languages and formats, (including Braille, large print etc.), can be made available on request. If it would assist you to access this document

in an alternative format or language other than English, please contact us using the e-mail or postal address below or by calling 0300 200 7830.

If you have any comments or complaints about the consultation process itself (rather than the content of this document), these should also be directed to the postal or e-mail addresses above.

Freedom of Information Act 2000 - Confidentiality of Responses

The Department may publish a summary of responses following the closing date for receipt of comments. Your response, and all other responses to this publication, may be disclosed on request and/or made available on the DfI website (redacted). The Department can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of responses as this will give you guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this publication.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) give the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Department in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this publication, including information about your identity, should be made public or treated as confidential. The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- The Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided.
- The Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties 'in confidence' which is not confidential in nature.

- Acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

The information you provide in your response, excluding personal information, may be published, or disclosed in accordance with FOIA or EIR. Any personal information you provide will be handled in accordance with the UK-GDPR and will not be published. If you want the non-personal information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please tell us why, but be aware that, under the FOIA or EIR, we cannot guarantee confidentiality.

For information regarding your personal data, please refer to the DfI Privacy Notice at www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/dfi-privacy.

For further details on confidentiality, the FOIA and the EIR please refer to www.ico.org.uk.

Impact Assessments

Government bodies are required to screen the impact of new policies and legislation against a wide range of criteria, including equality and human rights.

Equality Impact Assessment Screenings and an Initial Preliminary Regulatory Impact Assessment have been undertaken and are available to view or download from the Citizen Space web link or the Department's website at the link above.

The Department believes that there would be no differential impact in rural areas or on rural communities. It also considers that the proposals laid out in this document are fully compliant with the Human Rights Act 1998.

The Department welcomes views and comments on whether the conclusions contained in the above assessments are correct.

Introduction

Purpose of the consultation

- 1.1 This consultation invites views from the public and stakeholders on potential changes to The Planning (Fees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (the Fees Regulations). These potential changes focus on the introduction of set fees for non-material changes and discharge of conditions planning applications.
- 1.2 At the time of transfer of the planning functions to local government in April 2015, fees for application types such as non-material changes and discharge of conditions were not introduced as the Department at that time took the decision that the new two-tier planning system would need sufficient time to bed in before any new fees should be introduced.
- 1.3 This resulted in councils processing applications for non-material changes and discharge of conditions without any associated fee being payable.
- 1.4 In the 2022 Review of the Implementation of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 (RIPA) report, the Department considered there is merit in reviewing planning fee categories and the fees themselves to establish if they remain fit for purpose and cover the costs of processing applications in line with the requirements of Managing Public Money (NI). Part of this review is to consider the introduction of new fee categories for applications for non-material changes and discharge conditions.

Longer Term Cost Recovery

- 2.1 As part of the second phase of the planning improvement programme the Department, in collaboration with local government, is scoping the challenges and opportunities around increasing levels of cost recovery to support the longer-term financial sustainability of the planning system. This consultation aims to further gather evidence to help inform future proposals.

Question 1: From the list below, please select the category of respondent most appropriate to you:

Business and development interests ☐

Resident/Community groups/Voluntary organisations ☐

Environment and heritage groups ☐

Political party/Elected representative ☐

Council ☐

Statutory consultee ☐

Applicant ☐

Architect/Planning consultancy/Agent ☐

Other ☐

Please provide your organisation's name:

Non-Material Changes

- 3.1 The Planning Act (NI) 2011 (the 2011 Act) introduced a mechanism by which a council have a formal method of dealing with small changes ('non-material') to approved schemes (Section 67 and Regulation 7 of the Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (as amended) (the GDPO)). The introduction of the non-material change procedure under the 2011 Act replaced the otherwise informal process previously used to respond to requests for minor amendments.
- 3.2 An application for a non-material change removes the need for an entirely new planning application to be submitted where only a very small change is sought which does not materially change the nature of the approved development. Such an application, if approved, would form an amendment to the original planning permission and would be subject to the conditions and time limit of the original permission. It would not result in a new planning permission and the existing permission will continue to exist and should be read in conjunction with the non-material change decision letter.
- 3.3 There is no statutory definition of a non-material change. This is because it depends on a range of factors including the context of the overall scheme, the amendments being sought to the original permission and the site-specific circumstances, all of which can vary from one application to another.
- 3.4 Discretion rests with a council as to whether the amendments constitute a non-material change to a planning permission within the scope of the original permission.

- 3.5 Councils in the North have been processing applications for non-material changes but have not been receiving any fee for this work. This has now become a useful mechanism in the planning process to manage minor changes to approved development proposals and in the published official Northern Ireland planning statistics April 2023 – March 2024 there have been 451 non-material change applications.
- 3.6 It has been common practice in the other jurisdictions to include a fee for non-material changes within their specific fee's regulations. This has been in place in Scotland, England and Wales for a significant number of years. Fees in other UK jurisdictions range from £115 to £298, with a reduced fee for householder applications in both England and Wales.
- 3.7 The current fee in England and Scotland of £298 and £238 would be considered a high level to introduce a first-time fee for a non-material change, which is by nature an application where only a very small change is sought, which does not materially change the nature of the approved development.

Proposal

In the public interest of recovering costs in the planning system the Department proposes to amend the current Planning Fees Regulations by introducing a set fee for non-material changes applications.

The Department is proposing to introduce a set fee of £115 for non-material changes applications.

The proposal is to introduce one set fee for non-material changes which will apply to each application for non-material changes and not for each individual change within that request. This will allow an applicant to apply for a number

of non-material changes in one request and only one fee would apply. This aligns with the position in the other jurisdictions.

Question 2: Do you agree with the above proposal to introduce a set fee for non-material changes applications?

Please respond: Yes / No

Please provide additional information in support of your answer:

Question 3: Do you agree with the above proposal to set the fee level at £115 for non-material changes applications?

Please respond: Yes / No

Please provide additional information in support of your answer:

Discharge Of Conditions

- 4.1 Article 12 of the GDPO allows for an application to be made to the council or, as the case maybe, the Department for any consent, agreement or approval required by a condition imposed on a grant of planning permission (other than an application for approval of reserved matters). The relevant planning authority shall give notice to the applicant of its decision on the application within a period of 8 weeks from the date when the application was received by the authority or such a longer period as may be agreed by the applicant and the council or, as the case may be, the Department in writing.
- 4.2 Councils in the North have been processing applications for discharge of conditions but have not been receiving any fee for this work. In the published official Northern Ireland planning statistics April 2023 – March 2024 there have been 1098 discharge of conditions applications.
- 4.3 It has been common practice in the other jurisdictions to include a fee for discharge of conditions within their specific fee regulations. This has been in place in Scotland, England and Wales for a number of years. Fees in the other jurisdictions range from £115 to £298, with a reduced fee for householder applications in both England and Wales.
- 4.4 No fee has currently been prescribed under the Fees Regulations for applications associated with the discharge of planning conditions.
- 4.5 Having considered the position in the other jurisdictions the Department will consult on introducing a fee of £115 for discharge of conditions. This is broadly in line with the fee in Scotland and Wales and will align with the proposal for non-material changes.

Proposal

In the public interest of recovering costs in the planning system the Department proposes to amend the current Planning Fees Regulations by introducing a set fee for discharge of conditions applications.

The Department is proposing to introduce a set fee of £115 for discharge of conditions applications.

A single fee of £115 will apply to each request made to a council or, as the case may be, the Department, for written confirmation of compliance with a condition or conditions attached to a grant of planning permission and will not be based on the number of conditions within each request. This aligns with the position in Scotland, England and Wales.

Question 4: Do you agree with the above proposal to introduce a set fee for discharge of conditions applications?

Please respond: Yes / No

Please provide additional information in support of your answer:

Question 5: Do you agree with the above proposal to set the fee level at £115 for discharge of conditions applications?

Please respond: Yes / No

Please provide additional information in support of your answer:

Question 6: Are there any other planning application types or planning services which are not currently charged for, but which in your view should attract a fee?

Tree Preservation Order ☐

Planning Advice Notice ☐

Pre-Application Discussion ☐

Other ☐

Please provide additional information in support of your answer:

Question 7: Are there any other planning application types or planning services for which the current fee level or structure is inappropriate / insufficient?

Please respond: Yes / No

Please provide evidence in support of your answer:

Question 8: Do you agree with proposals for planning fees to continue to be adjusted annually in line with inflation?

Please respond: Yes / No

Please provide evidence in support of your answer:

Question 9: Do you agree that the Bank of England CPI is the most appropriate index measure to use?

Please respond: Yes / No

Please provide evidence in support of your answer:



Subject:	Review of Building Control non-statutory charges
Date:	21 November 2025
Reporting Officer:	Kate Bentley - Director of Planning and Building Control
Contact Officer:	Ian Harper - Building Control 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 purpose of this report is to consider the review of charges for non-statutory functions delivered by Building Control. Part 11 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014

	allows the council to charge a fee for a service that is not a statutory provision that the council is required to provide to the person, providing the cost does not exceed the costs of the provision.
1.2	The charges of fees are in the line with the Corporate Pricing Framework, Financial Regulations and the Scheme of delegation.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the set of charges and fees for non-statutory services provided by Building Control. A list of the fees is detailed in Appendix 1. It is recommended that the additional fees come into effect from 1st April 2026, in line with the budget setting process and will be reviewed after 12 months.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Members will be aware that some fees for statutory services in Building Control are set by the Department of Finance others such as licensing are set through the Licensing Committee and referred to Strategic Policy and Resources. As part of the budget setting process officers are required to review charges and fees for services provided that are not part of the Council's statutory functions.
3.2	Building Control's management team reviewed all services provided and whether fees were charged and the reason why some services were provided with no chargeable fee.
3.3	A benchmarking exercise was carried out across all local councils in Northern Ireland and some councils in Scotland and England. In most cases councils charge for the non-statutory functions, whereas none have been charged in Belfast.
3.4	Following the benchmarking exercises, the fees for non-statutory services are proposed to be revised with the introduction of some charges and an increase in others, as set out below.
3.5	<p>Building Control currently charge a fee for the services below but would propose a fee increase.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Building Control service currently charges £30 for a property enquiry. This charge does not cover the cost for the provision of the service, based on an analysis of time spent by staff carrying out the service. Therefore, the proposal would be to increase the charge based on the hourly rate to carry out the task to £100 per single dwelling and £100 for a commercial property consisting of one unit.

3.6	<p>2. Building Control currently charge an administration fee of £50 for Building Regulation applications that are withdrawn, which would include fees charged for full plan applications and building notice applications. The service propose to introduce this charge to all application types which would include, Property Certificates, Property Enquiries, Licensing applications (Entertainment, Amusement, Cinema, Petroleum, Street Trading, Pavement Café and Road Closures).</p> <p>Building Control do not currently charge for the services below but would propose to introduce a fee.</p> <p>1. Copy certificates or confirmation of postal address. There is a significant increase in the demand for copy certificates. Taking into consideration the costs incurred the Service propose to introduce a charge of £50 for both services – copy certificates and confirmation of postal address. This is in line with the charges levied by other councils.</p> <p>2. Confirmation of completion letters prior to 1994. There is no requirement to provide documentation for applications made prior to 1994, however the service receives regular requests. This would fall within the parameters of a property enquiry, with a full search being required. Therefore, a new £100 charge is proposed to match the property enquiry fee.</p> <p>3. Building Control currently offer a pre-submission consultation service which provides advice and guidance prior to the submission of a Building Regulations application. This service is primarily offered to larger commercial projects, is currently free of charge, and takes time to administrate, review in advance, meet with the applicant and provide a response. The Service would receive on average approximately 30 applications per year. Based on the officer time required using the hourly rate for an administration officer and an average hourly rate for a Building Control Surveyor to provide professional technical advice a new charge of £170 per enquiry is proposed.</p> <p>4. Additional or replacement set of approved drawings. This request can take a substantial amount of staff time as there is the requirement to compare the new set of drawings submitted with the approved drawings held on file, check for an acceptable match, and if so, stamp each drawing and post out. Taking the requirements to deliver this service and officers time into consideration a new charge of £80 per request is proposed.</p>
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	<p>5. Provision of specification notes for Energy Performance Certificates. The requests for these are limited but the work entailed would fall into similar criteria for the charge for a property enquiry, therefore a new charge of £100 is proposed.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Based upon the suggested new fees or fee increases, an analysis of the number of applications and requests previously made, benchmarking other councils and assumptions made in relation to the levels of ongoing applications, a conservative increase of £20,000 has been added to the 2026-2027 estimates, subject to council approval of these proposed fee changes. This will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, to determine if application numbers are sustained given the changes in the charges and to evaluate the actual increase in income.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>There are no Equality or good relations implications from the increases in charges proposed. A rural assessment is not considered necessary.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached - List of fees</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 - Building Control - proposed changes to non-statutory charges</p>

APPENDIX 1

Building Control - proposed changes to non-statutory charges

Service	Current charge	New charge
Property enquiry single dwelling	£30.00	£100.00
Property enquiry commercial property for one unit	£30.00	£100.00
Copy certificate	£0.00	£50.00
Confirmation of postal address	£0.00	£50.00
Completion letter prior to 1994 single dwelling	£0.00	£100.00
Completion letter prior to 1994 commercial property for one unit	£0.00	£100.00
Pre-submission consultation	£0.00	£170.00
Additional or replacement approved drawings	£0.00	£80.00
Specification notes for EPC single dwelling	£0.00	£100.00
Specification notes for EPC commercial property for one unit	£0.00	£100.00

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Subject:	Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
Date:	21 November 2025
Reporting Officer:	Damien Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy
Contact Officer:	Jim Girvan, Operational Director Jamie Uprichard, Business Research and Development Manager Cate Taggart, Neighbourhood Services Manager Suzanne Gowling, Safer City Coordinator

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 40px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 									
<p>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To update the committee on the programme of work that council is delivering to support The Executive Office's (TEO) strategic framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG).
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the update on the wide range of work being delivered by council in support of TEO's strategic framework to EVAWG; and • Endorse the Women's Night Safety Charter, to support partner organisations with its promotion and roll-out to the hospitality and entertainment sector as part of TEO's strategic framework.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Policy Context</u></p> <p>What is Violence Against Women and Girls?</p> <p>Violence against women and girls is comprised of actions and the threat of actions including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. physical, sexual, psychological and emotional violence occurring in the family including children and young people (Domestic Abuse), in the general community, or in institutions, including coercive control and stalking 2. harmful sexual behaviour which is sexual behaviours expressed by children and young people that are inappropriate or abusive 3. sexual harassment, bullying, and intimidation in any public or private space 4. commercial and non-commercial sexual exploitation of women and girls, trafficking, child sexual abuse, so-called honour-based violence, including female genital mutilation, forced and child marriages, and so-called honour crimes 5. online and technology facilitated abuse [or gender-based violence] including cyberstalking, cyber flashing, sexual harassment, grooming for exploitation or abuse, image based sexual abuse and abuse through emerging technologies such as 'internet of things' devices 6. workplace sexual harassment ranging from sexual jokes or comments to unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favours and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature 7. financial abuse such as controlling a woman's or girl's access to their money, taking loans or credit cards in their name, or using their money without their permission 8. everyday harm caused by everyday misogyny, sexist jokes and language, and discrimination which contributes to an atmosphere in which the threat of violence, specific or general is consistently in women's minds.

3.2	<p>The Executive Office’s Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls</p> <p>In 2021, the Northern Ireland Executive directed that a Strategy to End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) be developed, and the Executive Office (TEO) is leading on this whole of government, whole of society approach.</p> <p><u>TEO led the development of a co-designed Strategic Framework</u> which sets the agenda for all of government and society to address the whole range of gender-based violence, abuse and harm which is disproportionately experienced by women and girls, and which is rooted in gender inequality. The framework is ambitious, long term, and wide reaching. The Vision is: <i>A changed society where women and girls are free from all forms of gender-based violence, abuse, and harm, including the attitudes, systems, and structural inequalities that cause them.</i> There are six outcomes organised under the four themes of 1) prevention; 2) protection and provision; 3) justice system; and 4) working better together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 1: Changed attitudes, behaviours and culture - Everyone in society understands what violence against women and girls is, including its root causes, and plays an active role in preventing it. • Outcome 2: Healthy, respectful relationships – Everyone in society is equipped and empowered to enjoy healthy, respectful relationships. • Outcome 3: Women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere – Organisations and institutions across government and society embed the prevention of violence against women and girls in all that they do, so that women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere. • Outcome 4: Quality frontline services, protection, and provision for victims and survivors of violence against women and girls – Provision of high-quality services for women and girls who are victims and survivors of violence against women and girls. • Outcome 5: A justice system which has the confidence of victims, survivors and the public in its ability to address violence against women and girls – In the context of violence against women and girls, a justice system that is trauma informed, considers the needs of people who come into contact with it, gives victims and survivors a voice and a place in the process, holds perpetrators to account, while challenging and supporting them to change and has the confidence of the public. • Outcome 6: All of government and society working better together to end violence against women and girls – A whole system approach with collaboration and cooperation by default across central and local government, statutory bodies, and with, within and between the community, voluntary, trade unions, employers, business and other sectors. <p>The council is supporting TEO with the implementation of its strategic framework for EVAWG. This works comprises several separate workstreams as set out in sections 3.3-3.5. In addition,</p>
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	the council is also delivering, supporting, endorsing or signposting a range of activities to support women's safety and the campaign to end violence against women and girls both internally and externally within the Belfast district. This work is detailed at section 3.6.
3.3	<p><u>Regional Change Fund</u></p> <p>The council administers a regional funding programme on behalf of TEO with eight specialist delivery organisations receiving a share of £1.2 million up to 31 March 2026. There is a possible uplift of £50-£75K per group to be complete in year (process not yet confirmed).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Action • NSPCC • Women's Aid • White Ribbon • WRDA • Nexus • Barnardo's • Relate NI
3.4	<p><u>Local Change Fund</u></p> <p>The council also administers a smaller grant programme (budget of £255,000) through the Central Grants Unit for projects which equip third sector groups in Belfast to achieve the prevention outcomes of the EVAWG Strategic Direction which are detailed below. Every project must contribute to changed attitudes behaviours and culture; and may contribute to the other two outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changed attitudes, behaviours and culture - Everyone in society understands what violence against women and girls is, including its root causes, and plays an active role in preventing it. 2. Healthy, respectful relationships – Everyone in society is equipped and empowered to enjoy healthy, respectful relationships. 3. Women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere – Organisations and institutions across government and society embed the prevention of violence against women and girls in all that they do, so that women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere. <p>The grants (which include three separate tiers – up to £5k, £15k and £25k) provide funding up to 31 March 2026 to support 27 local groups to deliver events, projects or programmes of activity aimed at EVAWG within the communities they support. At its meeting on 5 August, the People and Communities committee agreed the proposed approach to allocate any additional Momentum fund, Local Change Fund grant support and additional in-year allocations for the Regional Change Fund on the understanding of receiving further funding from TEO (demand £1,251,422 greatly exceeded the available budget). However, at the time of writing there has been no confirmation or letter of offer received from TEO.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Belfast Mobilisation Programme</u></p> <p>The Belfast Mobilisation Programme (budget of £110,000) enabled immediate and urgent action to raise awareness of the new EVAWG Strategy. This funding (agreed by People & Communities in December 2024) facilitated an expansion of existing good work by council and</p>

	<p>communities, in addition to new activity within the 2024/25 financial year. The diverse programme reached over 1,000 participants across 65 sessions with a number of extremely successful projects, including training for council officers and local community organisations; high profile area events; safety awareness sessions for women and girls; targeted training and support for people working in hostels or with female who are rough sleeping and a bystander conference for leaders in sport to explore how men can help end violence against women and girls. While this programme has been very successful, many of the participants were keen to continue their involvement. An evaluation of the programme to date notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 95% of respondents felt that participation had increased their knowledge of what violence against women and girls is. • 89% responded that the programme has given them a better understanding of the underlying causes of violence against women and girls; and • 91% feel that participation has increased their confidence about what they can do to help end violence against women and girls. <p>Given the success of council-led initiatives, TEO has indicated that it wishes to support an extension of the Momentum Programme for 2025/26. A Programme of activity is currently being developed and is expected to be brought to the People & Communities Committee for final approval as soon as possible once the Letter of Offer has been received from TEO.</p>
3.6	<p>Ending Violence Against Women and Girls is included as a priority within the council's 3-year Corporate Plan 2025-28. The Deputy Chief Executive and Strategic Director of Corporate Services, and Strategic Director of Place and Economy have both been appointed as champions for women's safety and EVAWG. The Council has been delivering, supporting, endorsing and signposting a range of activities to support women's safety and the campaign to end violence against women and girls. This includes a range of internal staff based training and external interventions amplifying the council's leadership role within the city, and is detailed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Onus Workplace Charter on Domestic Violence (Platinum level) this comprises a Workplace Policy on Domestic Violence and Abuse, associated network of trusted colleagues, regular trusted colleague training and support, and general awareness raising training, communications and signposting to additional support outside of work. • International 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign – this year the council's campaign begins on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (Tuesday 25 November) and ends on Human Rights Day (Wednesday 10 December). Corporate HR has organised a series of Raise Your Voice workshops, including one specifically for male colleagues. All sessions aim to promote allyship and support safer communities for everyone.

- **White Ribbon Pledge** – an annual commitment to Belfast being recognised as a Safe City and creating a safer society by challenging harmful behaviours, promoting equality and respect, and fostering a community where everyone feels safe and valued. The pledge is that “together we pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls”. The Lord Mayor, Chief Executive and Director of HR will sign the Charter on 2 December 2025.
- **Gender Action Plan** – the council’s 2024-27 Plan contains actions that supplement domestic violence training and awareness raising across the city, annual funding of the International Women’s Day rally and march in the city (organised by Reclaim the Agenda), and delivery of a partnership research project with Queen’s University to improve design of public spaces.
- **Onus Safe City Award** (assessed annually) – Domestic Abuse Policy and support for staff is integrated within a much wider cohesive and co-ordinated approach to addressing both domestic and sexual abuse and violence against women and girls across the Belfast City Council area.
- **Community Safety – 2025/26 Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership Action Plan** - Delivery of a range of specific projects and activity that addresses issues related to violence against women and girls, including but not limited to funding for Belfast Area Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnership Programme, additional Safer Neighbourhood Officer patrols, safety awareness classes within our community centres and funding for safer socialising kits which include bottle covers to prevent drink spiking.
- **Late Night Transport** - At September’s SP&R meeting, the committee agreed to provide funding to support a one-year pilot scheme extending hours for late-night transport in Belfast which will contribute towards reducing the potential for violence against women and girls on late night transport on their way home from socialising in the city centre.
- **Safer Socialising** - as part of EVAWG Foundational Action Plan, Hospitality Ulster have partnered with TEO, PSNI, SIA, Youth Work Alliance, Health and Social Care NI, Department of Justice, SOLACE, Translink, Tourism NI and the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland to establish a Safer Socialising Steering Group (SSSG), which will coordinate a range of NI-wide initiatives, including the rollout and oversight of the [Women’s Night Safe Charter](#). Members are asked if they are content to agree to endorse the Charter, which has been signed by 10 Councils across NI, to support its promotion and roll-out to the hospitality and entertainment sector as part of the TEO’s strategic framework.
- **Entertainment Licensing current work and Best Practice Signposting** – The Building Control Licensing team actively promote the ‘Ask for Angela’ initiative when engaging with hospitality premises that apply for or have an entertainments licence. This may include discussing the scheme with licensees and managers during renewal inspections and asking bar staff if they are aware of the scheme when during performance inspections are

	<p>being carried out at night. The SSSG are currently reviewing a range of safer socialising initiatives including 'Ask for Angela' which is led by HU in partnership with the PSNI. As soon as the group have finalised their recommendations, Building Control Licensing officers will proactively promote and signpost to any updated scheme. Under entertainments licensing the building control licensing team assess event management plans including the health and welfare and medical provisions proposed to keep people attending outdoor concert events safe, when often there is considered to be a high risk of harm and vulnerability due to drugs and alcohol, often particularly for young women and girls. Officers from the council's community safety and the alcohol enforcement team work in conjunction with licensing and event promoters and provide support to vulnerable people on the ground before, during and after outdoor concerts. For indoor nightclubs and dance music venues the licensing team references conditions within the safer dancing appendix of the council's Rules of Management for Indoor Places of Entertainment which have the aim of helping keep people attending indoor dance events safe from drink/drug related harm.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>TEO currently provides funding to enable council's management and administration of the Regional and Local Change Fund Projects to March 2026. As outlined in section 3.4, further in-year funding may be received from TEO to allocate additional Momentum fund, Local Change Fund grant support and additional in-year allocations for the Regional Change Fund. However, at the time of writing there has been no confirmation or letter of offer received from TEO. The Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership Action Plan is funded by the Joint Committee of the Department of Justice and the NI Policing Board. A number of workstreams have been incorporated within relevant corporate work programmes and utilise existing staff and resources. Specific funding has been allocated to the late-night transport pilot scheme.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The Executive Office's Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and Action Plan has been screened for Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Implications.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices - Documents Attached</p>
	<p>None</p>

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Subject:	Age Friendly Employer Pledge
Date:	21 November 2025
Reporting Officer:	Christine Sheridan, Director of Human Resources
Contact Officer:	Catherine Christy, Corporate HR Manager, Development

Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input type="checkbox"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 									
<p>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek agreement to a proposal that the Council signs up to the Age Friendly Employer Pledge.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider the contents of this report and agree to the Council signing up to the Age Friendly Employer Pledge.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	In 2012, Belfast City Council provided the initial leadership to explore Belfast becoming an Age Friendly City and in May 2012, the Lord Mayor signed a declaration committing Belfast to this process by joining the World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities.
3.2	The Health Ageing Strategic Partnership (HASP) has been working collaboratively to ensure Belfast is an Age Friendly City. It is responsible for the development and implementation of the city's Age Friendly Plan on behalf of the Council and the wider community planning partners. In the third Age Friendly Plan 2023 – 2027 partners are focusing on four thematic areas to address infrastructure, social inclusion, health and well-being, and financial security for older people.
3.3	Age Friendly Belfast is a key workstream in the Belfast Agenda. It recognises our older population with its diverse range of abilities and needs, along with the contribution older people make to their families, their communities and the economy.
3.4	Members will be aware that the Reference Group on Older People, composed of elected members from each party group and chaired by Alderman S Copeland, has supported the development of the Age Friendly Belfast Plan which includes a commitment to promote Age Friendly employers within the city. The Council's Age Friendly Coordinator, who is also the lead officer on the Reference Group for Older People has asked that the Council considers adopting the Age Friendly Employer Pledge.
	Age Friendly Employer Pledge
3.5	The Age Friendly Employer Pledge is for employers who recognise the importance and value of older workers; are committed to improving work for people in their 50s and 60s (and beyond), and are prepared to take action to help them flourish in a multigenerational workforce. The Council currently has 1060 employees who are aged 50 and above – 42.9% of the workforce.
3.6	Currently over 450 employers have signed the pledge which includes other council's such as Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, Ards and North Down Borough Council, Manchester City Council and more. The Age Friendly Employer Pledge (see Appendix 1 for more information) is a nationwide programme for employers that:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a senior sponsor for age-inclusion in the workforce and publicly state their commitment to the pledge; • Ensure age is specifically named within their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies; • Take action to improve the recruitment, retention and development of workers over 50 from one of the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create an age friendly culture - Hire age positively - Be flexible about flexible working - Encourage career development at all ages –Ensure everyone has the health support they need
3.7	Members will be aware that the Council has in place flexible working opportunities for all staff which are regularly advertised, there is regular staff support, opportunities for training or e-learning sessions on interview skills and selection techniques and that a comprehensive Health & Wellbeing programme in place covering menopause, yoga, musculoskeletal issues, addiction, stress awareness.
3.8	Signing the Pledge signifies that the Council will commit to take action in at least one of the above areas every year and report back to the Centre for Ageing Better.
3.9	The Director of Communications, Marketing and External Affairs has been nominated by CMT to be the Council's senior sponsor for age-inclusion in the workforce should this proposal be agreed by Committee.
3.10	<p>Financial and Resource Implications</p> <p>There are no financial implications to this report. Any costs associated with the Age Friendly Pledge will be met from existing budgets.</p>
3.11	<p>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</p> <p>Actions which would promote the inclusion of older people in employment would have a positive impact on equality and good relations within the city.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1-Age Friendly Pledge Information and Communications Pack.

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Thinking of becoming an Age-friendly Employer?

Page 329

Get the advantage.
Be age friendly.

 Centre for
Ageing Better

Age-friendly
Employer
Pledge



Promoting the value of older workers

The Centre for Ageing Better is calling on employers to pledge to become more age friendly.

The job market is changing and employers are facing huge challenges. There are skills and labour shortages with vacancy rates at record highs. Workers in their 50s and 60s are key to filling these gaps. Yet employers are missing out on all that older workers can offer.

More people are working later in life, but older workers often face prejudice and are overlooked.

Employment rates drop after the age of 55, and over half of people have stopped working before state pension age. But we know multigenerational workforces drive productivity and innovation.

Download this pack
as a PowerPoint



Top tip

Know your numbers: analyse your workforce data by age



£6.6bn

The skills and labour shortage is costing UK businesses up to £6.6 billion annually





**Multigenerational
workforces drive
productivity and
innovation**

Who's the pledge for?

The Age-friendly Employer Pledge is a nationwide programme for employers who:

- ✓ **recognise** the importance and value of older workers
- ✓ are **committed** to improving work for people in their 50s and 60s (and beyond)
- ✓ are prepared to **take action** to help them flourish in a multigenerational workforce



Top tip

Provide career guidance in mid-life and beyond, including retirement planning



The pledge

As an Age-friendly Employer, we will...

1

Identify a **senior sponsor for age-inclusion** in our workforce – and publicly state our commitment to the pledge

2

Ensure age is specifically named within our **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies**

3

Take action to improve the recruitment, retention and development of workers over 50 from one of the following areas:

- ✓ Create an age-friendly culture
- ✓ Hire age-positively
- ✓ Be flexible about flexible working
- ✓ Encourage career development at all ages
- ✓ Ensure everyone has the health support they need

We will commit to take action in at least one area every year and will report back on our activities and achievements annually.

“

Saga – supporting 'Generation Experience'

Jane Storm, Chief People Officer, explains the changes Saga is making, from flexible working to age-inclusion forums.

We take care with the wording we use in recruitment, avoiding language such as 'energetic' or 'graduate', which could introduce an age bias.

We look to offer flexibility in hours and location, recognising that this can be valuable to all.

And to gain insight from colleagues about what's working and where we could do better, we hold 'Age Inclusion Forums' – listening sessions on age – with members of our Executive Leadership Team.

“

Dave's voice – unretiring with Ipsos

Dave worked at Ipsos, an international market research organisation, for 11 years before returning.

When Dave decided that he wanted to retire from work after going part-time, Ipsos supported the transition.

But after a few months of retirement, Dave realised he missed the travel and working with people of all ages.

Since then, Dave has been involved in mentoring a group of colleagues under 25 with their training qualification.

With the support of Ipsos, Dave has been able to 'give back' after years of training, development and progression.

Where do we start?

Becoming an Age-friendly Employer is a journey.

By signing the pledge, you are not committing to changing your whole organisation overnight. You are committing to take one action – big or small – every year, to improve the recruitment and retention of older workers.

Ageing Better will support your journey with a framework of suggested actions, webinars, and case studies of effective practice from employers like you.

Here are some suggestions for where you could get started...



Analyse your workforce data by age

If you want to know where you should start, your data will tell you where your biggest challenges are. Are older applicants less likely to get to interview? Are your staff in their 50s and 60s accessing training and development? What is your average age of exit? Your own data will give you a starting point for your journey.



Look at your job ads

Our research shows that making job ads more appealing to older workers does not deter younger workers. So avoid terms like 'recent graduate', and add a diversity statement that includes age-inclusivity.





Welcome flexible work for any reason

We know that flexibility is the key factor that attracts workers in their 50s and 60s, and it enables people to stay in work. Flexible work supports older workers with caring responsibilities and to manage their health – but it can also give space to get other things out of life. If a job can be done flexibly, it can be done flexibly by anyone.



Have open conversations about menopause at work

Menopause symptoms – and the inability to talk about them – push too many women out of work. Provide training to staff of all ages and genders about the effects of menopause and how they can be managed. Small adjustments can make a big difference.



Provide a holistic 'MOT' to staff in mid-life and beyond

Don't limit career development conversations to younger workers – and don't wait too long to talk about pensions. The mid-life MOT provides a framework for structured conversations with staff in their 40s, 50s and beyond about their future – at work, and after.

Looking for more advice on becoming age friendly?

[View our full framework](#)



Spreading the word

Getting buy-in from your colleagues to sign the pledge

Here are some key facts to help get your organisation on board:

Age-friendly employment benefits all of us. We all want to know that we will not be marginalised as we age.

Age-inclusion does not compete with other diversity efforts. Age-friendly policies – like flexible working, open conversations about health, and de-biasing recruitment processes – help everyone.

The Age-friendly Employer Pledge is a small, but tangible, commitment. Age-friendly Employers commit to taking just one action a year towards being more age friendly – and they can decide what that is.



Benefits of signing the pledge

- ✓ **Age-positive recruitment** means you draw on a wider pool of applicants for each job.
- ✓ Research shows multigenerational workforces drive **innovation and productivity**.
- ✓ Older workers can continue to **thrive and contribute** in your organisation.





What happens next?

1

If you're brand new to the pledge, you can get started here, by **registering your interest**. This does not commit you to the pledge, it tells us you want to hear more.

Register interest

2

Share this pack with your colleagues and other key stakeholders.

If you have any questions or need more information, then please get in contact with us at **employerpledge@ageing-better.org.uk**, and a member of the team will arrange a call with you.

3

When you're ready, you can formally **sign the pledge**. You will need to provide:

- The senior sponsor who will sign the pledge
- A designated person who we can follow up with
- Your corporate logo

You will then appear on our website as an employer that has signed the pledge.

Sign the pledge

Read our [Terms and Conditions](#)

4

You will then receive:

- A **communications pack** to help you spread the message including a logo that you can use on your website to publicise your commitment
- Regular newsletters with tips, guidance and inspiration
- Invitations to **peer calls and webinars**, to learn from employers like you and help you move forward on your age-friendly journey
- A **follow-up call** at six and twelve months to see how it's going – and for you to share the action you're taking.

About the Centre for Ageing Better

The Centre for Ageing Better is pioneering ways to make ageing better a reality for everyone, including challenging ageism and building an Age-friendly Movement, creating Age-friendly Employment and Age-friendly Homes.

We're a charitable foundation funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and part of the government's What Works Network.

Stay in touch

✉ ageing-better.org.uk/enews

🐦 @Ageing_Better

Sign up to the Age-friendly
Employer Pledge and show
you recognise the value of
older workers.

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Register your interest today

WELLBEING PLANNING

Jan - Dec 23
Mental health days
Physical activities
Football tournament
AS





Subject:	Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition
Date:	21 November 2025
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director, City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Deirdre Kelly, Programme Manager, City Regeneration & Development Marie Miller, Marketing Manager, City Regeneration & Development

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 purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Note the update on the Belfast Regeneration Place Based Growth Proposition, including the completion of the Business Case for Place-Based Investment which has been forwarded to UK Government for consideration. II. Note the update on ongoing strategic engagement with the UK Government in Westminster, and the Northern Ireland Executive. III. Approve attendance of Elected Members as set out in the report at the Scottish Cities Alliance roundtable, as part of advocacy and engagement activities to support the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition. IV. Note the continued role for Members in terms of political party engagement at local, MP and ministerial level.
3.0	Background
3.1	Members will recall that an update was brought to this Committee in April 2025 and the City Growth & Regeneration Committee in June and September 2025 on the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition and the development of a full five-part business case to underpin the ask. which sets out the case for enhanced regeneration funding in line with other UK cities, aligned to a clear growth proposition underpinned by regeneration priorities for the city.
3.2	As previously reported, the Place Based Growth Proposition sets out the compelling case for Belfast but notes that there are significant levers required for the city to realise it's growth potential. It notes that due to a combination of Regeneration and place based funds not being applicable to the devolved administrations, and Northern Ireland receiving relatively lower allocations from funds operating on a competitive basis, results in Northern Ireland having amongst the lowest spend on regeneration and local growth per head of population, compared to Scotland, Wales and English regions – nearly half the regional average spend per capita. This outcome is not reflective of the need for regeneration in Belfast relative to other cities in England, Scotland or Wales or Northern Ireland more broadly. Arguably the need is greater in a Northern Ireland context. A number of specific regeneration funds available in the rest of the UK have not been available in Northern Ireland which has led to a clear deficit and a missed opportunity for growth and positive economic, regeneration, social and environmental outcomes.

3.3	<p>The wider context for seeking enhanced powers and funding was outlined previously to the Committee. The English Devolution White Paper, published in December 2024, envisions a fundamental change of the relationship between Whitehall and local government in England – with the intent of tackling regional inequality by transferring authority and funding over key policy areas and funding, such as economic development, housing, planning, transport and skills. There is now a presumption in favour of devolution on foot of this White Paper and with the creation of new Strategic Authorities this means funding and legislative powers will be further devolved in other UK cities. The transfer of additional funding and power to these Strategic Authorities across the whole of England will allow Councils to set and deliver on priorities that better respond to local needs and drive growth. Increased funding pots and flexibilities are to be afforded to those Strategic Authorities that progress within the devolution framework, with single-pot integrated settlements over 30 years and access to consolidated funding pots covering local growth, place, housing, and regeneration, non-apprenticeship adult skills and transport. Strategic Authorities designated at the Established Mayoral level of devolution will receive Integrated Settlements. By way of example, West Midlands Combined Authority will receive £388.6m for 2025-26 and Greater Manchester will receive £630m for 2025/26. Other areas include the North East, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Liverpool City Region and Greater London Authority, where the process for determining the value of the integrated settlements has been published but not the funding allocations currently.</p>
3.4	<p>In addition, the spending review, June 2025, the Government set an ambition to deliver around 300,000 social and affordable homes through the new £39bn Social and Affordable Homes programme. At this stage it is uncertain if comparable funding will be allocated to the Devolved Administrations via the Barnett Formula, however it is understood that it will not. Homes England, the government’s housing and regeneration agency, has recently started working more closely with Combined Authorities which reflects Homes England remit to include a range of regeneration activities i.e. wider than just housing delivery. Between 2018 – 2023 Homes England has supported the development of 186,413 new homes, unlocked land with the capacity for a further 392,000 homes and invested £11.1bn. The recently announced Land Fund (BIL) which is a £1bn capital programme, is targeting unlocking 40,000 new homes and up to 200,000sqm employment floorspace.</p>
3.5	<p>Major regeneration schemes that are being funded by Homes England include a UK Government approved £121m funding package to bring forward new homes, public realm and commercial space at Forth Yards, a 50-acre water frontage brownfield site in Newcastle. Funding will allow for site remediation, ground works and infrastructure activity, fixing complex land issues in advance of procurement process to appoint a private sector delivery partner. The business case was developed by Homes England, working in partnership with Newcastle</p>

	<p>City Council, North East Mayoral Combined Authority and Network Rail. Homes England has also just announced a regeneration scheme they are supporting with Plymouth City Council and City College Plymouth with £18.4m grant funding from their BIL Fund which includes transforming the listed Civic Centre for residential use, alongside the College Campus. It is to pay for a programme of remediation work to bring the building to a point where residential units can be fitted out and delivered by a private developer. Additional funding for this wider regeneration scheme has come from other public sector sources including the Levelling Up Fund and Future High Streets Fund, as well as Council funding. The purpose of BIL funding is to deliver housing led brownfield infrastructure and land projects but is only available in England.</p>
3.6	<p>It is clear that Belfast is already facing a regeneration deficit in both powers and funding and could be left even further behind if there are not commensurate levels of funding as with other core cities. This could make it even harder for the city to attract the resources needed to unlock demand and growth.</p>
3.7	<p>The Growth Proposition seeks to secure regeneration funding for Belfast from UK Government and sets out asks for a Regeneration, Housing and Infrastructure Fund seeded by the Government focussed on potential priority areas to transform Belfast. It also seeks capacity (revenue) funding to further regeneration priorities, in line with similar funding received by the Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and Strategic Authorities in England. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Led, Mixed Use Regeneration including measures to address dereliction • Improved infrastructure, connectivity, public realm, place making, public and green spaces • Unlocking Major Regeneration Schemes
3.8	<p>Development of the Proposition has been informed through significant engagement with a range of cross-sector stakeholders and in line with the Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) Stocktake findings which received political and stakeholder endorsement.</p>
4.0	Main Report
4.1	<p>Belfast Business Case for Place-Based Investment</p> <p>As noted to Committee in April 2025, the Place Proposition was to be supported by a full five part business case. This is now completed and outlines the strategic, economic, commercial, financial and management case to support the request to Westminster. The business case sets out how BCC has spent the last 18 months laying the groundwork to develop the proposition and establish the conditions for successful delivery. This has included stakeholder engagement with elected representatives and business, investor and local communities, and</p>

	<p>builds on more than 10 years of wider community and stakeholder engagement through the Belfast Agenda and BCCRIS. The recommendations have been informed through previous engagement with Members, Belfast MPs, Executive Ministers and engagement with BCC officers, senior officials from DoF, DfI and DfC and representatives from local development, business and local communities to inform the priority areas, and to assist with quantifying the ask.</p>
4.2	<p>The business case includes a comprehensive evidence base to provide insight about Belfast's economic, demographic, housing, business, labour market and commercial property performance. The analysis recognises the city's strategic role within the wider region and its function as the capital city of Northern Ireland. The proposal builds on the success of the Belfast Region City Deal, and targets the city's legacy of physical regeneration challenges, and the wider 'regeneration deficit' that has seen Belfast struggle to match the power and dynamism of the English and Scottish Core Cities. This proposition sets out a compelling case for change and notes that unlike its peers, Belfast has lacked the means and resources to correct what could be seen as 'regeneration deficit'. Public spending on 'regeneration' has been about one half of its English counterparts, while decision-making remains fragmented and difficult. It notes that there are significant opportunities to be gained from an uplift in place-based regeneration and that this is best addressed by public-sector led investments which can provide the leadership and confidence to the private sector and strategic stakeholders. It outlines how BCC is seeking to equip itself with the ability and responsibilities to drive growth and investment in the city and is seeking to establish a new City Regeneration Fund (CRF) designed to drive catalytic change - focusing on people and city living, delivering active and sustained travel, developing green and climate resilient public realm, unlocking stalled major redevelopment schemes, addressing dereliction and vacancy and taking a multi-agency approach to place making and city management.</p>
4.3	<p>Critically, the proposition is based on an evidence-led understanding of market failures and a shared vision for the future. The business case highlights that the proposed areas of focus provide value for money and deliverability. Conservatively based economic analysis shows that the proposal will achieve a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of at least 1.5 (as assessed against MHCLG criteria and indicates that £1 public expenditure returns £1.50- £2 in benefits achieved). However, it notes HM Treasury has recognised that the current place-based appraisal approach inadequately captures the wider economic impacts associated with regeneration activity. Therefore, it suggests that this understates the dynamic impact that the Fund could have on the wider economy and anticipates long-term benefits will be transformational for the wider region.</p>

4.4	<p>The proposal builds on established systems and existing work streams undertaken by BCC and its partners. This includes the strong governance and administrative structures already in place, and a Regeneration Framework which can prioritise investments and activities. It proposes that the current governance structures in place to support the City Regeneration Fund provide a mechanism for supporting the CRF.</p>
4.5	<p>It recognises the incredibly difficult financial conditions across the United Kingdom but highlights that this proposal is about unleashing potential and growth and is a statement of intent for the future of the whole of Northern Ireland. It notes that our asks mirror arrangements in other parts of the country, and requests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A £250m City-Wide Infrastructure, Housing and Regeneration Fund - seeded by the UK Government and supported in the long term by greater business rates retention. This would be targeted on delivering housing led regeneration, green urban infrastructure and placemaking and unlocking strategic regeneration schemes. To address the 'regeneration deficit', we would ask that this be provided on the same basis as a City Deal, that is over and above the Northern Ireland Block Grant settlement. • £1m Capacity (revenue) funding per annum for three years – to provide the support needed to building house capacity .
4.6	<p>The Proposition, and the business case is premised as a Barnett Bypass. It will not affect the core settlement and highlights that Council are committed to working in partnership with the Executive if successful through a new model of collaboration. It is not seeking to “unpick” the current core settlement via Barnett but seeks to ensure that Belfast receives comparable funding to other UK cities on foot of recently announced funding of Strategic Mayoral Authorities via Home England regeneration funding. The Proposition and business case highlight that a successful Belfast is a successful Northern Ireland. This has been demonstrated via the Innovation & Inclusive Growth Commission, the BRCD and extensive economic analysis and empirical evidence. It is important to highlight that Belfast’s city region geography like Birmingham and Manchester’s, benefits from a central urban area with a higher density of economic activity. As such Belfast is highly attractive to knowledge based economic activity which is highly productive and which delivers prosperity and opportunity through the region</p>
4.7	<p>In order to develop the full model business case specimen projects were identified. Projects were identified on the fundamental basis of growth output. Given that the Proposition is predicated on delivering growth projects identified were on the basis that they were catalytic in nature and had the ability to deliver the expected growth. The Regeneration Framework as previously agreed by Committee assisted in drawing down on specimen projects for inclusion.</p>

	<p>This approach allows for some degree of agility to permit the inclusion of other schemes going forward if they can deliver similar economic growth outcomes. The specimen schemes included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Housing Led Regeneration Programme including BCC seed sites, wider viability support for housing-led regeneration, H.O.U.S.E (Homes over upper spaces for everyone, aimed at reactivating vacant spaces on upper floors for retrofit delivery) - Unlocking Major Developments including Tribeca, Waterside, Dunbar Street and the The Sixth - A Bolder Vision including Belfast Streets Ahead public realm, High Street Investment Fund, Under the Bridges, Inner North West Placemaking and Castle Street and Environs.
4.8	<p>As updated at PLCF in November, the Business Case has been recently completed and submitted to UK Government for consideration. This is in line with advice on the need to ensure the compelling case is with Government in advance of the Chancellors Budget Statement on 26 November 2025. It is recognised that this submission is in the backdrop of a time of fiscal constraint. The Mayoral Combined Authorities in England have however been successful in securing investment because they have built a clear growth story. The business case articulates Belfast's growth proposition.</p>
4.9	<p>Advocacy & Engagement</p> <p>Work has continued on engagement and advocacy activities to support the Proposition, including engagement with NI Executive and Westminster at official and political level. As noted to Committee in April 2025, a joint Ministerial meeting with Ministers for Finance, Economy, Infrastructure and Communities has now taken place. This meeting was held in late September 2025 and follows a meeting with the Minister for Finance in April 2025 which was facilitated by the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership. The feedback from Ministers was positive and noting the case for Belfast as the Regional Economic Driver.</p>
4.10	<p>As previously noted by the City Growth & Regeneration Committee engagement has included attendance at the Labour Party Annual Conference 2025. The conference took place in Liverpool from 28 September – 1 October 2025. This provided an opportunity to engage with key Labour MP's and officials, in pursuing the case for change as set out in the Place Based Growth Proposition.</p>
4.11	<p>Following submission of the Business Case to Government work on a wider communication and engagement plan, with supporting messaging documents aligned to the business case findings, is advancing. Continued support from Members in advocating for this Proposition,</p>

	notably through party political channels, will be very important to raise visibility for this Proposition within NI Executive and Westminster at local, MP / MLA and Ministerial level.
4.12	<p>Scottish Cities Alliance</p> <p>The Scottish Cities Alliance have issued an invitation for Council to participate in a roundtable discussion with city leaders from Scotland and Wales to discuss the English devolution white paper, and response from cities in devolved nations. The invitation is for the attendance of the Lord Mayor, and as Belfast City Council are the lead Authority for the BRCD the invite was extended to Council's nominated Elected Member who would Chair the BRCD Council Panel when BCC host meetings. It is understood that the Scottish Cities Alliance are considering inviting the other BRCD Councils.</p>
4.13	<p>The session will focus on how to respond to the pace and scale of English devolution to ensure city regions in the devolved nations remain competitive for investment and growth including best practice in demonstrating the strength of partnership working within existing and established governance models which can ensure the UK Industrial Strategy supports balanced growth across all nations and regions. It will consider how the devolved nations capitalise on their strong established brand to compete for investment alongside Mayoral Strategic Authorities at events such as UKREiiF as well as opportunities for collaboration across shared sectoral strengths. Political leaders from all eight Scottish cities will attend, Cardiff Capital Region have also indicated that their political leaders will attend. This event will take place on 21 January 2026 in London. Committee approval is sought for Elected Members attendance and travel.</p>
5.0	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
5.1	<p>Financial impact directly associated with the proposition and business case recommendations will be brought back to Committee in due course following consideration by UK Government.</p> <p>Costs including travel and subsistence for the Scottish Cities Alliance roundtable at the time of preparing the report for Committee are estimated at £500 per person.</p>
6.0	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
6.1	None associated with this report.
7.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	None



Subject:	Physical Programme Update
Date:	21 November 2025
Reporting Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Property & Projects
Contact Officer:	David Logan, Senior Programme Delivery Manager Shauna Murtagh, Portfolio Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 40px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	
<p>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="width: 70%;"> <p>After Committee Decision</p> <p>After Council Decision</p> <p>Sometime in the future</p> <p>Never</p> </div> <div style="width: 25%; text-align: center;"> <input style="width: 40px; height: 25px;" type="text"/> <input style="width: 40px; height: 25px;" type="text"/> <input style="width: 40px; height: 25px;" type="text"/> <input style="width: 40px; height: 25px;" type="text"/> </div> </div>	

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

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.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is requested to –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital Programme Movements - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ St George's Market – New Stalls – Note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £433,840 be allocated. ○ Open Spaces and Streetscene (OSS) Machinery Replacement Programme 2025/26 – Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> with a maximum allocation of up to £336,231. ○ Workshop Plant Replacement - Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> with a maximum allocation of up to £120,000. ○ Wilmont House H&S works – Agree that 'Wilmont House Health & Safety Works' is moved immediately to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> due to the condition of the building, 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 a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver. ○ Fernhill House H&S works – Agree that 'Fernhill House Health & Safety Works' is moved immediately to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> due to the condition of the building, 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 a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver. ○ Colin Active Travel (formerly Colin Greenway) – Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> 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 a contract to be awarded on

	<p>the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Depot Charging Scheme - Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at <i>Stage 1 – Emerging</i> to allow a business case to be developed.																								
3.0	<p>Main report</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p>																								
3.1	<p>Physical Programme</p> <p>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. The Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange a site visit to any projects that have been completed or are underway.</p>																								
3.2	<p><u>Capital Programme - Proposed Movements</u></p> <p>As outlined above 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:</p> <table><tr><th>Project</th><th>Overview</th><th>Stage movement</th></tr><tr><td>St George’s Market – New Stalls</td><td>Replacement of market stalls in St George’s Market.</td><td>Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £433,840</td></tr><tr><td>Open Spaces and Streetscene (OSS) Machinery Replacement Programme 2025/26</td><td>Rolling programme to replace grounds maintenance machinery which is beyond its lifespan.</td><td>Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £336,231</td></tr><tr><td>Workshop Plant Replacement</td><td>To replace workshop plant which exceeded 10 plus years and no longer fit for purpose.</td><td>Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £120,000</td></tr><tr><td>Wilmont House H&S Works</td><td>Remedial works to be carried out to ensure the building is made safe for further surveys to enable renovation works.</td><td>Move to Stage 3 – Committed</td></tr><tr><td>Fernhill House H&S Works</td><td>Remedial works to be carried out to ensure the building is made safe for further surveys to enable renovation works.</td><td>Move to Stage 3 – Committed</td></tr><tr><td>Colin Active Travel Phase 1 (formerly Colin Greenway)</td><td>Development of active travel routes within the Colin Area to connect residents to key services, amenities and employment opportunities.</td><td>Move to Stage 3 – Committed</td></tr><tr><td>Depot Charging Scheme</td><td>Improvements to electric vehicle (EV) charging provision on Council depots.</td><td>Add as Stage 1 – Emerging</td></tr></table>	Project	Overview	Stage movement	St George’s Market – New Stalls	Replacement of market stalls in St George’s Market.	Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £433,840	Open Spaces and Streetscene (OSS) Machinery Replacement Programme 2025/26	Rolling programme to replace grounds maintenance machinery which is beyond its lifespan.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £336,231	Workshop Plant Replacement	To replace workshop plant which exceeded 10 plus years and no longer fit for purpose.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £120,000	Wilmont House H&S Works	Remedial works to be carried out to ensure the building is made safe for further surveys to enable renovation works.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed	Fernhill House H&S Works	Remedial works to be carried out to ensure the building is made safe for further surveys to enable renovation works.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed	Colin Active Travel Phase 1 (formerly Colin Greenway)	Development of active travel routes within the Colin Area to connect residents to key services, amenities and employment opportunities.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed	Depot Charging Scheme	Improvements to electric vehicle (EV) charging provision on Council depots.	Add as Stage 1 – Emerging
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3.3	<p>St George’s Market – New Stalls</p> <p>Members will recall that in November 2024 this project was moved to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> and held at <i>Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk</i> pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return. It was also agreed that an update was to be brought back to Committee along with the final budget allocation and confirmation that this is within the</p>																								

	<p>affordability limits of the Council. This project involves the replacement of market stalls in St George's Market. The current stalls are over 18 years old and many are in a poor state of repair. Members are asked to note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £433,840 be allocated.</p>
3.4	<p>Open Spaces and Streetscene (OSS) Machinery Replacement Programme 2025/26</p> <p>This project was moved to the Capital Programme at Stage 2 – Uncommitted in September 2025, to replace grounds maintenance machinery to maintain service provision across the Council's estate. As per the three-stage approval process, the outline business case has been completed and the project can now progress to delivery stage. The list of machineries to be procured under the programme for 2025/26 is attached at Appendix 1. Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £336,231. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.</p>
3.5	<p>Workshop Plant Replacement</p> <p>This project was added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging in September 2025, with the aim to replace workshop plant which exceeded 10 plus years of working wear and tear and no longer fit for purpose. In order to meet the demands placed upon the service, these workshop plant and equipment need to be replaced immediately. This includes replacement of single girder overhead crane, GVC/ MOT roller brake tester and others. Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £120,000. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.</p>
3.6	<p>Wilmont House Health & Safety Works</p> <p>Members will recall that in November 2024, the Committee received a detailed update on Council heritage assets including Wilmont House and agreed that the project be added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging. The building current state of internal disrepair has meant only a visual inspection was conducted, mainly due to restriction of safe access around the internal areas. A high-level feasibility study for remedial works was carried out to ensure the building is made safe for further renovation works. A series of immediate health and safety works are required. Members are asked to agree that 'Wilmont House Health & Safety Works' is moved immediately to Stage 3 – Committed due to the condition of the building, 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 a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.</p>

3.7	<p>Fernhill House Health & Safety Works</p> <p>In November 2024, Members received a detailed update on Council heritage assets including Fernhill House and Courtyard and noted that both the main House and the Courtyard buildings are on HED's 'At Risk' register. In September 2025, the Council agreed that the £948k underspend be committed to Fernhill Capital Works. The project is currently in the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging and the business case is being developed. A high-level feasibility study for remedial works was carried out with evidence and recommendations required to proceed with essential “make safe” works that will allow safe access and future decision-making on the long-term use of Fernhill House. Implementing these initial stabilisation, health and safety works, we can secure the building for further evaluation and preserve the opportunity for longer term restoration of a property of both historic and cultural importance. Members are asked to agree that ‘Fernhill House Health & Safety Works’ is moved immediately to Stage 3 – Committed due to the condition of the building, 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 a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.</p>
3.8	<p>Colin Active Travel Phase 1 (formerly Colin Greenway)</p> <p>Members will recall that in November 2021 the ‘Colin Greenway’ project was moved to Stage 2 – Uncommitted under the Connectivity/ Access to the Hills theme. The project involves the development of active travel routes within the Colin Area to connect residents to key services, amenities and employment opportunities, including recent major public investments in amenities such as the Transport Hub, Belfast Rapid Transport (BRT) and Páirc Nua Chollann. The project aims to make walking/ cycling routes more direct to incentivise people to use them. The active travel routes identified will be delivered on a phased approach. The order of delivery will be agreed with DfI once designs have been completed. Members will note that the development of Active Travel Routes has broad support from several key stakeholders & partners including DfI, DfC, BCC, TEO Urban Villages Initiatives, NIHE, and the local community including Colin Neighbourhood Partnership (CNP). DfI have agreed to explore a partnership delivery with BCC by proposing to fully fund the active travel routes which form part of their Belfast Cycle Network. The proposal is for BCC to act as the lead delivery partner delivering the BCN routes within the Colin area. Members are asked to agree that this partnership project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed, 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</p>

	‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated with a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.
3.9	<p>Depot Charging Scheme</p> <p>In October 2025, the SP&R Committee has approved the submission of an application for funding under the Government’s Depot Charging System. The Depot Charging Scheme supports the uptake of zero emission HGVs, vans, and coaches by part-funding the installation of charging infrastructure at fleet depots. The scheme covers 75% of eligible costs incurred and 25% will be the Council’s counterpart. The project which aims to improve the EV charging on Council sites will support the fleet transition and overall decarbonisation of Council fleet. Members are asked to agree that the project is added to Stage 1 – Emerging to allow the business case to be developed and funding application to be submitted.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p><i>Financial Implications –</i></p> <p>St George’s Market – New Stalls – capital budget allocation of up to £433,840 in which £250,000 is profiled for 2025/26 and the remaining £183,840 for 2026/27.</p> <p>OSS Machinery Replacement Programme 2025/26 – capital allocation of up to £336,231.</p> <p>Workshop Plant Replacement – capital allocation of up to £120,000.</p> <p>The Director of Finance has confirmed that these are within the affordability limits of the Council.</p> <p><i>Resource Implications –</i> Officer time to deliver.</p>
3.11	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – OSS Machinery Replacement Programme 2025/26

OSS & Bereavement Services Machinery Replacement Programme

Year 2, 2025-2026

Year 2			
Quantity	Description	Indicative cost per unit	Total
4	Mid deck ride on rotary mower	£14,550.00	£58,200.00
3	Front deck ride on rotary mower	£26,500.00	£79,500.00
6	25hp mini tractor with front loader	£25,000.00	£150,000.00
1	Remote controlled bank mower	£28,531.00	£28,531.00
1	Zero turn mower	£20,000.00	£20,000.00
	Total		£336,231.00

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Subject:	Asset Management i) Barnett Demesne – Deed of Surrender and New Lease with Add Venture Northern Ireland Limited ii) Barnett Demesne – Deed of Surrender and New Lease with Belfast Activity Centre iii) Car Parking – New Agreement for existing ESB Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Points
Date:	21 st November 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

☐

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

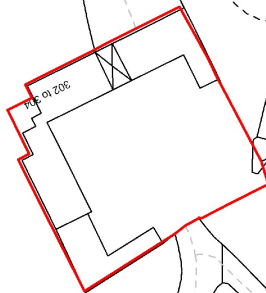
Never

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> X <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

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) Barnett Demesne – Deed of Surrender and New Lease with Add Venture Northern Ireland Limited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approve the Deed of Surrender and entering into a new 35-year lease with Add Venture Northern Ireland Limited. ii) Barnett Demesne - Deed of Surrender and New Lease with Belfast Activity Centre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approve the Deed of Surrender and entering into a new 35-year lease with Belfast Activity Centre. iii) Car Parking – New Agreement for existing ESB Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approve entering into rolling 12-month agreements with the ESB for the continued use of space for electric vehicle car charging points at Glenburn Road, Hope Street and Little Victoria Street Car Parks.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>i) Barnett Demesne – Deed of Surrender and New Lease with Add Venture Northern Ireland Limited</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Approval is sought to agree a Deed of Surrender of Add Venture Northern Ireland Limited's existing lease at Barnett Demesne and simultaneously entering into a new 35-year lease. Add Venture currently hold a 25-year Lease from November 2003, in which a premium in lieu of annual rent was paid. The current Lease terminates on 28th November 2028 and Add Venture, in conjunction with the Belfast Activity Centre, have secured funding to refurbish and improve the premises and have now requested that the current lease is surrendered, and a new 35-year lease is entered into. LPS have assessed the annual rent at £7,500 for the first 5 years which will then be reviewed every 5 years in line with the Retail Price Index. If approved, the lease will be for use as equipment storage, administrative offices, lecture rooms, outdoor activities centre and training rooms. Lands proposed to be leased to Add Venture Northern Ireland Limited outlined in appendix 1.</p>

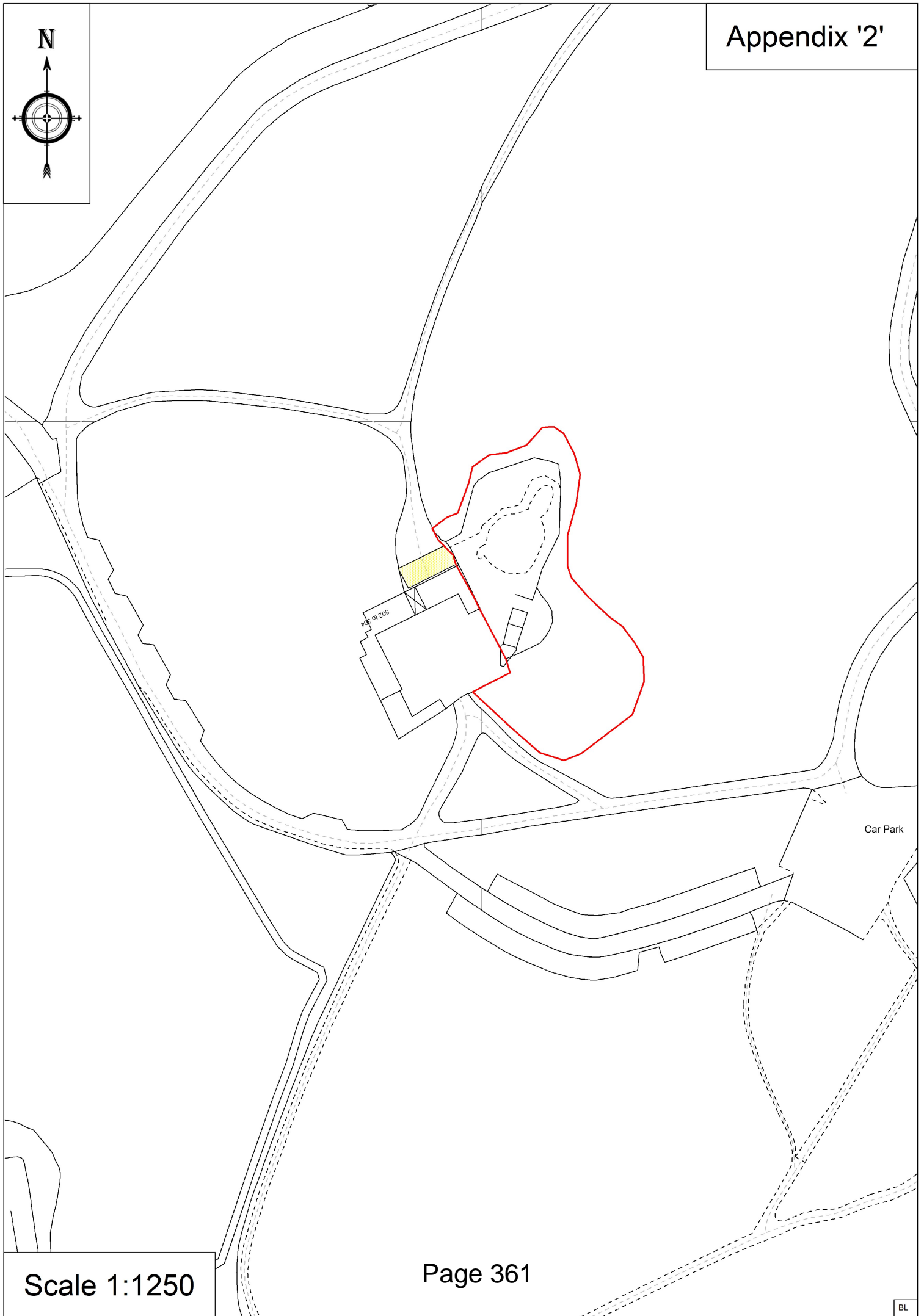
	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Council's Legal Services shall act on the instructions of the Estates Management Unit to agree terms. Council shall receive an annual rent of £7,500.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.2	<p>ii) Barnett Demesne – Deed of Surrender and New Lease with Belfast Activity Centre</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Approval is sought to agree a Deed of Surrender of Belfast Activity Centres (BAC) existing Lease at Barnett Demesne and simultaneously entering into a new 35-year lease. On the 6th July 2010, Belfast Activity Centre entered into a lease with council expiring on the 6th November 2028 to coincide with the expiry of the Lease with Add Venture. The initial rent was at a rent of £1,500 and has been reviewed in line with Retail Price Index up to today's date. The current Lease terminates on 28th November 2028 and BAC, in conjunction with Add Venture, have secured funding to refurbish and improve the premises and have now requested that the current Lease is surrendered, and a new 35-year lease is entered into. LPS have assessed the annual rent at £2,500 for the first 5 years which will then be reviewed every 5 years in line with the Retail Price Index. If approved, the lease will be for the use as an adventure centre. Lands proposed to be leased to Belfast Activity Centre are outlined in Appendix 2.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Council's Legal Services shall act on the instructions of the Estates Management Unit to agree terms. Council shall receive an annual rent of £2,500.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.3	<p>iii) Car Parking – New Agreement for existing ESB Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Points</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Approval is sought to enter into new agreements with the ESB for 22KW Electric Vehicle Charging Points at Glenburn Road, Hope Street Car Park and Little Victoria Street Car Park. Subject to members approval, it is proposed to enter into rolling 12-month agreements at a licence fee of £600 per charging unit per annum and will be backdated to April 2023. The licence fee shall be subject to annual uplifts in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) capped and collared at a 1-4% increase. The agreements will include a lift and shift clause to ensure operational flexibility and protect development potential of the car park.</p>

	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Council's Legal Services shall act on the instructions of the Estates Management Unit to agree terms. Council shall receive £600 per charging unit per annum for each agreement entered into.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – Map outlining the area to be included in the lease to Add Venture Northern Ireland Limited highlighted in red.</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Map outlining the area to be included in the lease to Belfast Activity Centre highlighted in red along with vehicular access route highlighted in yellow.</p>



Car Park

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Subject:	Contracts Update
Date:	21 November 2025
Reporting Officer:	Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Corporate Services
Contact Officer:	Noleen Bohill, Head of Commercial and Procurement Services

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 40px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 									
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After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
	<p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek approval from members for tenders, contract modifications to contract term and Single Tender Actions (STA) over £30,000

	<p>And to ask members to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note retrospective Single Tender Actions (STAs) and non-procurement expenditure • Note the update regarding STA and Contracts <£30k Reporting set out in Section 5.
2.0	Recommendations
	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1) • Approve the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2)
3.0	Competitive Tenders
	<p>Section 2.5 of the Scheme of Delegation states Chief Officers have delegated authority to authorise a contract for the procurement of goods, services or works over the statutory limit of £30,000 following a tender exercise where the council has approved the invitation to tender.</p> <p>Standing Order 60(a) states any contract that exceeds the statutory amount (currently £30,000) shall be made under the Corporate Seal. Under Standing Order 51(b) the Corporate Seal can only be affixed when there is a resolution of the Council.</p> <p>Standing Order 54 states that every contract shall comply with the relevant requirements of national and European legislation.</p> <p>The Committee is asked to approve the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1).</p>
4.0	Single Tender Actions (STAs)
	<p>The Council's current Single Tender Action (STA) process, which has been in place since 2020, provides assurance that the Council continues to comply with its obligations under the Procurement Act 2023 'the Act' and internal governance arrangements including required controls and approvals. It mirrors the Act setting out the exceptional and specific circumstances when a STA can be used (see STA/ Direct Award Reasons Table in Appendix 1).</p> <p>To support Officers understanding and to build capability, CPS offer support training and guidance on the STA process.</p> <p>In line with Standing Order 55 the Committee is asked to approve the award of the STAs in Appendix 1 (Table 2).</p>
5.0	Tender pipeline
	<p>To support transparency and assist supplier planning, Members should note that Future Tendering Opportunities are published annually on the Councils website. The next</p>

	<p>update is in November 2025 (website in the process of being updated) and will cover future tendering opportunities up to 31st March 2027: Tendering opportunities.</p> <p>Note: CPS consult with Departments to help populate this procurement pipeline and are reliant on Departments sharing their available procurement plans.</p>
6.0	Financial & Resource Implications
	The financial resources for these contracts are within approved corporate or departmental budgets.
7.0	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
	None
8.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table 1 - Competitive Tenders • Table 2 - Single Tender Actions

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Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Email filtering to remove spam and malware in emails	Up to 3 years	£150,000	S McNicholl	Without a filtering solution like this BCC would receive a large number of spam and malware emails. This would increase the risk of a cyber attack	N	N	N
Urban Meadows Creation Works – in relation to a Notice of Motion	Up to 1 year	£50,000	S Leonard	Required under a Notice of Motion to create 4 new urban meadows across the city	N	Y – P&C Oct 25	N
The repair, deployment, filling and storage of 20 beacons	Up to 36 months	£172,000	J Girvan	A supplier is required to carry out these works prior to the delivery of the annual Beacon programme on July 11th.	N	N	N
Fairground rides and entertainment package for events	Up to 4 years	£480,000	D Sales	Service required to support wide range of Council events held throughout the year. May also be used to support Fleadh requirements as well.	N	N	N
Provision of fuels; Diesel, Gas Oil, Kerosene & Ad Blue	Up to 3 years	£500,000	D Sales	Required to fuel various machines, plant items and buildings throughout the Council's estate	N	N	N
Collection, treatment and recycling of hard plastics	Up to 4 years	£650,000	D Sales	Service required to support recycling of hard plastics from household recycling centres by our waste management team.	N	N	N
Provision of Sharps Boxes Services	Up to 3 years	£90,000	D Sales	Specialist and suitable certified contractor to provide a sharp boxes service. Service includes supply of sharps/ needle boxes to designated street and parks locations and safe removal/ disposal of same.	N	N	N
Public protection software for the provision of a Case Management Solution for NI HMO.	Up to 3 years	£85,000	P Gribben	For the continued use of the current public protection software system for NI Housing of Multiple Occupation 'HMOs'. It is a regional service. BCC provide the service, collect all the fees and licence HMOs for all Councils in NI. All Councils have licences and access to the system.	N	N	N

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason	Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Pest control services across BCC sites	Up to 1 year	£80,000	N Largey	A STA is recommended with Termapest to regularise this off contract spend until insourcing project is complete. This is estimated to be completed within 6 to 12 months; STA to cover up to 12 months as open tender exercise will take up to 6 months to complete. No fixed term contract will be created with Termapest as part of this STA so spend with Termapest will cease once insourcing project is complete.	Termapest Ltd	11.	N	N
Support and maintenance of E-Bravo tendering solution	Up to 2 years	£111,146	S McNicholl	Annual license for the continued use of E-Bravo to support the Council's procurement teams and publishing tenders electronically. Exploring options about delivering through e5 financial system and their procurement module.	Bravo Solutions (Jaggaer)	3.	N	N
Tricostar Case Management solution	Up to 3 years	£46,304	P Gribben	The current system delivers functionality which is required in Legal Services to manage case files along with associated documents / correspondence. There is no other supplier who can offer the license and support requirements for this solution	Tricostar Software Ltd	3.	N	N

STA/ Direct Award Reasons

STA Number	Full description
1. Switching to a Direct Award	Switching to a Direct Award: No response or no suitable response following advertised procurement exercise.
2. Single Supplier for Art or Artistic Performance	Single Supplier for Art or Artistic Performance: the creation or acquisition of a unique work of art or artistic performance
3. Single Supplier Absence of Competition for Technical Reasons	Single Supplier Absence of Competition for Technical Reasons: only a particular supplier can supply the goods, services or works required and there are no reasonable alternatives to those goods, services or works
4. Single Supplier Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)	Single Supplier Intellectual Property Rights (IPR): only particular supplier can supply the goods, services or works required due to that particular supplier having IPR or other exclusive rights and there are no reasonable alternatives to those goods, services or works.
5. Urgency	Urgency: Where the goods, services or works to be supplied under the public contract are strictly necessary for reasons of extreme and unavoidable urgency which is not attributable to any act or omission of and could not have been foreseen by the council, and as a result the public contract cannot be awarded on the basis of a competitive tendering procedure using the reduced10 day period for 'urgent procurements'
6. Prototypes and Development	Prototypes and Development: the production of a prototype, or supply of other novel goods or services (i.e. goods or services designed or developed at the request of BCC), for the purpose of testing the suitability of the goods or services, researching the viability of producing or supplying the goods or services at scale and developing them for that purpose, or other research, experiment, study or development.
7. Additional or Repeat Goods Services or Works	Additional or Repeat Goods Services or Works: Extension or Partial Replacement concerns the supply of goods, services or works by the existing supplier (includes supplier that the council no longer has a contract with) which are intended as an extension to, or partial replacement of, existing goods, services or works in circumstances where a change in supplier would result in the council receiving goods, services or works that are different from, or incompatible with, the existing goods, services or works, and the difference or incompatibility would result in disproportionate technical difficulties in operation or maintenance.
8. Commodity	Commodity: Supplies quoted and purchased on a commodity market

Appendix 1

9. Advantageous time-limited	Advantageous time-limited: Supplies or services on particularly time-limited advantageous terms e.g. supplier winding up its business activities
10. Additional or Repeat Goods Services or Works	Additional or Repeat Goods Services or Works: Similar to Existing Goods Services or Works, concerns the supply of goods, services or works by the existing supplier (includes supplier that the councils no longer has a contract with) that are similar to existing goods, services or works where the existing goods, services or works were supplied under a public contract that was awarded following a competitive procedure within the period of five years ending with the day on which the transparency notice is published, and the tender notice or any tender document in respect of the earlier contract set out the Council's intention to carry out a subsequent procurement of similar goods, services or works in reliance on this direct award justification, and any other information specified in Section 95.
11. Other	Other: Reason not in line with Procurement Act 2023
12. To Protect Life	To Protect Life: where a Minister of the Crown has by Regulations provided that specified contracts may be awarded to protect human animal or plant life or health or protect public order or safety
13. Schedule 2– Exempted Contract	Schedule 2– Exempted Contract: Requirement not considered procurement spend but use of STA process to document and approve spend. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/54/schedule/2

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Subject:	Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 10 th November 2025
Date:	21 st November 2025
Reporting Officer:	Jim Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Godfrey McCartney, Good Relations Manager

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 									
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After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To report to committee on the key issues discussed at the Shared City Partnership meeting held on the 10 ^h November 2025.

2.0	Recommendation
2.1	That the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approve the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on the 10 th November, including:
2.2	<p><u>Presentation from Law Centre - Welcome Information Programme</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Shared City Partnership noted the presentation and recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the presentation.
2.3	<p><u>Presentation from International Organisation for Migration</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Shared City Partnership noted the presentation and recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the presentation.
2.4	<p><u>Update from Partnership Members</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updates from members are noted in the minutes for further information
2.5	<p><u>Good Relations Verbal Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Shared City Partnership agreed to note the update and recommends to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee that they also agree and note the and agree the verbal update recorded in the minutes.
2.6	<p><u>PEACEPLUS – Secretariat Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report
2.7	<p><u>Peace Plus Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report
2.8	<p><u>Peace Plus Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members noted the contents of the report and agreed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extended delivery timeframe to 31 March 2028 for Lot 1 – Language and Cultural Access of the CCD5 Multiculturalism to Interculturalism project Morton Community Centre, as the initial location for a Welcome Hub and to consider nominations for the Civic Mentor element of the CCD2 – Community Connections project; and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources

	Committee agree the recommendations above and note the contents of the report.
2.9	Community Regeneration & Transformation Thematic Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report
2.10	<u>Any Other Business</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was no further business.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The Shared City Partnership is a Working Group of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee which consists of Elected members and representatives from various sectors across the city. The minutes from the Partnership are brought before the Committee for approval on a monthly basis.
3.2	<p>The key issues on the agenda at the 10th November 2025 meeting were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership Papers of the 6th October 2025 Presentation from Law Centre - Welcome Information Programme Presentation from International Organisation for Migration Update from Partnership Members Good Relations Verbal Update PEACEPLUS – Secretariat Update Peace Plus Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update Peace Plus Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update Community Regeneration & Transformation Thematic Update Any Other Business AOB
3.3	More details regarding the above issues and recommendations are included in the following minutes of the meeting attached in Appendix 1: Minutes of the Shared City Partnership from the 10 th November 2025, Appendix 2: Presentation from The Law Centre, Appendix 3: Presentation from IOM, Appendix 4: PeacePlus Performance Dashboard, Appendix 5: PeacePlus Risk Register, and Appendix 6: PeacePlus Community Connections Brief.

3.4	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>All financial implications are covered through existing budgets, and the Good Relations Action Plan is included in the current estimates process.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The recommendations of the Partnership are to promote the work of the Council in promoting good relations and will enhance equality and good relations impacts for the City of Belfast.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices - Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Minutes of the Shared City Partnership from the 10th November 2025</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Presentation from The Law Centre</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Presentation from IOM</p> <p>Appendix 4 – PeacePlus Performance Dashboard</p> <p>Appendix 5 – PeacePlus Risk Register</p> <p>Appendix 6 – PeacePlus Community Connections Brief</p>

SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

Monday 10th November, 2025

MEETING OF SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

Members present: Councillor J. Duffy (Chairperson);
and Councillors Abernethy and Lyons.

External Members: Mr. L. Gunn, NIHE;
Ms. J. Irwin, Community Relations Council;
Mr. W. Naeem, Interfaith Forum;
Ms. T. Mimna, Executive Office;
Ms. A. Roberts, Community and Voluntary Sector
Mr. G. Walker, Community and Voluntary Sector; and
Ms. A. M. White, British Red Cross.

In attendance: Mr. G. McCartney, Good Relations Manager
Ms. D. McKinney, PEACE Programme Manager;
Mr. D. Robinson, Acting Senior Good Relations Officer;
Ms. L. Dolan, Acting Senior Good Relations Officer;
Ms. E. Kennedy, Project Officer (Good Relations);
Ms. V. Postle, Project Officer (Good Relations); and
Mr. A. McMullan, Members' Services and Digital Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland, Councillors Ian McLaughlin and Smyth and Ms. Briega Arthurs.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 6th October were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 24th October.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Duffy Councillor Duffy, Ms. Roberts and Mr Wasif declared interests under Item 7, PEACEPLUS Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update, in that they were associated with organisations delivering projects under the Community Recovery Fund and the PEACEPLUS Programme. As the reports did not become subject to debate or discussion, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Schedule of Meetings 2026

The Partnership noted its schedule of meetings for 2026, as set out below:

- Monday 12th January at 1:30pm;
- Monday 9th February at 1:30pm;
- Monday 9th March at 1:30pm;
- Monday 13th April 1:30pm;
- Monday 11th May 1:30pm;
- Monday 8th June 1:30pm;
- Monday 10th August 1:30pm;
- Monday 7th September 1:30pm;
- Monday 5th October 1:30pm;
- Monday 9th November 1:30pm; and
- Monday 7th December 1:30pm.

Presentations

Presentation from Law Centre – Welcome Information Programme

Ms. Medbh Henry, Community Development Officer, Ms. Niamh Rowan, Community Engagement Officer, and Ms. Liz Griffith, Head of Migration Justice from Law Centre NI provided the Partnership with an overview of the Welcome Information Programme, a 12-month capacity building project funded by the Council.

Ms Rowan highlighted that the project had included an online survey to help identify community development needs in the city and to assess what further support organisations needed to advise and support asylum seekers.

She provided an update on the delivery of a three-tier training programme and the development of a knowledge and learning network to enhance the capacity of those organisations which provide advice and support services for asylum seekers, and to enable those organisations to include asylum seekers within their services

Ms Griffith reported that the project was also developing a user-friendly online map of services available to asylum seekers and refugees in Belfast.

The Partnership noted the information which had been provided and thanked Ms. Henry, Ms. Rowan and Ms Griffith for their presentation.

Presentation from International Organisation for Migration (IOM) - Place Based Community Asylum Support Link Advisors

Mr. Andrew Chisholm, Senior Project Associate/Northern Ireland Lead and Ms. Suzanne Mutasim, Project Associate/Case Worker from IOM presented the Partnership with an overview of the Asylum Link Advisor Project.

Mr. Chisholm reported that the objectives of the project were to provide asylum seekers in Belfast with a high-quality outreach and advice service and to provide ad-hoc second-tier

advice to external organisations, frontline staff and support workers in order to improve the support they could provide to asylum seekers.

Ms. Mutasim highlighted previous casework examples and IOM's signposting service to other agencies to assist asylum seekers with safeguarding concerns, rights and entitlements, accessing legal representation and dealing with refused claims.

Following questions by Members, Mr. Chisholm confirmed that the project's focus was on new arrivals, but that IOM were also able to help those who had already received refugee status. He also confirmed that referrals to the project could be made by community organisations or elected representatives.

The Chairperson thanked IOM for attending the meeting and the Partnership noted the information which had been provided.

Members' Verbal Update

Ms. Roberts reported that previously reported anti-social behaviour at East Belfast interfaces continued. She highlighted that, although it was a city-wide occurrence, a tailored approach for each area would be necessary to tackle this issue. She noted that the lack of resources available to confront the anti-social behaviour had caused frustration and division in communities and, as a result, the behaviour had on accession transformed into sectarian in nature.

The Chairperson noted the absence of the PSNI representative at the meeting and reiterated the importance of their attendance.

Ms. White informed the Partnership that she would provide an overview on the work of the British Red Cross and the challenges the organisation faces at the next meeting.

The Chairperson reminded Members to submit any updates at least a week in advance of the Partnership meetings to allow them to be added to the agenda.

Noted.

Good Relations Verbal Update

The Good Relations Manager reported that Social Change Initiative was undertaking a pilot programme focusing on building the capacity and competence of women in the Unionist Community and that the organisation had expressed an interest in working with the Council to progress the initiative. He highlighted that a collaboration would align with BCC 8 Strategic Connections and would complement the Council's work on capacity building within communities in relation to understanding migration issues and promoting better understanding and relations between all communities.

He suggested that the Council develop a pilot proposal to progress the programme in conjunction with Social Change Initiative with an update to be provided at the Partnerships' December meeting.

The Good Relations Manager advised that Rubiconn were finalising some engagements regarding the Good Relations Strategy and Action Plan and that some detail, in draft form, had been received from them. He suggested that a half-day session be arranged for the Partnership to consider the Strategy and its recommendations.

He reported that the Executive Office had indicated that additional funding for Asylum Dispersal would be allocated to Councils this year and that a long-term proposal for its use would be brought to the Partnership's December meeting.

He advised that he would schedule presentations to the Partnership from a number of groups including Reconnected Belfast PEACEPLUS Programme, The Fleadh Belfast 2026, City of Sanctuary, Community Regeneration and Transformation Team, and PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan Contracted Delivery Agents.

The partnership noted the update and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also note the update.

PEACEPLUS - Secretariat Update

The Partnership considered the following report:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide Shared City Partnership members with an update on the mobilisation of PEACEPLUS Belfast Local Community Action Plan (LCAP).

2.0 Recommendations

Members are requested to note the contents of the report; and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also note the content of the report.

3.0 Main report

3.1 The Secretariat report combines both the mobilisation and processes update for the PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan. Progress on the implementation of projects is outlined in the Thematic reports.

3.2 Mobilisation

Mobilisation is now focusing on both the capital and animation elements of the Community Regeneration & Transformation theme, and the Multiculturalism to Interculturalism Lot 1 project.

3.3 Programme Extension

An extended Letter of Offer (LoO) to 30 September 2028 has been received and accepted. Members are reminded that project activity is to end March/April 2028 with programme closure in May/June 2028. As required by SEUPB, the final period (July-September 2028) relates solely to the Financial Controller aspect.

3.4 Contract Awards and Procurement

The contract for delivery of the CCD 4 Ex Politically motivated prisoners project has now been awarded to Coiste.

The re-tender for delivery of the CCD5 Lot 1 Multiculturalism to Interculturalism opened on 24 October 2025.

3.5 Financial Controller

The Application for Approbation to appoint an External Controller has been submitted to KPMG and is progressing to SEUPB.

Members should note KPMG will invoice actual hours incurred for the verification of each claim. As such payments per claim may vary, however overall costs will be up to the maximum contract value of the agreed £162,395.

3.6 Finance and Claims

PEACEPLUS claimable expenditure to 30 September 2025 is approx. £1.44m as outlined below:

Claim #	Salaries	O&A	External Expertise and Services	Total
1 – Jan to Mar 2024	£18,207.81	£2,731.17		£20,938.98
2 – Apr to Jun 2024	£25,957.06	£3,893.56		£29,850.62
3 – Jul to Sep 2024	£92,346.64	£13,852.00		£106,198.64
4 – Oct to Dec 2024	£123,671.08	£18,550.66		£142,221.74
5 – Jan to Mar 2025	£164,379.03	£24,656.85		£189,035.88
6 – Apr to Jun 2025	£175,895.86	£26,384.38	£184,266.89	£386,547.13
7 – July to Sept 2025	£165,500.18	£24,825.03	£378,654.10	£568,979.31
Total to date	£765,957.66	£114,893.65	£562,920.99	£1,443,772.30

Initial contract payments totalling £94,266.94 have been made to delivery partners for the CCD1 Interfaith and Belief and CCD2 Community Connections projects.

Preparation for the submission of claims on to SEUPB's JeMS system is progressing, with Claims 1-3 prepared. A phased approach to claims submission is being adopted to manage risk and the first claim will only be submitted once the Financial Controller is appointed.

3.7 Staffing

Róisín Erskine joined the team as Project Support Officer and will be supporting the PM's portfolio, with a thematic focus on the Community Regeneration and Transformation theme.

The recruitment process of the Project Officer resulted in no appointment. As such the recruitment exercise is to be reissued. Recruitment for the Monitoring and Data Analyst post opened on 10 October 2025, with interviews scheduled for 12 November 2025.

3.8 Monitoring and Evaluation System

Projects continue to progress towards achievement of their targets and evidence via the submission of data on the Monitoring and Evaluation System. As summary of participant data is as follows:

	To date:	Previously reported:	Variance since last report
Projects commenced adding participant data	10	10	=
Participants registered on the system	1371	1059	312
Participants achieved (unverified)	836	494	342

Further detail on the key achievements of the Programme to date are outlined in Appendix I Performance Dashboard

3.9 Governance

The Performance and Finance Steering Group (PFSG) has now been established. The focus of the steering group is to monitor performance and finance of the Programme, escalate issues and make recommendations to the Programme Board for action and reporting to the Shared City Partnership.

The first meeting was held on 29 September 2025 and key discussion points included:

- PFSG Terms of Reference
- Agreement of Standardised Agenda for future meetings
- M&E Update
- Finance Update

No issues or concerns were highlighted at this stage, and the PFSG meetings will progress quarterly.

3.9 Assurance Audit

The Partnership is advised that all requested documentation for the Assurance Audit has been submitted, and the audit is underway. It is anticipated that a draft audit report will be issued in November 2025. The audit report and recommendations will be reported through the PEACEPLUS Governance structure.

3.10 Risk Management

Members are reminded that the PEACEPLUS risk register is reviewed quarterly, as per Appendix II PEACEPLUS Programme Risk Register. No additional significant risks have been identified, and no risks have been escalated from individual project risk registers.

3.11 Financial and Resource Implications

All expenditure associated with the PEACEPLUS Action Plan is reimbursed by SEUPB and is eligible from 1 January 2024. As referenced at 3.6 above, PEACEPLUS claimable expenditure to 30 September 2025 is approx. £1.44m.

3.12 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

The PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan has been screened for equality, good relations and rural needs assessment, and has been screened out.

The Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update

The Peace Programmes Manager provided the Partnership with a progress update on projects within the Thriving and Peaceful Communities Theme of the PEACEPLUS Belfast Local Community Action Plan.

She reported that the launch of the Health and Wellbeing Project launched on 18th October and Ashton, the project's lead delivery partner, had confirmed that the indicative areas of interest outlined in the action plan and tender specification would be the delivery areas for the duration of the project. She advised that the project was running slightly behind schedule but assured the Partnership that it was progressing.

The Peace Programme Manager highlighted the Social Action Project under TPC3 Lot 2: 12-15 Year Olds (Intermediate) was underway delivering the priorities identified by the participants including addressing period poverty, homelessness and disadvantage which were aligned very closely to PEACEPLUS requirements.

She reported that the residential project under TPC3 Lot 3: 16-18 Year Olds (Seniors), which included 26 young people accompanied by four members of staff, had started today with their travel to Poland.

She advised the Partnership that the Project under TPC3 Lot 4: 19-25 Year Olds (Young Adults) had seen an increase in residential costs. She advised that the Council were liaising with the lead delivery partner, GEMS NI, to consider options regarding the project targets and deliverables.

The Peace Programme Manager brought to the Partnership's attention the shortfall in participant retention and achievement of the required contact hours in the TCP 5 Employability Language Up project. She advised that the Council had been engaging with the lead delivery partner to provide a revised implementation plan outlining how the project deliverables would be achieved.

Following a question from a Member, the Peace Programme Manager confirmed that the lead partner would look to realign targets into another phase and that tolerances in regard to participants achieving contact hours would also be considered.

The Partnership noted the report and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update

The Partnership considered the following report:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Shared City Partnership with a progress update on projects within the Celebrating Cultures and Diversity (CCD) Theme of the PEACEPLUS Belfast Local Community Action Plan (LCAP).

2.0 Recommendations

Members are requested to note the contents of the report and agree

- Extended delivery timeframe to 31 March 2028 for Lot 1 – Language and Cultural Access of the CCD5 Multiculturalism to Interculturalism project**
- Morton Community Centre, as the initial location for a Welcome Hub and to consider nominations for the Civic Mentor element of the CCD2 – Community Connections project**

and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agree the recommendations above and note the contents of the report.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Project Delivery

Projects are at various stages of implementation and an overview of project progress is outlined below.

CCD1 – Interfaith and Belief Lead Delivery Partner: Corrymeela Community Consortium Partners: Redeeming Our Communities, Belfast Islamic Centre, NI Inter-Faith Forum

Relationships with key faith & belief groups including: Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, Baha'i and Humanist continue to be developed.

Recruitment is ongoing across the three key streams. Three sessions have been delivered with 48 individuals expressing an interest, however only two participants have signed up to the steering groups, and further recruitment is ongoing.

Stream 1: The Reference Team continues to provide expertise on the development of the youth education resources.

Stream 2: Three Capacity Building sessions are planned for delivery

Stream 3: A pilot Interfaith Walking City Tour is being developed to take place on 9 November 2025.

Members are requested to note that the Delivery Partner has outlined that implementation is approximately one month behind schedule, due to delay in the staff and participant recruitment. The PEACEPLUS Project Manager is working closely with the Delivery Partner to bring the project on track.

The quarterly payment for the project is being processed.

3.3 CCD2 – Community Connections Lead Delivery Partner: GEMS NI

Consortium Partners: Business in the Community, Belfast City of Sanctuary, Diverse Youth NI, Migrant Centre NI, Ballynafeigh Community Development Association

Project set up and planning is ongoing with delivery to commence in October 2025. Following feedback from the mapping survey, participants in Strand 1 (Leadership and Mentoring) will work towards accreditation for a Level 2 Leadership and Team Skills. Recruitment is underway for Strand 1 and Strand 2 (Community Facilitators).

Recruitment of civic mentors is a critical element of Strand 1, to provide mentor support for participants from a minority ethnic background. The Delivery Partner is actively seeking nominations from political parties to participate in this mentoring element. It is anticipated that 6 civic mentors from the main political parties will take part in the project with a time commitment of 17.5 hours, minimum. Further detail on the mentoring opportunity is outlined in Appendix I Community Connections SCP Brief.

Members are requested to consider nominations for the civic mentors and submit nominations to the PEACEPLUS

team by 28 November 2025. Further options to encourage civic mentor recruitment would be welcome.

The project also includes the development of 3 Welcome Hubs in Council community spaces, providing a space for those new to Belfast to meet, make connections and to network with support organisations. The delivery partner has been liaising with relevant Council officers to identify suitable Hub locations.

The Programme Board considered options for the Welcome Hubs, and recommends that the Shared City Partnership agree, in principle, Morton Community Centre, as the initial location with a further report on other Welcome Hub locations once a full proposal is finalised.

3.4 CCD 3 – LGBTQIA+ Community Engagement Project - Lead Delivery Partner: The Rainbow Project Project Partners: Cara Friend, HERe NI

All project staff are now in post, and the first Project Steering Group took place in September 2025. Further recruitment for the Steering Group is ongoing to ensure increased diversity and representation.

Preparation for procurement of the Strategic Planning activity is progressing and initial scoping for the research strand and development of the comms strategy is ongoing. The project launch is being scheduled for November 2025.

As reported in October 2025, the project is approximately one month behind scheduled delivery and officers are working closely with the Delivery Partner to bring the project on track by December 2025.

3.5 CCD4 – Community Empowerment Ex Politically Motivated Prisoners

The contract for delivery of the project has been awarded to Coiste na nIarchimí and consortium members of Tar Anall, Action for Community Transformation, Charter NI, and Tar Isteach. The contract initiation phase is progressing with the initiation meeting taking place on 20 October 2025.

CCD5 From Multiculturalism to Interculturalism

3.6 Lot 1 – Language and Cultural Access

As reported in October 2025, the previous tender call did not result in contract award.

On considering options to mobilise the project, it was identified that an extended timeframe to enable delivery of

activity is required. The Programme Board considered the options and agreed an extended delivery timeframe to 31 March 2028, which is within the current LoO timeframe. The Partnership is requested to note and agree the extended timeframe.

To maximise the delivery period, the tender was re-issued at the end of October 2025.

3.7 Lot 2 – Cultural Spaces Lead Delivery Partner: MayWe

The contract initiation phase is progressing towards completion, with project planning being finalised.

The Partnership is requested to note that the cultural spaces that have confirmed participation are The MAC, Banana Block, Belfast Intercultural Romanian Community, Discover Ulster Scots, and An Chultúrlann. These cultural spaces meet the tender requirements and criteria for participation. The delivery partner is liaising with further cultural spaces to participate in the project.

3.8 Lot 3 – Festivals and Flagship Events Lead Delivery Partner: Féile an Phobail

The Phase 1 Project Initiation milestones are nearing completion, and an induction for the Mentoring Programme was scheduled for delivery late October 2025.

Members should note that 6 Flagship Events have been identified for delivery as part the Flagship Events Steering Group. Officers are currently considering the details, and a further report will be submitted in due course.

A public launch and media release for the Mentoring Programme, Flagship strand, and Capacity Building Programme has been rescheduled to November 2025.

3.9 Lot 4 – Culture and Shared Built Heritage Lead Delivery Partner: Arts Ekta

Project Partners: Cairde na Cille, Kabosh Theatre

Project activity is progressing ahead of schedule. Activity delivered over September 2025 included Friar's Bush animation and St George's Graveyard workshops as part of the Burial Traditions Programme. Delivery of the OCN Level 2 in Tour Guiding with Belfast Met has commenced.

Analysis of M&E shows 267 participants registered and 259 actively participating, of which 223 completed, across all project activities. 52 attitudinal surveys have been received to date with overall average positive response rate exceeding the 70% threshold required.

The Partnership is requested to note the themes to be delivered as part of the Civic Voices Theatre Programme.

- community-led restorative justice;
- alternative archive of LGBTQ+ life;
- heritage of working-class communities in East Belfast
- maritime heritage between Gdansk and Belfast
- life in a post-conflict society

This element is to be delivered by Kabosh Theatre, and further detail on the Theatre Programme is outlined in Appendix II Civic Voices Theatre Programme

3.10 Financial and Resource Implications

All expenditure associated with the PEACEPLUS Action Plan is eligible from 1 January 2024.

3.11 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

The PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan has been screened for equality, good relations and rural needs assessment, and has been screened out.

Appendix II - Civic Voices Theatre Programme (Lot 4 – Culture and Shared Built Heritage)

Cohort	Thematic outline	Performance Location	Show Date
New Lodge Arts (North)	This piece will explore the theme of community-led restorative justice, developed with input from Community Restorative Justice (CRJ) and inspired by interviews with local community leaders. Participants will examine how communities in Belfast historically responded to anti-social behaviour, and how those approaches have evolved in the transition from conflict to peace. By uncovering testimonies about the informal justice systems of the past — some of which were rooted in fear and punishment — participants will grapple with the legacy of distrust in formal policing and justice structures. They will then contrast this with contemporary restorative practices, which emphasise dialogue, accountability, and reconciliation. Through these explorations, the group will create a performance that provokes informed debate about the legacy of the past, the ongoing challenges of community safety, and the possibilities for justice rooted in empathy, responsibility, and repair.	Duncairn Arts Centre	30th October

Paperclips (City Centre)	This queer youth group will focus on creating an alternative archive of LGBTQ+ life in Belfast — mapping the “hidden city” of stories, bars, clubs, meeting places, and safe havens that have shaped queer identity across generations. The promenade performance will move through central Belfast, turning public spaces into stages that reveal both celebration and struggle. Participants will ask what it means to claim space in a city where queer stories have often been silenced or erased, and how theatre can act as a living archive. This strand will highlight resilience, creativity, and the importance of visibility.	City centre promenade	2nd November
Eastside Arts (East)	This strand will focus on the heritage of working-class communities in East Belfast, examining the resilience of families who built lives amid industrial hardship and social adversity. Participants will highlight stories of ordinary people — shipyard workers, mill workers, homemakers — who contributed to a strong sense of place, identity, and solidarity. Themes of sacrifice, generosity, and collective survival will anchor the narrative, with performances weaving together local voices, archival fragments, and intergenerational testimonies.	East Belfast promenade	15th March
Polish Sisterhood (South)	This strand will explore the shared maritime heritage between Gdansk and Belfast, two port cities shaped by shipbuilding, trade, and migration. Participants will examine stories of industrialisation and textile manufacturing, weaving these narratives with personal accounts of journeys to and from Belfast. Religion and ritual will serve as cultural touchstones, reflecting both the Catholic traditions of Poland and the Protestant and Catholic traditions of Belfast. The intergenerational nature of the group will allow parents and children to reflect together on the meaning of migration, belonging, and adaptation.	Belvoir Forest Park	14th June
Black Mountain Women’s Group (West)	Black Mountain looms as both a physical and symbolic presence in the west of the city. Historically a place of refuge, resilience, and division, it has shaped community identity in profound ways. This strand will focus on life in a post-conflict society — exploring how families rebuild, how memory is transmitted across generations, and how communities can find common ground in the shadow of political division. By situating the performance in the Black Mountain Community Garden, participants will draw on the symbolism of growth, renewal, and shared stewardship of the land.	Black Mountain Community Garden	28th June

After discussion the Good Relations Manager suggested that the various project leads be invited to a future meeting to update the Partnership on their progress.

The Partnership noted the contents of the report and agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it also note the contents of the report and approve the recommendations contained therein.

PEACEPLUS Community Regeneration and Transformation Thematic Update

The Partnership considered the following report:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Shared City Partnership with an update on delivery of the Community Regeneration and Transformation Theme of the PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan (LCAP).

2.0 Recommendations

Members are requested to note the contents of the report and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also note the contents of the report.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Community Regeneration and Transformation Implementation Update

As previously reported, design teams have been appointed for all 5 CRT projects and initial meetings with the designers, Steering Groups and stakeholders have taken place. Delivery timeframes for each project are currently being confirmed.

3.2 Pre-market engagement - Animation

A Pre-market engagement session for all animation projects took place on 7 October 2025. Some concerns were highlighted regarding the Annadale proposal and community engagement, steps to address the issues are being progressed.

Members are reminded that SEUPB agreed a phased approach for animation activity for pre, during and post construction stages. The procurement approach for each project is outlined below. Tender documentation is being prepared, although members should note that the issue of tenders and contracting dates are being reviewed to ensure alignment with the capital delivery timeframes.

3.3 Governance update

The first meeting of the Capital Project Board is scheduled for 30 October 2025, key points for discussion include governance, terms of reference and implementation.

3.4 Capital and Animation updates

CRT1: LGBTQIA+ Hub

Mechanical & Engineering Assessments are underway. The business case for approval of 'landlord' related capital works, to align with PEACEPLUS capital works, is progressing.

Members are reminded that the animation activity is to be delivered via enhanced service provision, that the main stakeholder/tenant organisations will deliver when relocating to the new Hub. Discussions on appropriate legal agreements to ensure delivery of the animation are being progressed.

3.5 CRT2: Annadale

Stakeholder engagement is continuing and discussions to address concerns raised during the pre-market engagement session are progressing.

Planning is to be submitted through a regular application, and clarification on Council's position on funding for pitch element, which is additional to the approved PEACEPLUS element, is progressing.

An indicative procurement approach to mobilise the animation is as follows:

- Event Management Training, via a quotation exercise in November 2025 with delivery starting January 2026.
- Detached youth work with a cross-community focus, via a quotation exercise in January 2026 with delivery starting April 2026.
- Training on delivery of environmental activities and play sessions, procured via a quotation exercise in January 2026 with delivery starting April 2026.
- Events via quotation exercise in January 2026 with delivery starting April 2026.
- Delivery of traditional and urban sports sessions, health & wellbeing sessions, wildlife haven workshops, gardening workshops, traditional & modern craftsmanship, talks, walks and trips and photography workshops, via a tender, published in October 2026 with delivery starting February 2027.

3.6 CRT3: Distillery Street

Planning for the project will be submitted through a regular application. Clarity on maintenance responsibilities and land ownership is also progressing.

Procurement for the animation activity will be via a tender to be October/November 2025 with delivery starting February 2026.

3.7 CRT4: Access to the Hills

Following recent site walks and given the complexity of the site, it was identified that Planning may require a major application, which may impact the delivery timeframe. Options to progress planning are under consideration.

The animation procurement approach will be via a public tender, with an estimated release date of 21 November 2025, with delivery starting March 2026.

3.8 CRT5: Sanctuary Theatre

The nature of works at the Sanctuary Theatre does not require planning approval.

Procurement of the animation activity including a volunteering programme, school's outreach good relations programme, good relations drama productions, audience and participant engagement, and communications activity will be procured via a tender, published end October 2025, with delivery starting February 2026.

Design teams have been requested to provide delivery programmes for each project with clear timelines to include all key steps, e.g. planning, tender preparation, contractor procurement, construction. A report on the timelines will be provided in December 2025.

3.9 Capital Risks

Members are advised that the key issues affecting the capital elements, as identified at an internal risk workshop are: (i) adherence to timelines, (ii) securing planning approval, (iii) financial and delivery within budget, and (iv) ongoing political support.

Members should note that a request for additional works, such as surveys which sit outside of PEACEPLUS scope, is being discussed through Council's Financial Oversight

The Board is requested to note that the Delivery Programme Manager has identified there may be a requirement to request a further extension from SEUPB, linked to planning requirements and programmes from Design Teams.

3.10 Financial and Resource Implications

All expenditure associated with the PEACEPLUS Action Plan is eligible from 1 January 2024.

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

The PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan has been screened for equality, good relations and rural needs assessment, and has been screened out.

The Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

Dates of Next Meeting

The Partnership was reminded that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Monday, 1st December.

Chairperson

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WELCOME INFORMATION PROGRAMME



Belfast
City Council

**Supporting and
Advising Asylum
Seekers:
Development Needs
in the Community
and Voluntary Sector
in Belfast**



WELCOME INFORMATION PROGRAMME



Belfast
City Council

What is WIP?

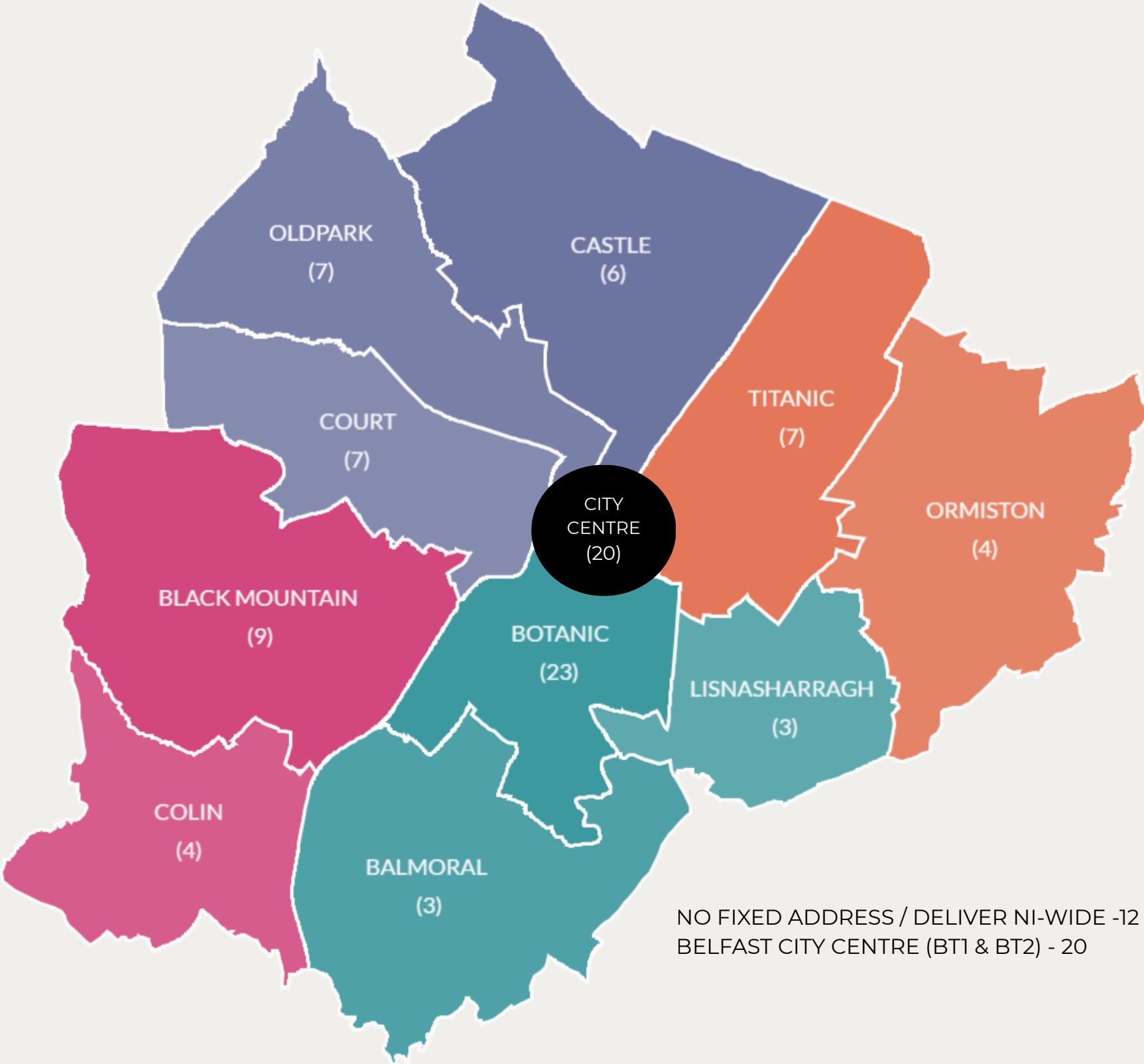
12-month capacity building project funded by Belfast City Council

- Identify existing community development needs in Belfast and assess what further support is necessary for organisations to advise and support asylum seekers.
- Deliver a three-tier training programme alongside the establishment of a Knowledge and Learning Network to enable organisations to be better-equipped to advise and include asylum seekers within their services.
- Produce a user-friendly online map of services available to asylum seekers and refugees in Belfast.

Survey highlights & report



Belfast
City Council



Surveying community development needs

- An online survey ran for six weeks
- Survey received 85 responses
- 16% migrant-led organisations, 84% “other”
- 19 engagement interviews

Survey highlights & report



Belfast
City Council

Confidence

- 42% said that staff/volunteers did not have a good understanding of available support services for asylum seekers
- 57% cited the need for more networking and better knowledge of signposting opportunities
- 99% supported the idea of a centralised map of services in Belfast

Accessibility

- 72% organisations do not provide services in additional languages, though there was a willingness to do so if funding was available.

Advisers

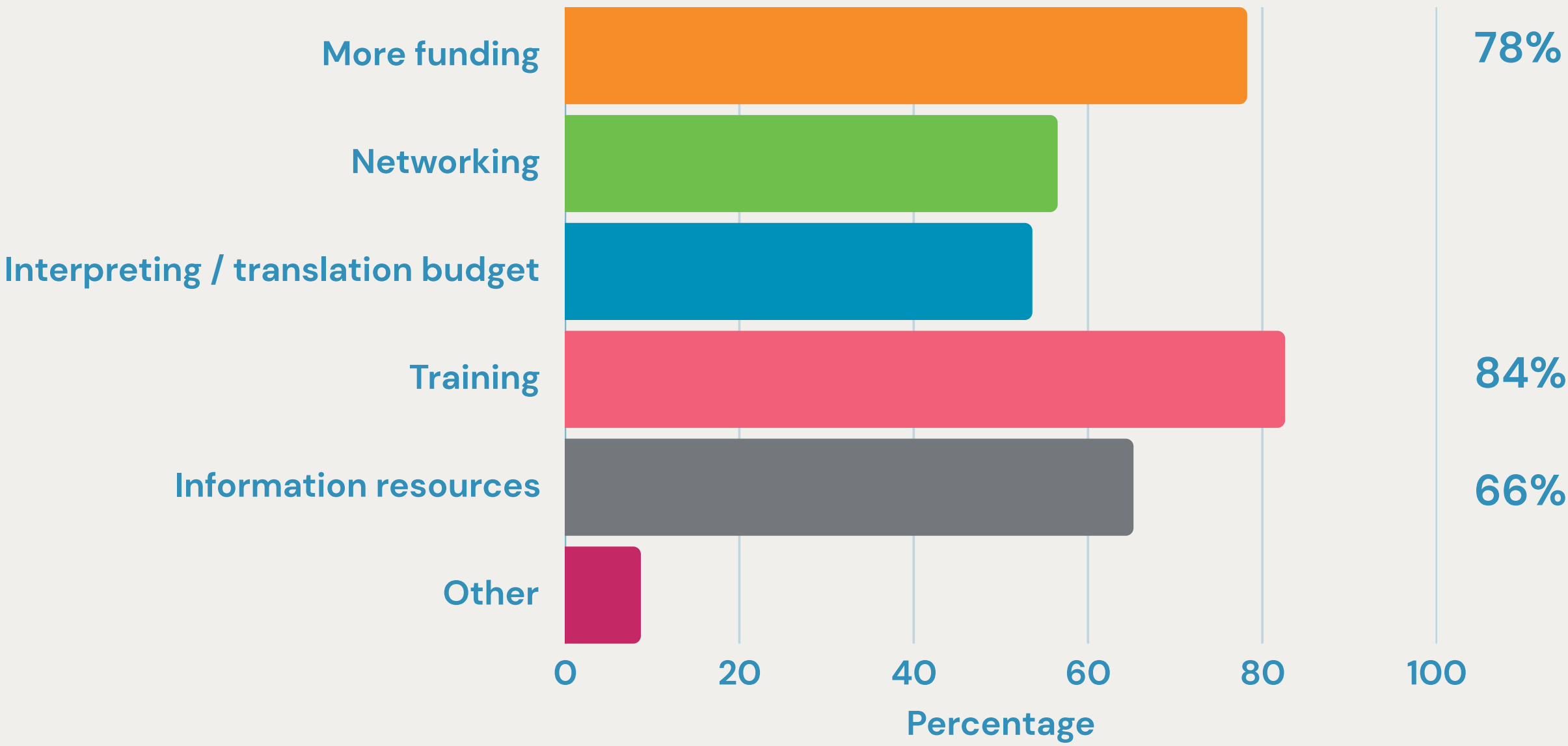
- Only 20% of organisations had a qualified Generalist Adviser to support with benefits, housing etc
- Only 7% had a qualified immigration adviser

Survey highlights & report



Belfast
City Council

Development needs



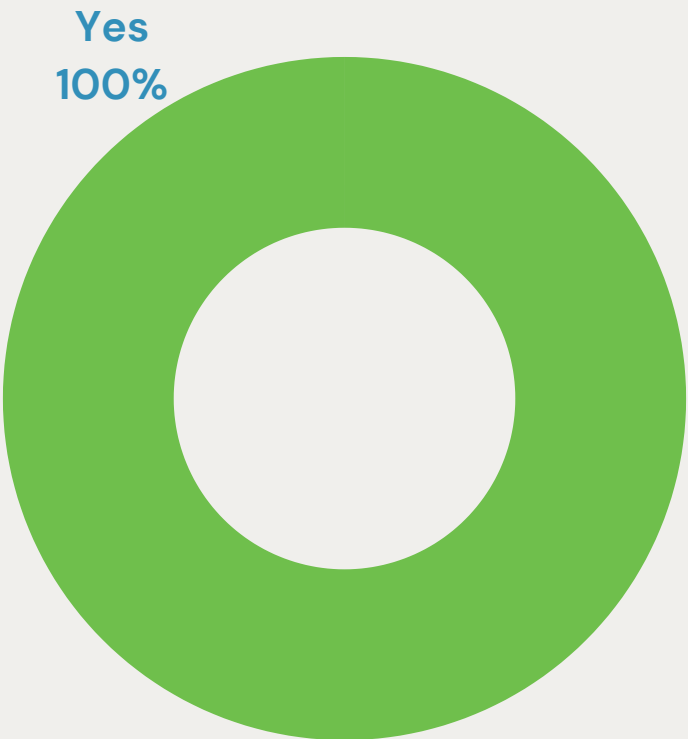
Survey highlights & report



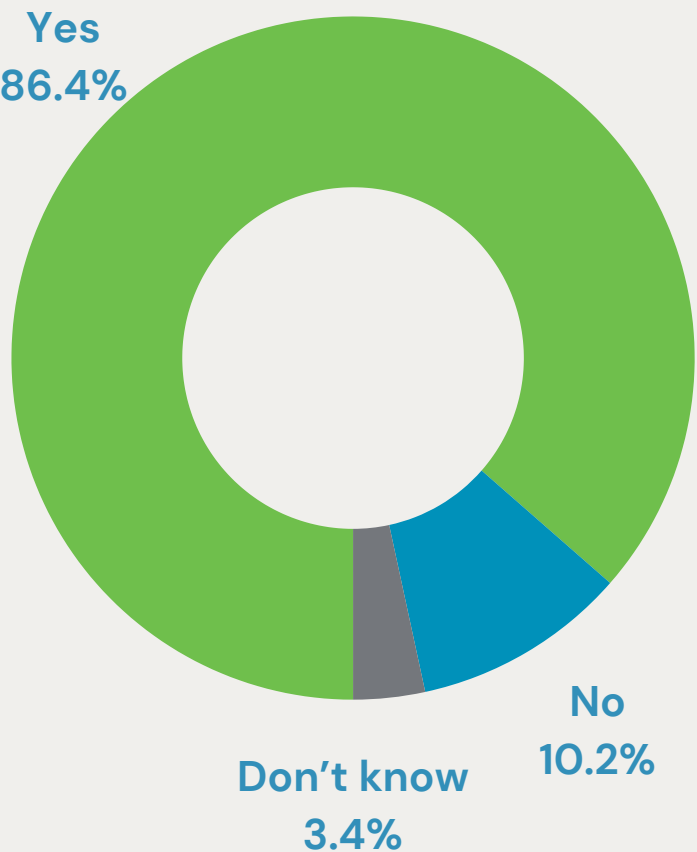
Belfast City Council

Are you concerned about anti-migrant rhetoric in your area of Belfast?

Migrant-led organisations



Other organisations



“Our organisation has been targeted during race-related riots, forcing the closure of classes and raising deep concerns for the safety and well-being of our service users”

“We no longer advertise who we are on our office windows”

“It impacts the people we support. It causes fear and people at times have stopped coming to our services because of it. It means we have additional work to do in reassuring and supporting and showing care”

Training delivery



Belfast
City Council

2 x Small Worlds Workshops

- 80 participants

4 x Understanding Asylum and Refugee Rights sessions

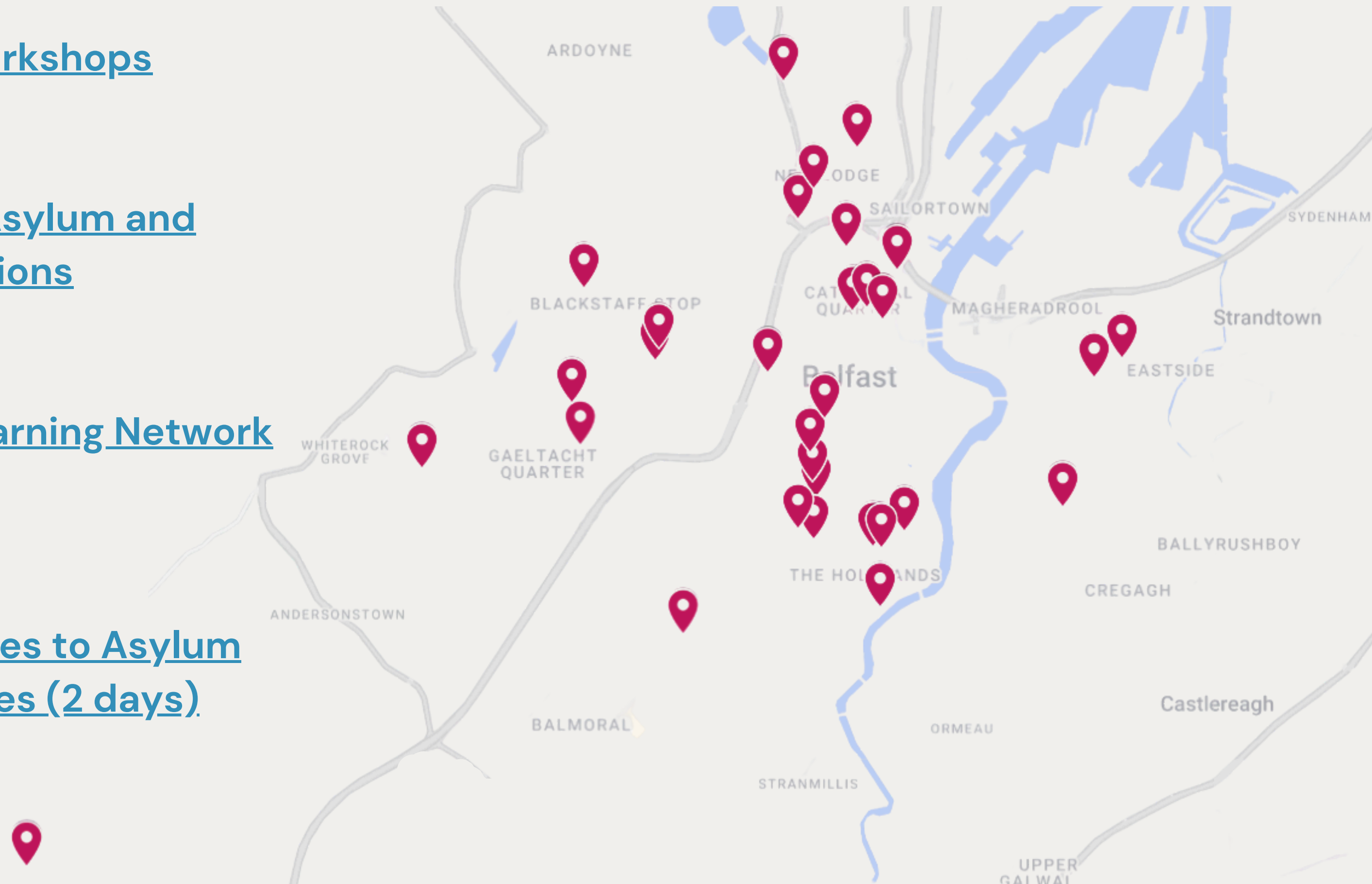
- 80 participants

8 x Knowledge & Learning Network sessions

- 80 participants

1 x Delivering Services to Asylum Seekers and Refugees (2 days)

- 12 participants



Organisations offered training



Belfast
City Council

- Act Now NI
- Anaka Women's Collective
- Ashton Community Trust
- Barnardos
- Beechmount Sure Start
- Belfast Islamic Centre
- Belfast Trust
- Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre
- Chinese Welfare Association
- Common Youth
- Community Restorative Justice
- Diverse Youth
- Early Years
- East Belfast Mission

- East Belfast Sure Start
- Factcheck NI
- Footprints Women's Centre
- Friends of Africa
- Gems NI
- Glow NI
- Groundwork
- Happy Women's Group
- Homeplus
- Include Youth
- International Meeting Point NB
- King's Trust
- LORAG
- Mornington Community Project

- NIACRO
- NSPCC
- Quaker Service
- The Rainbow Project
- Refuge Language
- Shankill Women's Centre
- Starling Collective
- Street NI
- Suitcase Project
- Victim Support (HCAS)
- West Belfast Partnership Board
- Whiterock Children's Centre
- Windsor Baptist Church

Current recommendations



Belfast
City Council

- Continuation of a programme of training and capacity building for organisations.
- Continuation of a Knowledge and Learning Network.
- Increased provision of free training across Belfast, to be available to community organisations and statutory agencies.
- Ensure migrant-led organisations are included within any capacity building initiatives.
- Commission more translatable information resources – especially on rights, entitlements, restrictions.
- Commission further research on the impact of anti-migrant rhetoric and hate crime on the provision of support for asylum seekers and refugees.
- Promote and encourage the connectivity and information exchange between Belfast's existing Migrant Forums.
- Purchase translation devices for organisations that are struggling to provide services in additional languages.
- Include funding for interpreters in all community advice tenders.

Thank you!

Any questions?

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WELCOME INFORMATION PROGRAMME



Belfast
City Council



Belfast
City Council

ASYLUM LINK ADVISOR PROJECT



ASYLUM LINK ADVISOR PROJECT OVERVIEW

- Background to IOM UK

Context:

- Funding through Belfast City Council to develop the capacity and infrastructure to meet the needs of Asylum Seekers accommodated in the BCC area.

The need:

- Contribute to and increase the capacity of a specialised advice and casework service,
- Geographically located in local community settings, ensuring asylum seekers have access to advice and support at an early stage
- Building capacity of local communities and organisations as support hubs

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Support asylum seekers across North, South, East and West Belfast with a **high-quality outreach and advice service**
- 2) Provide **ad hoc second-tier advice** to external organisations, frontline staff and support workers, in order to improve support to asylum seekers who utilize their services

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ADVICE, CASEWORK AND SIGNPOSTING TO AVAILABLE LOCAL RESOURCES FOR:



REFERRAL THROUGH PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Conway Education Centre

WEST Belfast

Thursday

Ashton Community Trust

NORTH Belfast

Monday



East Belfast Mission
(Skainos)

EAST Belfast

Friday

NINES Team &
Community
Inclusion Team

Mobile Clinics

GEMS NI

SOUTH Belfast

Tuesday

OUR PROCESS:

1

- Referral from partner organisation or community organisations

2

- Appointment invitation for individual / family

3

- Advice/ Casework support

OUR CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



New CMS Case Profile

New Case Profile

CPN01. Area where support was given:

CPN02. Region:

CPN47. Registration Date:

03/11/2025

CPN03. IOM Case Number:

IOM10976

CPN04. IOM Case Worker:

eljohnson

CPN05. Case type:

CPN07. Date of Referral:

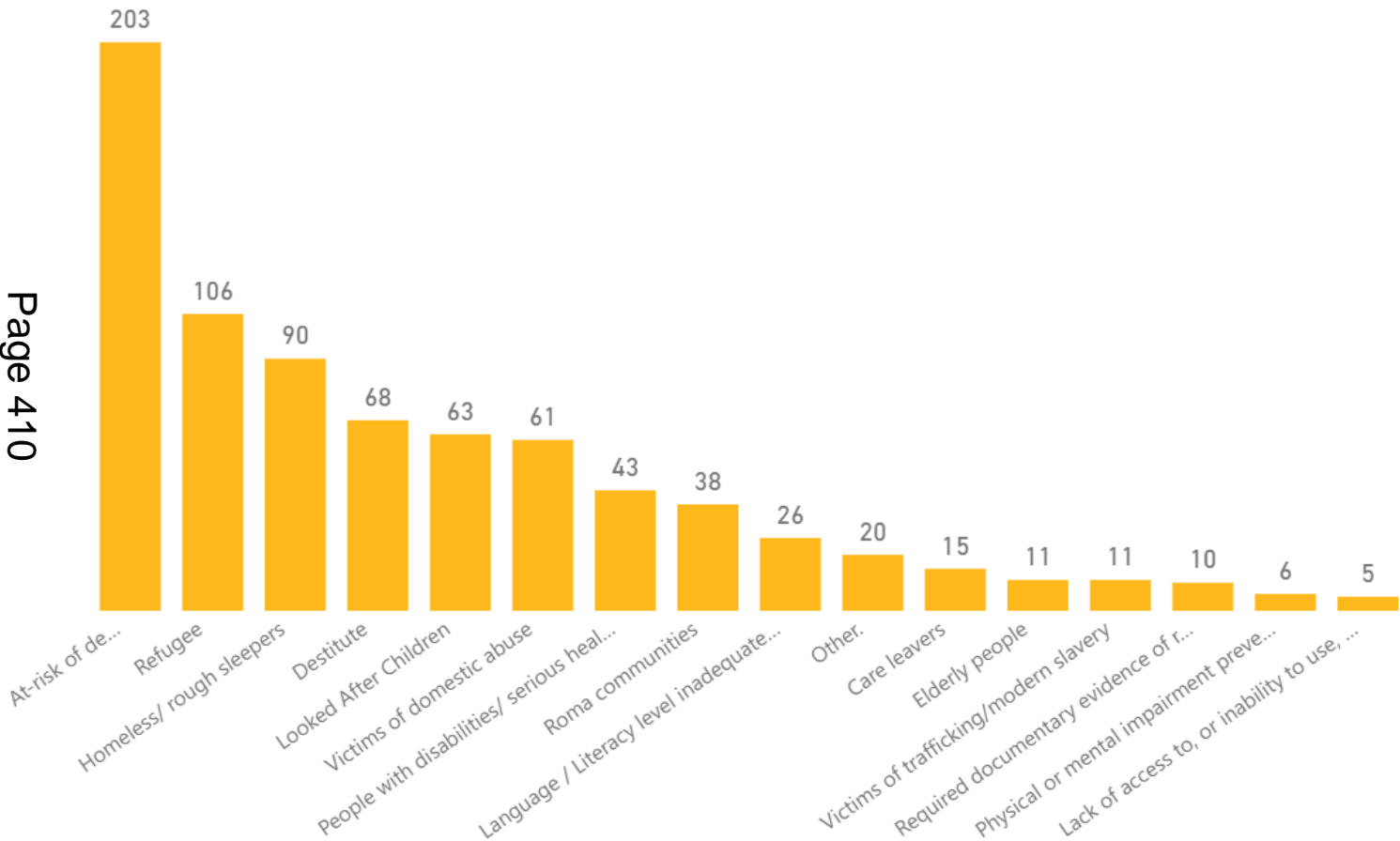
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CPN08. Referred by:

CPN08.1. Contact details:

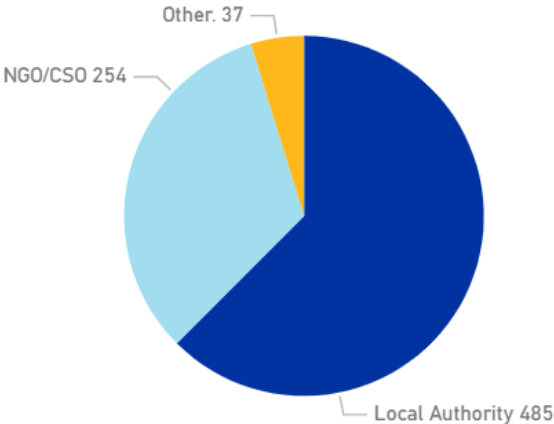
CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM DASHBOARD

Page 410



Destitute	70
At-risk of destitution	54
Language / literacy barriers	45
Internet application access barriers	29
Lack of residency evidence	23
Disabilities / serious health conditions	20
Homeless / rough sleepers	20
Refugee	13
Other.	8
Roma communities	6
Elderly people	5
Physical or mental impairment	4
Looked After Children	3
Victims of domestic abuse	3
Victims of trafficking/modern slavery	2
Economic vulnerability	1

Origin of the request



A young Iraqi
asylum seeker
was referred to
IOM by a partner
organisation

Eligibility for
permission to
work application

ESOL enrolment

Physical and
social wellbeing
support

Thank you!

achisholm@iom.int

smutasim@iom.int

asylumlinkbelfast@iom.int

Belfast

PEACEPLUS

Priority 1.1 Local Community
Peace Action Plan

Programme Board Report

As of

08/10/2025 11:08:44



PEACEPLUS
Northern Ireland - Ireland

Co-funded by the
 European Union  UK Government



Belfast
City Council

The Belfast Local Community Action Plan is supported by PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

Last Refreshed

08/10/2025 11:08:44



10

Projects Added Data

Number of projects with activities added: 10



1,371

Participants Registered

Participants registered this month: 19 86% (-117) vs. last month

Participants last month: 136

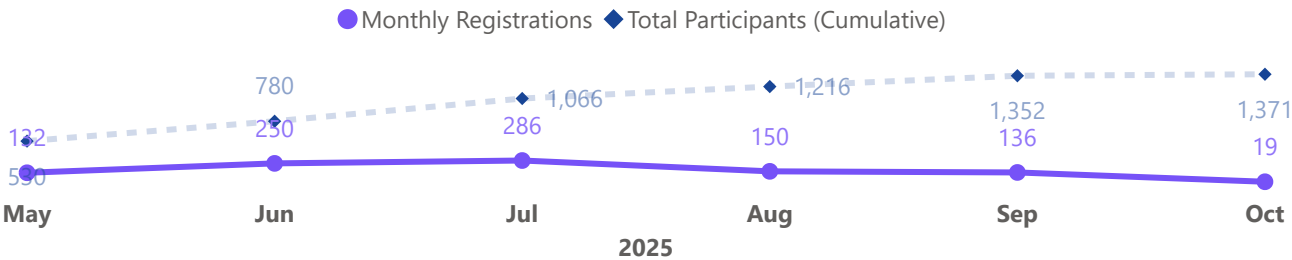


1K

Participants Attending Activity More Than Once

Participant Registrations

Last 6 Months



Project Activity Tracker

Theme Abbv	Times Activity Held	Total Unique Participants
TPC	282	902
Youth Empowerment: Juniors (9-12)	49	425
Junior (9-12 year old) Activity	49	425
Youth Empowerment: Intermediate (12-15)	25	69
Intermediate (12-15 year old) Activity	25	69
Youth Empowerment: Seniors (16-18)	49	59
Seniors (16-18 year old) Activity (Non-Residential)	49	59
Sport for Peace	95	148
Pillar 1: Qualification/Coach Education	25	39
Pillar 2: Participation	70	116
Employability (Language Up)	59	184
Strand 1: Community Provision of Flexible Language Courses	41	183
Strand 2: Community Programme of Activities (including co-design process)	18	91
Arts Across the Genres	5	17
CCD	37	278
Community Connections	3	4
Belfast LGBTQIA+ Community Engagement Programme	6	3
From Multiculturalism to Interculturalism: Festival and Flagship Events	2	4
From Multiculturalism to Interculturalism: Culture and Built Heritage	26	267
Total	319	1180

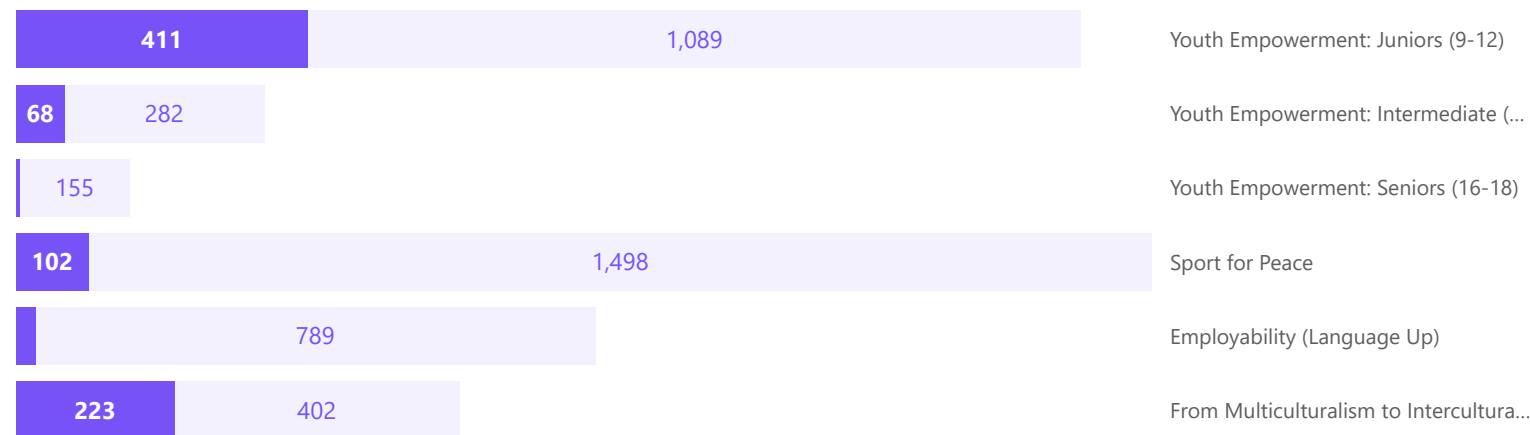
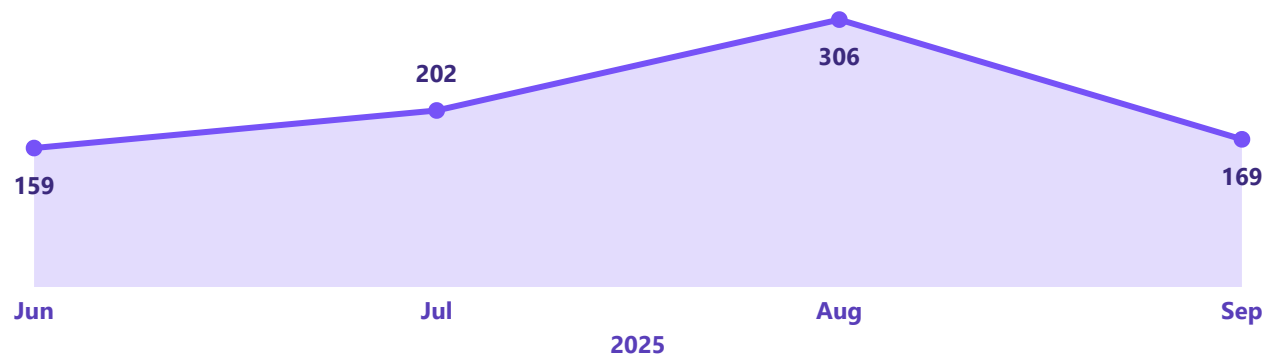
Total Participants by Project

Theme and Project	Total Participants	Non-Participating
TPC	1,095	193
Youth Empowerment: Juniors (9-12)	540	115
Youth Empowerment: Intermediate (12-15)	71	2
Youth Empowerment: Seniors (16-18)	64	5
Sport for Peace	154	6
Employability (Language Up)	211	27
Arts Across the Genres	55	38
CCD	276	6
Community Connections	5	1
Belfast LGBTQIA+ Community Engagement Programme	3	
From Multiculturalism to Interculturalism: Festival and Flagship	5	1
Total	1,371	199


Achieved Participants (Last Month) 169

 **Woman or Girl Participant Programme Target:** 40% (+8% over target)

% Ethnic Minority

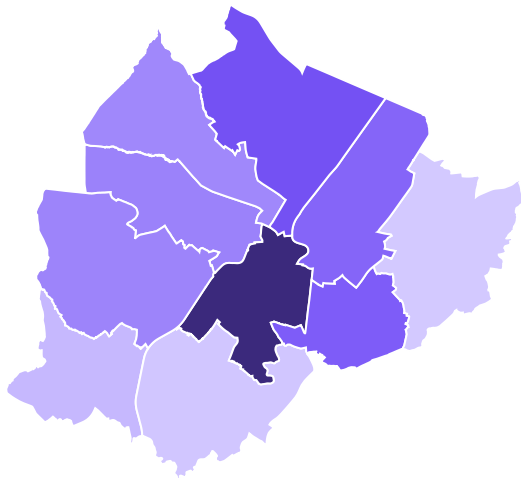


Theme and Project		% Catholic	% Protestant	% None	% Other
TPC		↑ 45% 🇸🇪 43%	↑ 28% 🇸🇪 22%	↓ 16% 🇸🇪 28%	↑ 11% 🇸🇪 7%
	Youth Empowerment: Juniors (9-12)	↓ 44% 🇸🇪 47%	↑ 25% 🇸🇪 24%	↓ 22% 🇸🇪 26%	↑ 8% 🇸🇪 3%
	Youth Empowerment: Intermediate (12-15)	↑ 57% 🇸🇪 47%	↑ 37% 🇸🇪 24%	↓ 1% 🇸🇪 26%	↑ 4% 🇸🇪 3%
	Youth Empowerment: Seniors (16-18)	↓ 0% 🇸🇪 47%	↑ 60% 🇸🇪 24%	↓ 20% 🇸🇪 26%	↑ 20% 🇸🇪 3%
	Sport for Peace	↑ 51% 🇸🇪 49%	↑ 37% 🇸🇪 26%	↓ 7% 🇸🇪 22%	↑ 5% 🇸🇪 3%
	Employability (Language Up)	↓ 4% 🇸🇪 23%	↓ 0% 🇸🇪 14%	↓ 0% 🇸🇪 42%	↑ 96% 🇸🇪 21%
CCD		↑ 47% 🇸🇪 43%	↓ 26% 🇸🇪 30%	↓ 16% 🇸🇪 24%	↑ 11% 🇸🇪 3%
	From Multiculturalism to Interculturalism: Cultures and Daily Habits	↑ 47% 🇸🇪 43%	↓ 26% 🇸🇪 30%	↓ 16% 🇸🇪 24%	↑ 11% 🇸🇪 3%
	Total	↑ 45% 🇸🇪 43%	↑ 27% 🇸🇪 24%	↓ 16% 🇸🇪 28%	↑ 11% 🇸🇪 6%

Theme and Project		Total Achieved	Total Remaining	Project Target	%
 TPC		613	3,813	4,426	14%
	Youth Empowerment: Juniors (9-12)	411	1,089	1,500	27%
	Youth Empowerment: Intermediate (12-15)	68	282	350	19%
	Youth Empowerment: Seniors (16-18)	5	155	160	3%
	Sport for Peace	102	1,498	1,600	6%
Total		836	4,215	5,051	17%

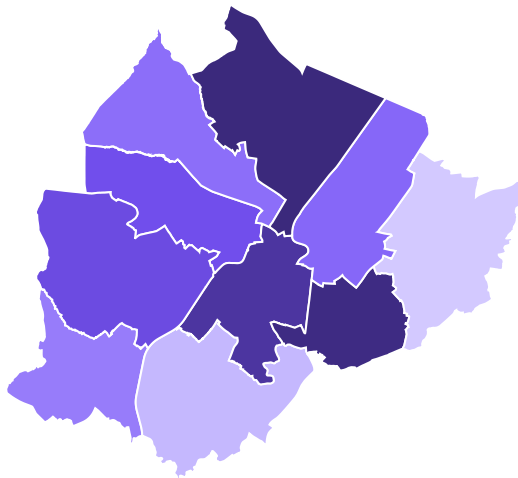
All Participants Heatmap

by DEA



Achieved Participants Heatmap

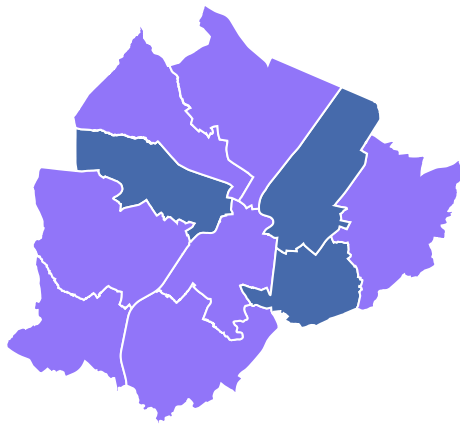
by DEA



Most Represented Religious Beliefs by DEA

Achieved Participants

● Catholic ● Protestant



City Region & DEA		Total Participants	% Total
☐ North Belfast		277	20%
Castle		161	12%
Oldpark		116	8%
☐ South Belfast		318	23%
Balmoral		68	5%
Botanic		250	18%
☐ East Belfast		359	26%
Lisnasharragh		150	11%
Ormiston		66	5%
Titanic		143	10%
☐ West Belfast		319	23%
Black Mountain		119	9%
Collin		79	6%
Court		121	9%
☒ Outside Council District		98	7%
Total		1,371	100%

City Region & DEA		Total Participants	% Total
☐ North Belfast		170	20%
Castle		106	13%
Oldpark		64	8%
☐ South Belfast		139	17%
Balmoral		43	5%
Botanic		96	11%
☐ East Belfast		208	25%
Lisnasharragh		104	12%
Ormiston		38	5%
Titanic		66	8%
☐ West Belfast		213	25%
Black Mountain		78	9%
Collin		60	7%
Court		75	9%
☒ Outside Council District		106	13%
Total		836	100%

City Region & DEA		Top Religious Belief	Count
☐ North Belfast		Catholic	98
Castle		Catholic	54
Oldpark		Catholic	44
☐ South Belfast		Catholic	49
Balmoral		Catholic	15
Botanic		Catholic	34
☐ East Belfast		Protestant	74
Lisnasharragh		Protestant	39
Ormiston		Catholic	15
Titanic		Protestant	22
☐ West Belfast		Catholic	135
Black Mountain		Catholic	69
Collin		Catholic	45
Court		Protestant	49
☒ Outside Council District		Catholic	35
Total		Catholic	379

608

Total Respondents

Number of projects with surveys added: 5

38%

% Female Respondents

73%

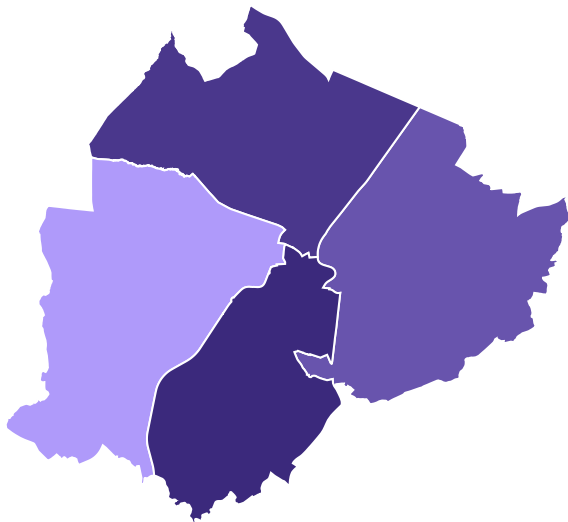
Respondents to Achieved

11%

% Ethnic Minority

Belfast Region Heatmap

Equality Monitoring Respondents



City Region	Total
South Belfast	188
North Belfast	176
East Belfast	152
West Belfast	88
Total	604

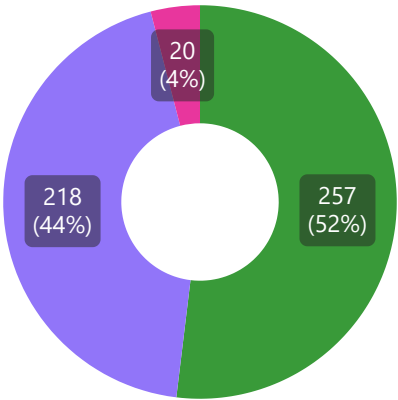
Total Respondents by Gender

Participants over 18

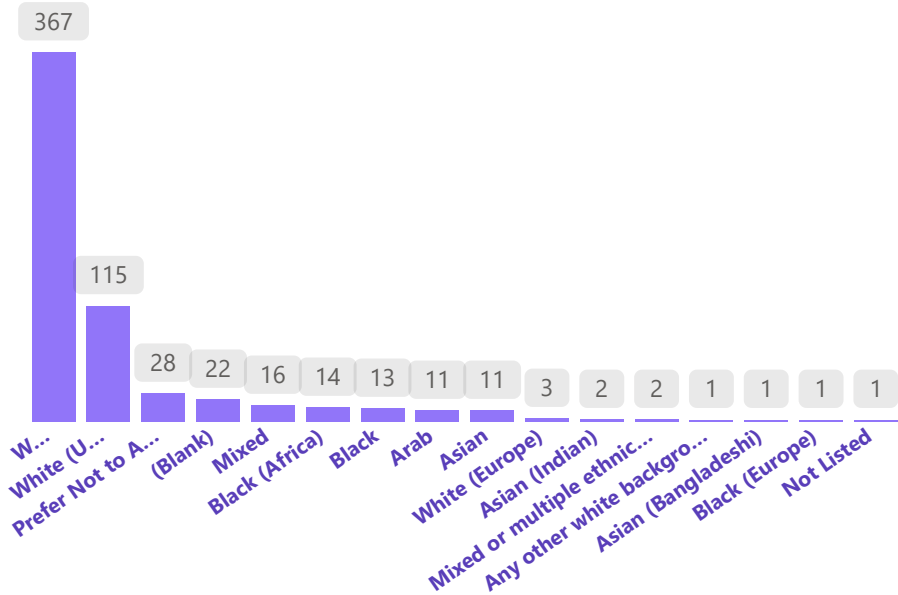
- Man or Boy

Woman or Girl

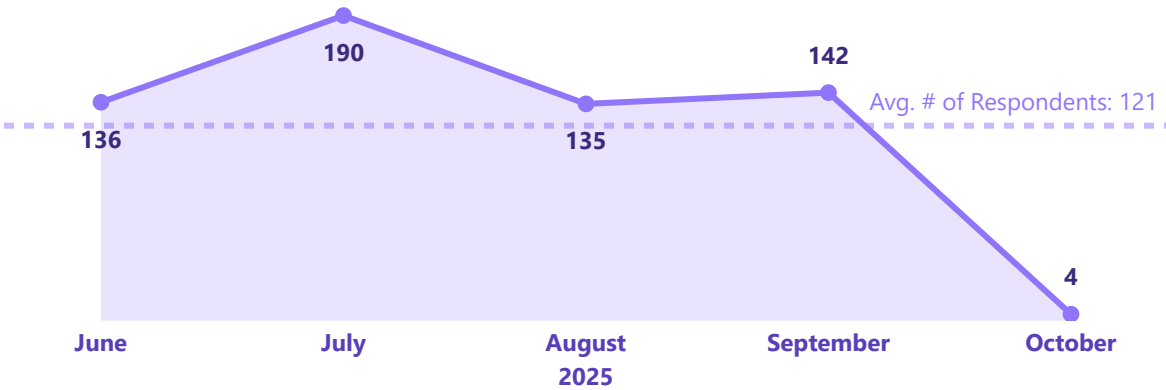
Prefer Not to Answer



Total Respondents by ethnic group/ethnicity

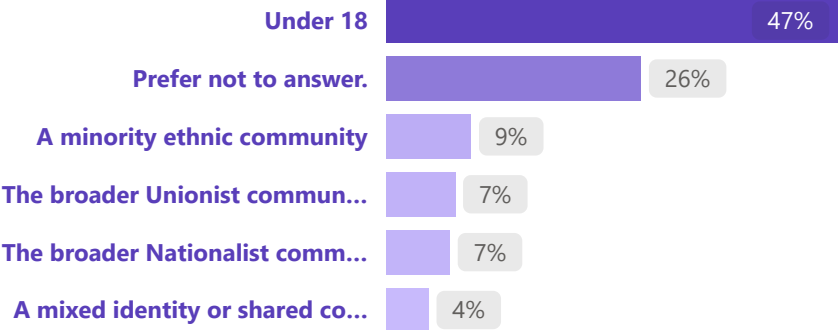


Respondents over Time



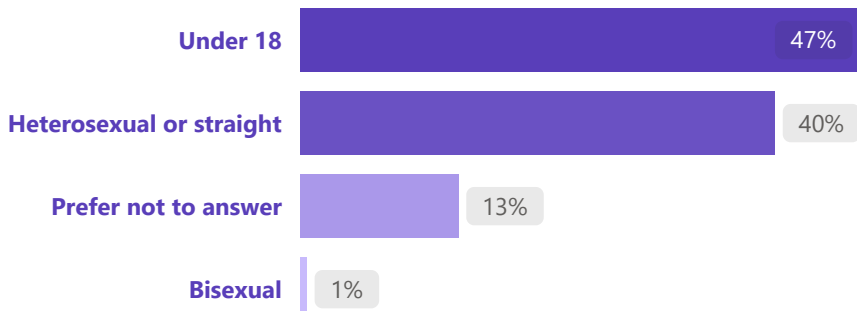
Total Respondents by Political Opinion

Participants over 18



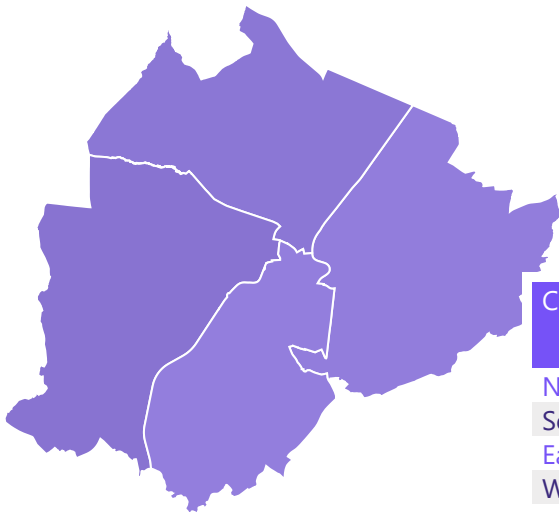
Total Respondents by Sexual Orientation

Participants over 18



Belfast Region Heatmap

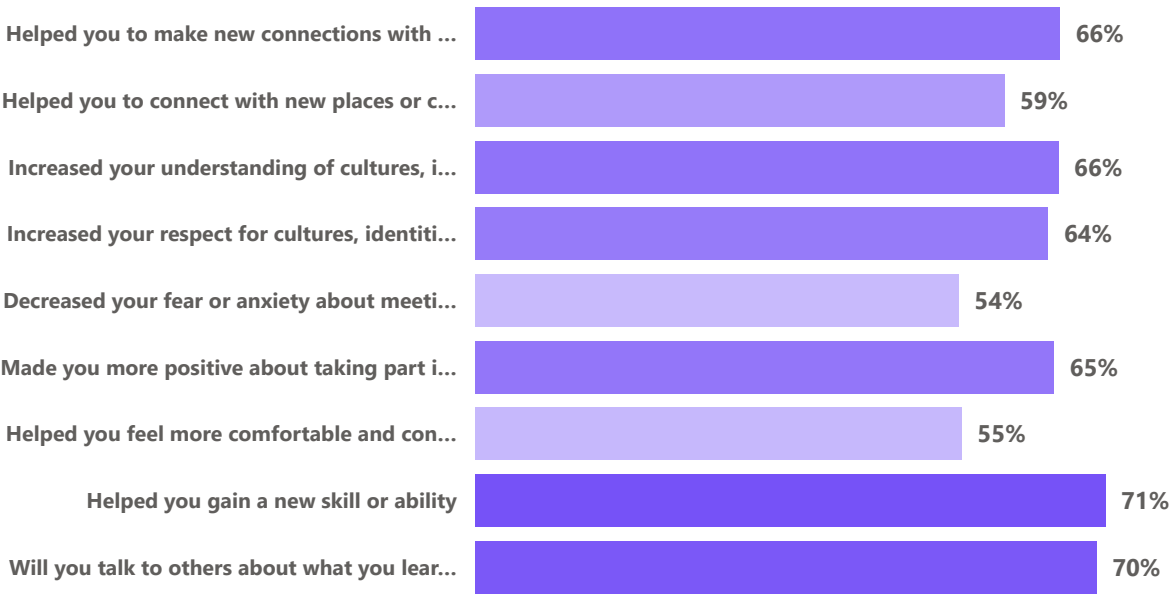
by Positive Response Rate



City Region	% Positive Responses
North Belfast	65%
South Belfast	61%
East Belfast	62%
West Belfast	66%
Total	63%

Positive Responses per Question

Positive Responses = Agree, Strongly Agree or Yes



Question Response Gauge

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree Yes No Prefer not to answer



177

Total Participants (All)

118

Total Achieved Participants

31%

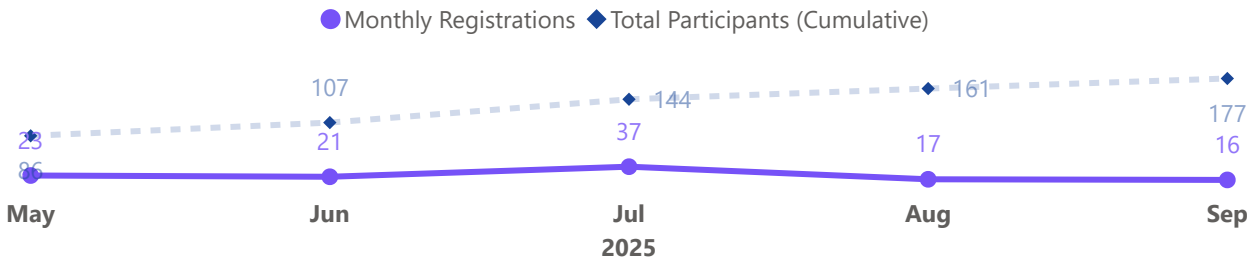
% Woman or Girl Participants

12%

% Ethnic Minority

Participant Registrations

Last 6 Months



Total Participants by Project

Theme and Project	Total Participants	Non-Participating
TPC	134	25
Youth Empowerment: Juniors (9-12)	82	15
Youth Empowerment: Intermediate (12-15)	7	1
Youth Empowerment: Seniors (16-18)	7	
Sport for Peace	13	
Employability (Language Up)	15	3
Arts Across the Genres	10	6
CCD	43	2
Community Connections	1	1
Belfast LGBTQIA+ Community Engagement Programme	1	
From Multiculturalism to Interculturalism: Culture and Built Heritage	41	1
Total	177	27

Project Activity Tracker

Theme Abbv	Times Activity Held	Total Unique Participants
TPC	186	109
Youth Empowerment: Juniors (9-12)	48	67
Junior (9-12 year old) Activity	48	67
Youth Empowerment: Intermediate (12-15)	25	6
Intermediate (12-15 year old) Activity	25	6
Youth Empowerment: Seniors (16-18)	35	7
Seniors (16-18 year old) Activity (Non-Residential)	35	7
Sport for Peace	57	13
Pillar 1: Qualification/Coach Education	25	8
Pillar 2: Participation	32	7
Employability (Language Up)	17	12
Strand 1: Community Provision of Flexible Language Courses	15	12
Strand 2: Community Programme of Activities (including co-design process)	2	7
Arts Across the Genres	4	4
CCD	20	41
Belfast LGBTQIA+ Community Engagement Programme	1	1
From Multiculturalism to Interculturalism: Culture and Built Heritage	19	40
Showcasing our shared historical built heritage : Tours of shared built heritage	11	28
Showcasing our shared historical built heritage: Arts and Culture Events	8	12
Total	206	150

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Appendix II PEACEPLUS Programme Level Risk Register

October 2025

	Risk	What we have <u>already done</u> or have in place (i.e. controls) to mitigate this	Current RAG	What we're <u>going to do</u> next to manage this to the target level (i.e. actions)	Responsible officer	Target RAG	Target date
1	Financial Risk If proper arrangements are not in place for managing the programme finances, the council may incur unexpected financial pressures/ losses. (Applicable to all projects)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualified and experienced staff responsible for managing budgets, claims, reviewing eligibility of expenditure • Written financial processes in place • Relevant staff trained in Council processes including E5 • Programme Rules reviewed • Access to the Joint Electronic Management System is restricted to relevant staff • Relationships with SEUPB staff in place • LoO € currency risk escalated to Head of Finance • Training provided to delivery partners to ensure invoices submitted align to contract Issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Financial Controller approach underway, awaiting contracting • Expenditure incurred from Jan 24 not yet able to be claimed from SEUPB 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continual staff training to ensure requirements are met • Ongoing review of processes to ensure fit for purpose • Any updated programme rules incorporated in internal financial processes • Regular check ins with appropriate SEUPB staff • Follow due process in terms of claims submissions and sign off • Agreement required on process for review of documentation provided by P&P • Expenditure monitoring of £ vs € budgets & income • Ongoing liaison with business manager & director of finance to manage exchange rate fluctuation risks • Due Diligence process ongoing with SEUPB / financial controller prior to contracting • Training to provided to any new delivery partners to ensure invoices submitted align to contract 	Helen Donaldson		ongoing
2	Procurement and contract management If we do not ensure that there are appropriate procurement and contract management arrangements in place, there is a risk of financial loss due to reduced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team in place to procure and manage contracts incl. project managers, support officers • Dedicated Category Officer support from CPS • Procurement process in place linking BCC policy to PEACEPLUS requirements • Timeline in place for procurement and contract delivery 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly / quarterly meetings ongoing for large delivery partner contracts • Quarterly reports process for submission from contractors in place • Procurement and Supporting documentation to be saved in Shared Folders to ensure audit trail is available to verify claims 	Debbie McKinney (with support from CPS and Project Managers)		ongoing

	Risk	What we have <u>already done</u> or have in place (i.e. controls) to mitigate this	Current RAG	What we're <u>going to do</u> next to manage this to the target level (i.e. actions)	Responsible officer	Target RAG	Target date
	funding/ financial penalties. (Applicable to all projects)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Market Engagement Sessions prior to issue of Tender Calls • Reporting and escalation process in place to manage issues • Change Control / Contract modification process in place for use if required • Seeking advice and guidance from SEUPB, as required 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For any upcoming procurements – changes to UK procurement law, considered in conjunction with CPS • Capital procurement / CPD, compliance and CPD involvement 			
3	Compliance with Letter of Offer, conditions of funding and monitoring and evaluation If we do not ensure that we are compliant with the Letter of Offer, conditions of funding, and monitoring and evaluation requirements, there is a risk of financial loss due to reduced funding/ financial penalties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust process for checking eligibility of expenditure prior to the submission of claims • Monitoring and Evaluation framework drafted • M&E system drafted • Attendance at PEACEPLUS training events • Review of Programme Rules • Letter of Offer received and conditions reviewed / responded to • LoO Conditions tracker established and reviewed 6 monthly • M&E system in place and being utilised by delivery partners – ensuring evidence on file for results / outputs • Response to conditions once LoO is signed and returned & JeMS access provided • Finalisation of M&E framework • Finalisation of M&E system incl. testing to be completed • Train delivery partners on M&E system 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to attend available training provided by PEACEPLUS • Ensure audit trail of M&E data available to submit in claims to SEUPB for their verification • Ongoing monitoring of implementation conditions and reporting to Programme Board and Shared City Partnership 	Helen Donaldson		ongoing
4	Recruitment / staffing If we do not recruit and retain suitably skilled and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful recruitment of staff to date 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity planning • Further development of processes • Ongoing support for staff 	Debbie McKinney		ongoing

	Risk	What we have <u>already done</u> or have in place (i.e. controls) to mitigate this	Current RAG	What we're <u>going to do</u> next to manage this to the target level (i.e. actions)	Responsible officer	Target RAG	Target date
	experienced staff, there is a risk that the programme is not delivered in line with the agreed timescales and in compliance with the T&Cs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction process and plans in place • Staff training in place • Monthly 1-2-1s with more regular check ins where required • Roles and responsibilities of each team member outlined • Monthly Team meetings • Regular work planning meetings to direct team • Processes in place as a 'desk instruction' to allow cross team working 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing training for staff • Cross skilling of staff across team functions • Ensure staff feel valued 			
5	Delivery of the programme If we fail to implement appropriate programme management arrangements, there is an increased risk of delays which could lead to financial penalties. (Applicable to all projects)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust co-design process followed to ascertain participant targets • All delivery partners asked to provide details of participant attrition rates / plans for recruitment and retention • BCC officers with experience in relevant areas sit on tender evaluation panels • Extension to project timeline approved by SEUPB 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing review of project achievement of results (participant numbers) • Continued collaboration between BCC departments and staff to avail of expertise within the organisation and the relationships built with the community • Monitoring of progress in relation to landowners, planning permission /statutory approvals etc • Capital Project Governance to include representatives from PEACEPLUS 	Debbie McKinney		ongoing

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Leadership and Mentoring Brief for Shared City Partnership

Introduction

GEMS NI and our partners, Belfast City of Sanctuary, Migrant Centre NI, Diverse Youth NI, Business in the Community and Ballynafeigh Community Development Association are delivering the “Community Connections” programme in Belfast.

The project forms part of the €17.1m Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan, which is led by Belfast City Council.

Alongside our partners we will be delivering activities across 4 key strands:

1. Leadership and Mentoring

A training and development activity that will enhance the skills, experience, and capacity of up-and-coming leaders from migrant backgrounds. The training will be delivered over 6 months and will culminate in participants obtaining an ILM level 2 leadership award and having the chance to develop and manage their own community-based project.

2. Community Orientation and Cultural Facilitators

This opportunity is for people from migrant backgrounds to undertake training and support to develop their facilitation skills and to then help us deliver impactful and enjoyable sessions for other project participants in the Welcome Hubs. Our facilitators will also help co-design a useful “Community Connections APP” which we hope will help the project leave a legacy behind when completed.

3. Community Connectors

With a focus on bringing cross community and cross-cultural aspects of the project together we aim to offer support and training to people from our majority backgrounds in Belfast and enable them to develop skills needed for befriending, offering support and networking and having engagement with participants in the Welcome Hubs.

4. Welcome Hubs

Three Belfast City Council Community Centre locations have been identified as suitable spaces to operate as Belfast Welcome Hubs, providing a weekly space for people that are new to Belfast to meet, make connections and to network with other support organisations. We will deliver a series of activities during the next 2 years that will focus on integration and inclusion in a casual and safe setting.

Our ask from our civic leaders

We’re inviting our local civic leaders to play a key role in building a more inclusive Belfast by becoming a mentor through “**Community Connections**”.

Community Connections is an initiative that supports individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds and promotes cross-community collaboration across Belfast.

It creates spaces where future leaders can build skills, networks, and confidence to lead change while fostering reciprocal learning with employers and civic society.

By connecting civic leaders, employers, and community partners, the project aims to strengthen representation, build sustainable leadership and deepen community connections.

As a mentor you can support our leadership trainees with:

- Approx. 10 hrs of 1:1 mentoring engagement with project participants (over a period of approx. 3-6 months)
- Your insight and raising awareness of Northern Ireland and our unique history
- Encourage and support mentees with educational development and job opportunities where applicable
- Supporting mentees with their leadership development
- Providing insight into key personal and professional development activities

As a mentor, you will gain:

- Mentoring skills training (4 hr workshop)
- Enhanced cultural competence (3.5hr workshop)
- Reverse mentoring opportunities through engagement with participants with lived experience of barriers, issues, and challenges of living in NI as an ethnic minority
- Access to a peer network of civic and business leaders

Your total time commitment between the mentoring engagement with participants and with the training workshops will be 17.5 hrs. This will be split across the delivery period and is not expected to be in bulk.

If you are interested in this opportunity we are asking you to send an email to Stephen.atkinson@gemsni.org.uk or call Stephen on 07970802311 for further information about how to get involved.

We are keen to have our political parties engaged within the project, but we do appreciate that you are all very busy, with this in mind we encourage you to think about any upcoming leaders in your own parties who may give consideration to being a mentor on this project if you are unable to commit yourself.

Many thanks from all the team in Community Connections!



Subject:	Equality & Diversity: Equality Screening and Rural Needs Outcome Report Quarter 2 2025-26
Date:	21 November 2025
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor and Director of Legal & Civic Services
Contact Officers:	Russell Connelly, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 									
<p>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to set out the Quarterly Screening Outcome Report of equality screenings and rural needs impact assessments for Quarter 2 2025-26.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the Quarterly Screening Outcome Report which will be published on the Council's website.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>As Members will be aware, the Council has a duty to have, under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity in relation to the nine equality categories; and Regard to the desirability of promotion good relations <p>In addition, under section 1 of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services. <p>To this end, the Council has a process to carry out equality screening and rural needs assessment of new and revised policies. This allows any impacts related to equality of opportunity, good relations or rural needs to be identified and addressed.</p>
3.2	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>An equality screening and rural needs impact assessment template is completed by the relevant officer, in collaboration with the Equality and Diversity Unit. On a regular basis, the Unit collates all completed templates into a screening outcome report and publishes onto the Council's website along with the relevant completed templates. The current screening outcome report for Quarter 2 2025-26 is attached at Appendix 1.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None.</p>
3.4	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>This report contributes to the Council's compliance with section 75 or the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Rural Needs Act 2016.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Screening Outcome Report for Quarter 2 2025-26.



Belfast
City Council

**Equality Screening Outcome Report and Rural Needs Impact Assessment
from July – September 2025**

Introduction

Legislation – An Overview

Section 75 Statutory Equality Duties

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the Council, when carrying out its functions in relation to Northern Ireland, to have due regards to the need to promote equality of opportunity between nine categories of persons, namely:

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without.

Without prejudice to its obligations above, the Council must also have regards to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

The Council's Revised Equality Scheme was formally approved by the Equality Commission in March 2021. The revised Scheme outlines how we propose to fulfil our statutory duties under Section 75. Within the Scheme, the council gave a commitment to apply the screening methodology below to all new and revised policies and where necessary and appropriate to subject new policies to further equality impact assessment.

- What is the likely impact of equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy/proposal, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?
- Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within Section 75 equality categories?
- To what extent is the policy/proposal likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?
- Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

In keeping with the Council's commitments in its Equality Scheme, the Council has applied the above screening criteria to new policies and proposals. Screening identifies policies that are likely to have an impact on equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

Screening identifies the impact of the policy/proposal as major, minor or none.

- If major – an Equality Impact Assessment may be carried out.
- If minor – consider mitigation or alternative policy and screen out.
- If none – screen out and give reasons.
- Ongoing screening – for strategies/policies that are to be put in place through a series of stages – screen at various stages during implementation.

The council also committed within its Revised Equality Scheme to prepare and publish for information regular reports on its screening exercises. This is screening report providing details on all screenings undertaken from the period July - September 2024.

Rural Needs Impact Assessments

The Council also has a statutory duty under the Rural Needs (Northern Ireland) Act 2016 to consider rural needs in the development of new policies, plans or strategies or in any service design/delivery decisions. The Council must therefore engage with rural stakeholders in relation to policy development when it is relevant and appropriate. The Equality and Diversity Unit is responsible for reporting to the Strategic, Policy and Resources Committee and for ensuring that annual reporting returns are submitted to DAERA.

To further promote openness and transparency, there is a link to each completed screening and rural needs impact assessment template on the Council's website. www.belfastcity.gov.uk

The templates detail all policies screened over this period and includes decisions reached.

Consultation

The development of new policies and proposals will be supported by effective engagement processes to ensure that staff, service users and all interested parties are fully involved.

Planning for and delivering safe and cost-effective services requires close collaboration at many levels.

If you have any queries about this document, and its availability in alternative formats (including Braille, disk and audio cassette, and in other languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English) then please contact:-

Bridgeen O'Neill
Equality and Diversity Unit
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

Direct Line 02890 270555
or 028 9032 0202 ext 6315

email: equality@belfastcity.gov.uk or oneillbridgeen@belfastcity.gov.uk

Screening Outcome

The screening outcomes are outlined in the table below. Three possible outcomes are recorded:

If **Major** – an Equality Impact Assessment may be carried out. **EQIA** - subject to further scrutiny under Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 to determine the impact upon those directly affected, which in turn will require informal and formal consultation with a wide range of stakeholders.

If **Minor** – consider mitigation or alternative policy and screen out.

If **None** – screen out and give reasons.

Screening Outcome Options

Major= In

Minor= Out with mitigation

None= Out without mitigation

Rural Needs Impact Assessment Options

Does the policy, plan, strategy or service design/delivery impact on the social and economic needs of people in rural areas?

Belfast City Council Equality Screening Outcome Report and Rural Needs Impact Assessment

This report includes published screenings and Rural Needs Impact Assessments for the period July to September 2025. Copies can be found at:-

<https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/council/equality-and-diversity/equality-screening-reports#711-3>

Description of Policy/Proposal	Rural Needs Impact Assessment Outcome	ECNI Screening Decision
Gaeltacht Quarter Dual Language Street Signs Proposal	N/A	Screened Out - Mitigating Actions (minor impacts)
The New Apple Concept Store - Furniture line enhancements within existing Cornmarket public realm	No rural needs were identified	Screened Out - Mitigating Actions (minor impacts)
Belfast City Council City Events Unit Annual Events Programme 2025-2026	No rural needs were identified	Screened Out - Mitigating Actions (minor impacts)
Planning Application Validation Checklist	No rural needs were identified	Screened Out - Mitigating Actions (minor impacts)
Belfast City Council Culture Night 2025	No rural needs were identified	Screened Out - Mitigating Actions (minor impacts)
International Relations Framework 2025-2028	No rural needs were identified	Screened Out - Mitigating Actions (minor impacts)

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Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum Thursday 13th November 2025

Attendance

Members:

Councillor Michael Long
Councillor Natasha Brennan
Councillor Sarah Bunting
Councillor Brian Smyth
Councillor Ciaran Beattie
Alderman Sonia Copeland
Councillor Séamas de Faoite

Officers:

John Walsh, Chief Executive
Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Strategic Director of Corporate Services
Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance
Nora Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Damien Martin, Strategic Director of Place & Economy
David Sales, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services
Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration & Development
Sinead Grimes, Director of Property & Projects
Jim Girvan Director of Neighbourhood Services (for Item 3)
Joanne Delaney, Portfolio and Programme Coordinator (secretariat)

1. Finance Update

The Director of Finance provided an update on the setting of the district rate for 2026/27. He advised that Director challenge meetings in relation to the draft departmental estimates, growth proposals and efficiencies were still ongoing. There was discussion on some of the growth proposals emerging and also detailed discussion on short term efficiencies and longer term transformation within the organisation. The issues raised by Members will be discussed in more detail at the upcoming Efficiency and Transformation workshop on 14th November. The Director also advised that the first draft Estimated Penny Product (EPP) is expected in late November with the final EPP to be notified to Councils in early December, therefore the impact on the District Rate Income for 2026/27 is still unknown at present. Officers to consider the frequency of any further workshops in line with the dates already in Members diaries for SP&R Committee.

Members also discussed NI Reval2026, the revaluation process being undertaken by Land & Property Services (LPS) to adjust the rateable value of business properties to reflect changes in the property market. The Director advised that the potential impacts for 2026/27 are still unknown at this time, however engagement was ongoing and further updates will be provided as this work progresses.

Members noted an overview of the quarter two 2025/26 forecast position and that a report on both the setting of the district rate 2026/27 and the quarter two forecast position would be submitted to November SP&R for Members consideration.

2. Draft Amenity Bye Laws

The City Solicitor provided a briefing in relation to the draft amenity bye laws for the city centre following the consultation and engagement process which also included facilitated workshops as requested by Members. The City Solicitor outlined the proposed revisions to the bye laws and the exceptions that will be included within the draft. There was detailed discussion on the proposals outlined including the parameters involved. Members raised a number of issues in relation to the enforcement of the bye laws both currently and in relation to the approach proposed for the revised bye laws for which the City Solicitor provided clarity. The City Solicitor to consider the feedback provided and to follow up with PSNI on the issues of concern raised by Members. Consideration to be given to inviting representatives from PSNI to a future meeting to discuss public order issues in the city centre.

A report will be brought to November SP&R for Members consideration. It was noted that the bye laws must be approved by the Department for Communities before they can be formally adopted.

3. Community Support Plan – Large Grants

The Director of Neighbourhood Services referred to the approach agreed by SP&R Committee for the new large grant funding programme 2026-2029 as part of the overall new Community Support Plan 2025-2029. He advised that the number of applications received, and the value of those applications received far exceeded the current budget. The Director highlighted that the assessment process is still ongoing though and that the final financial position was still to be determined. A Member raised a query in relation to funding for independently managed centres and the Director advised that this would be considered as part of the wider programme of work ongoing in relation to community support provision across the city aligned with work ongoing in relation to the use of council owned assets.

A report on the large grant funding programme outlined will be presented to P&C Committee in December and will seek the views of the Committee in relation to the funding deficit. The report will include a recommendation for Members to refer to SP&R Committee to consider additional funding for the programme as a growth proposal as part of the 2026/27 rate setting

process. It was noted that this will be discussed further at the Efficiency and Transformation workshop discussed earlier in the meeting.

4. Request to present – Belfast Harbour Commissioners

The Chief Executive referred to the request for a deputation from the Belfast Harbour Commissioners to present to Party Group Leaders on the Belfast Harbour 2050 Masterplan. Members agreed to the deputation attending a future meeting.

5. Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026

The Strategic Director of Place & Economy presented an update in relation to the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann work programme and outlined the work underway across a number of core workstreams including governance, finance and procurement requirements in order to ensure the effective hosting of the event in 2026. There were a number of queries raised in relation to licensing for which the City Solicitor provided clarity, the Director to also further consider those queries raised in relation to the overall programme of work.

Members also noted the consultation and engagement that was underway and the timeline for upcoming engagement. Members to contact the team directly with any stakeholders they wish to be added to the engagement schedule. A detailed report will be brought to November SP&R Committee.

6. Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition

The Director of City Regeneration & Development provided an update on the work ongoing in relation to a regeneration place based growth proposition for Belfast. The Director outlined the emerging proposed asks from Government following significant consultation with UK Government, the Northern Ireland Executive and Irish Government. Members noted that the business case is now finalised and will be circulated as outlined in advance of the upcoming November budget statement. A summary document has also been compiled and will be circulated to Members. Members noted their continued role in terms of political party engagement. A report outlining the detail discussed and next steps will be considered by November SP&R Committee and the report will also include a request for Member representation at a government roundtable discussion being organised by Scottish Cities Alliance.

As part of the discussion held it was also agreed that the Director of City Regeneration & Development continues to explore European funding opportunities.

7. Planning Update

The City Solicitor updated the Forum on the live planning applications that were considered at the November Planning Committee. Some issues were raised by Members in relation to short term lets, the City Solicitor to follow up with the Director of Planning.

Members also discussed the ongoing resource issues in relation to Environmental Health connected to planning applications which was noted by the Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services.

8. AOB

Queen's University Belfast (QUB)

The Forum recently received a deputation from Queen's University in September and had agreed that there would be merit in continuing the joint engagement. Members considered the frequency of the meetings going forward and it was agreed to invite the deputation to future meetings on a half yearly basis. It was proposed that the next meeting is hosted at Queen's University and that a tour of Friars Bush graveyard previously discussed be arranged to coincide with that meeting. .

Pecuniary Interests

The City Solicitor outlined to Members a pecuniary interest, and a historical interest both of which would be submitted for notation at the December Council meeting. Given the personal information involved these would be considered under restricted session.

Funding Request

The City Solicitor referred to a request that had been received from the Ulster Scots Agency in relation to the use of Council owned playing fields in 2026 and potential financial support for the event. Members to further consider in advance of a request being brought to SP&R Committee.

Windows 11 Upgrade

The Deputy Chief Executive/Strategic Director of Corporate Services reminded Members of the imminent deadline to have all computers upgraded to Windows 11. Members agreed that they would communicate the deadline and the importance of upgrading to party

colleagues. It was also noted that support was available for any technical issues that may occur as a result of the upgrade from the Digital Services team.

There were some other issues raised by Members and the Deputy Chief Executive advised that the Head of Digital Services would contact those Members directly to discuss.

2 Royal Avenue

The Director of City Regeneration & Development provided an update on the new Expression of Interest exercise to be undertaken in respect of the future use of the ground floor of 2 Royal Avenue. Members agreed to contact the Director should they wish to add any contact names.

City Centre Regeneration Scheme

The Director of City Regeneration & Development advised that there is ongoing Ministerial and political engagement being undertaken by the developers in relation to the site previously known as Tribeca and Members noted the engagement taking place. Members to contact the Director for further information if required.

Visit to Dublin City Council

The Chief Executive outlined the proposed itinerary for the upcoming Forum visit to Dublin City Council which has been arranged for 27/28 November 2025. It was noted that the final itinerary will be circulated shortly in advance of the visit.

Gasworks Site

The Director of Property & Projects outlined the specifics of an emerging proposal for an asset located in the Gasworks Site. Members noted the update presented and the Director to consider the community benefit aspects discussed in advance of the report going to November SP&R for Members consideration.

Member Request – Use of City Hall

The City Solicitor advised she had received a request from a Member for an upcoming event in November. Following discussion, it was agreed that further clarity was needed in relation to the request before any consensus could be given. Members also asked for clarification on the use of committee rooms to be brought back to a future meeting. The City Solicitor to follow up and circulate further details once received to Party Group Leaders.

Call In

Members noted a Call In had been received in relation to the decision made at November Council that in recognition of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, that the Council agrees to erect the National Flag of Palestine above the City Hall on 29th November 2025. Legal Counsel is to be sought in a timely manner given the timeframe involved and Members updated accordingly.

Issues raised by a Member

A Member referred to a recent funding announcement made by the Department for Communities. Members discussed other recent announcements, and it was agreed that Officers further explore and a report is brought back to a future meeting.

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Belfast
City Council

Subject:	Requests for use of the City Hall
Date:	21 November 2025
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Christopher Burns, Interim Functions and Exhibition Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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 <input type="text"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	This paper, together with the attached appendix, contains the recommended approach in respect of each of the requests by external organisations for access to the City Hall function

	rooms received up to 7 November 2025.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the recommendations as set out in Appendix 1.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Background Information</u>
3.1	The current criteria for use of the function rooms used to review external applications is set out below.
3.2	<p>Functions permitted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • functions which support other events in the city and which are of demonstrable economic benefit to Belfast whether organised by the council or not. • functions which demonstrably enhance the city's image nationally or internationally as a desirable commercial, business or tourist destination. • functions designed to celebrate or commemorate a notable achievement or significant anniversary (25, 50, 100 years) by an organisation or body with close links to the city or province. • functions organised by recognised local community or voluntary sector groups for non-profit and non-political purposes.
3.3	<p>Functions not permitted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conferences, meetings, seminars, performances, wedding receptions, private parties or receptions and similar booking requests in the prestige function rooms. • functions, which have as their principal purpose the generation of commercial gain for the organisers. Charity-fundraising functions are managed by the Lord Mayor's Office. • functions which have no compelling links to the council or the city specifically and which could instead use local private sector facilities. • functions which have as their primary purpose the advancement of any political or religious cause or campaign or are otherwise potentially contentious or involve significant reputation risks for the council. • functions which involve exceptionally large or disruptive set-ups or pose a real and tangible risk to the fabric of the building or grounds.
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.4	Committee will recall that at its meeting on 24 th May 2024, it considered an update on the City Hall Income Generation Project. Committee was advised that charging for the use of the Council's function rooms will be considered as part of a later stage of this project. This will include looking at a review of the current pricing structure and the provision of hospitality.

	Pending this work being brought to Committee, delegated authority was given to the City Solicitor and Director of Legal & Civic Services to depart from the existing charging structure and negotiate room hire charges for commercial type events.
3.5	The standard charging structure will apply to the events listed in the Schedule at Appendix 1 up until the end of the current financial year. Events from April 2026 onwards will not have prices confirmed to organisers until conclusion of current review.
	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.6	None, any recommendations for hospitality will be met from existing budgets.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.7	None.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Schedule of function requests received up to 7 November 2025.

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NOVEMBER 2025 CITY HALL FUNCTION APPLICATIONS

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE
Multi-Ethnic Sports & Cultures Northern Ireland (MSCNI)	10 January 2026	MSCNI 10th Anniversary & Launch of Northern Ireland Sports, Cultures and Neighbourhood Stories Awards (NISCANS Awards) The NISCANS Awards aim to shine a light on local heroes, community champions, and organisations who have helped welcome individuals and families who have migrated to NI from diverse backgrounds, contributing to inclusion, cohesion and a shared sense of belonging. Awards, cultural performances followed by dinner and entertainment. Numbers attending – 100	C & D	Current rate free as charity
Department of Education N.Ireland / Ireland	12 May 2026	Creative Connections Shared Island Pilot Programme– Celebration Day to celebrate the work of young people, Teachers and Creative Practitioners and showcase the value of cross border collaboration in Education. Speeches, showcase of work, entertainment followed by lunch. Numbers attending – 230	A & D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Cregagh Wanderers Football Club	22 May 2026	Cregagh Wanderers FC 20th Anniversary Celebration – Formal dinner with presentations and light entertainment. Numbers attending – 200	C	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Northern Ireland Screen	3 June 2026	Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund USA 250 reception at the Celtic Media Festival – coinciding with the Celtic Media Festival, Ulster Scots Broadcast Fund would like to celebrate it's 15-year anniversary and showcase the work they have funded for broadcasters including BBC NI and RTE with a drinks reception with light catering, speeches and showreels played. Numbers attending – 200	A, B & C	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>

NOVEMBER 2025 CITY HALL FUNCTION APPLICATIONS

The Church of Ireland	28 June 2026	Opening Gala Dinner for the 19th meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC-19). The council, which includes Anglican bishops, other clergy, and laity, meets every 2-3 years in different parts of the world. This dinner followed by speeches will see attendees from over 40 countries. Numbers attending – 180	A & B	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Queen's University Belfast (QUB)	2 July 2026	QUB International Summer School Farewell Event – Drinks reception followed by dinner, speeches and awards to celebrate around 100 international students who will have been studying in Belfast for 3 weeks prior to event. Numbers attending - 100	A & B	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Heritage Network	28 September 2026	Heritage Network Conference Dinner following main conference day in the assembly buildings. The event is expected to attract 250+ delegates from across the community heritage sector in the UK. Reception, dinner, presentations and cultural performances. Numbers attending – 300	A & B	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
ImageNation NI	17 October 2026	Belfast Diwali 2026 – Indian celebration event with dinner and cultural performances to mark the festival of Diwali. Number attending – 400	D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Gertrude Star Flute Band	31 October 2026	Gertrude Star 65th Anniversary Dinner – drinks reception, dinner, speeches and presentations followed by flute band performance and live music to end the evening. Numbers attending 150	C	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>