

Public Document Pack

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



**Belfast
City Council**

16th April, 2024

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet in the Lavery Room, City Hall on Friday, 19th April, 2024 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) Update on Temporary Contracts and Agency Workers_ (Pages 1 - 14)
- (b) Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations 2024 (Pages 15 - 22)

3. Matters referred back from Council/Motions

- (a) Notices of Motion Quarterly Update (Pages 23 - 32)
- (b) Response received from Dept for Communities re NOM - Anti-Poverty Strategy (Pages 33 - 38)

- (c) Response received from Dept for Infrastructure re Living With Water (LWW) (Pages 39 - 44)
- (d) Response received from Minister of Finance re Setting Rates (Pages 45 - 48)
- (e) Finaghy Festival (Pages 49 - 66)

4. **Governance**

- (a) Local Government Ability to Hold Remote Meetings - Mar 2024 (Pages 67 - 76)
- (b) Appointment of Members to the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners (Pages 77 - 80)
- (c) Corporate Seal S76 agreements (Pages 81 - 84)

5. **Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**

- (a) City Development and Regeneration (To Follow)
- (b) Social Supermarket Fund (Pages 85 - 98)
- (c) Gaeltacht Quarter dual language street signs proposal (Pages 99 - 112)
- (d) Culture Night (To Follow)

6. **Physical Programme and Asset Management**

- (a) Physical Programme Update (Pages 113 - 120)
- (b) Assets Report (Pages 121 - 128)

7. **Finance, Procurement and Performance**

- (a) Contracts Report (Pages 129 - 134)
- (b) West Belfast Well Being Hub (Pages 135 - 138)

8. **Equality and Good Relations**

- (a) Language Strategy Action Plan (Pages 139 - 204)
- (b) Irish Language Policy (Pages 205 - 228)

9. **Operational Issues**

- (a) Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum 11 April 2024 (Pages 229 - 232)
- (b) Requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality (Pages 233 - 238)

10. **Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

- (a) Baby Loss Awareness - Councillor Beattie to raise

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

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Subject:	Notices of Motion – Quarterly Update
Date:	19 th April 2024
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor & Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Geoff Dickson, Strategic Policy Lead Officer Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer Clare Hutchinson, Strategic Planning and Policy Officer

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 or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Committee on the progress of all Notices of Motion for which SP&R Committee is responsible for.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>It is recommended that the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the updates to all Notices of Motion that SP&R Committee is responsible for and • Agree to the closure of Notice of Motion 138 as referenced in Appendix 1 and paragraph 3.4 below.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>At SP&R Committee on 25th October 2019, the following Notice of Motion was agreed:</p> <p>“That this Council notes that other Councils produce a monthly status report in relation to Notices of Motion; and agrees Belfast City Council adopts a similar practice and produces a monthly Notice of Motion Update which will be brought to each full Council Meeting, detailing the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Date received 2. Notice of motion title 3. Submitted by which Councillor 4. Council meeting date 5. Committee motion is referred to 6. Outcome of committee where Notice of Motion will be debated 7. Month it will be reported back to committee 8. Other action to be taken.”
3.2	<p>Following a review exercise, a new database containing all Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance at Committee was created and quarterly reporting to Committee commenced in March 2021. Appendix 1 is the latest quarterly update showing all active Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance which SP&R Committee is responsible for.</p>
3.3	<p>Closure of Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance</p> <p>At SP&R Committee on 20th November 2020, it was agreed that Notices of Motion could be closed for one of two reasons:</p>

3.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notices of Motion which contained an action(s) that has been completed; and • Notices of Motion have become Council policy. <p>SP&R Committee are asked to agree that the following Notice of Motion is now closed:</p> <p>Category 2 Recommended Closure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Environment Day (138) – This NOM called on the Council to support biodiversity and take positive actions towards tackling the climate emergency by working with partners in range of areas, including marking World Environment Day on June 5th and through the development of awareness raising content and development of a programme of digital or physical events to support our citizens in challenging climate change. The Climate Team is developing a calendar of key dates with Corporate Communications, ensuring appropriate messaging is developed in advance. The Communication Plan will be delivered through the BCC Climate Action Plan. Therefore it is recommended that this NOM is now closed.
3.5	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no additional financial implications required to implement these recommendations.</p>
3.6	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications contained in this report.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices- Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1: Notices of Motion Live Database – SP&R Committee</p>

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Belfast City Council Notice of Motion Database

Ref	Type	Meeting Date	Duration	Motion Title	Proposed by	Reporting Committee	Reporting Officer	Lead Department	Status	Status Update
7	Notice of Motion	09/04/2018	5y 11m	Childcare Strategy	Cllr Mal O'Hara	SP&R	John Tully	City & Organisational Strategy	Ongoing	It was agreed at SP&R October 23 that this NOM would remain open, to allow for a further report to be submitted. UPDATE (March 2024): SP&R Committee agreed at its meeting on 23 February 2024 to request All-Party delegation meetings with each of the new NICS Ministers. The need for the Child Care Strategy and associated considerations will be incorporated within the agenda and areas for discussion with the relevant NICS Ministers and Departmental Officials.
23	Notice of Motion	01/07/2019	4y 9m	Removal of Banners and Paramilitary Flags in Belfast	Cllr Ciaran Beattie	SP&R	Nora Largey	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	Consultation delayed due to Covid-19. Since the decision by SP & R in 2019, the FICT report commissioned by The Executive was published which covers similar issues. Extensive consultation was undertaken between 2016 - 19 on this and the contents of this report have the agreement of the 5 main political parties represented on the Commission
25	Issue Raised in Advance	23/08/2019	4y 7m	Abortion Imagery	Cllr Aine Groogan	SP&R	Nora Largey	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	Report to be brought to CMT and potentially Party Group Leaders for discussion on way forward. On 26 June 2023 the SP&R Committee agreed that the draft Bye Laws be issued for formal public consultation commencing in September 2023. At the Oct 23 Cttee it was agreed that this would remain open awaiting outcome of planned consultation. Consultation commenced on 27 November 2023 and concluded on 4 March 2024. There was an extremely high level of responses to this consultation and officers are currently working on analysing the responses in preparation for drafting a report on the consultation findings.
35	Notice of Motion	02/12/2019	4y 4m	Pridestrian Animation	Cllr Matt Garrett	SP&R	John Greer	Place & Economy	Ongoing	As previously reported, Officers have engaged with external partners and developed a proposal for a piece of temporary public art. A paper for Committee's consideration will be presented in the coming months.
49	Notice of Motion	03/02/2020	4y 2m	Market Gardens and Urban Farming	Cllr Seamas de Faoite	SP&R	John Tully	City & Organisational Strategy	Ongoing	The Climate Team have established a Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership, which is currently developing a sustainable food strategy for the city and will consider the potential for market gardens and urban farming in the city as part of this. Also links with Right to Grow motion. The UPSURGE and UP2030 projects are also looking at the use of green space and nature based solutions, and will include community and urban food growing opportunities.

				Belfast Zoo						Cognisant of the USI Visioning Masterplan, an ongoing programme of works and upgrades continues to progress across the zoo site, with recent works including the refurbishment of the Monkey House. The Assets Team are contributing to an Asset Audit and Development Plan which will result in development plans being produced for several key assets. If the zoo is selected as a priority asset, development plans will include options for improved site utilisation, identification of capital development requirements, interpretation and programming, operational considerations, high level costs and potential sources of financial support. In March 2024, the zoo received an Autism NI Impact Award.
50	Notice of Motion	03/02/2020	4y 2m		Cllr Conor Maskey	SP&R	John Greer	Place & Economy	Ongoing	
51	Notice of Motion	03/02/2020	4y 2m	Growth Deal	Cllr Ciaran Beattie	SP&R	Sharon McNicholl	Corporate Services	Ongoing	To be progressed as resources become available.
				Disabled People and Older People						10.01.23 Part one of this motion in relation to older people and inclusivity is now recommended for closure due to the above update. However there are further actions and updates to be gained in relation to accessibility and inclusivity with regards to disabled people and in a wider sense. Therefore this motion has been left as on-going until these further updates are obtained
74	Issue Raised in Advance	19/06/2020	3y 9m		Cllr Ross McMullan	SP&R	Nora Largey	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	
131	Notice of Motion	02/11/2020	3y 5m	Sealing of the Records of Mother and Baby Homes	Cllr Michael Collins	SP&R	Nora Largey	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	Response from Irish Gov still outstanding - 06/09/21
				World Environment Day						The Climate Team is developing a calendar of key dates with Corporate Communications, ensuring appropriate messaging is developed in advance. The Communication Plan will be delivered through the BCC Climate Action Plan.
138	Notice of Motion	07/12/2020	3y 4m		Cllr Matt Garrett	SP&R	John Tully	City & Organisational Strategy	Recommend Close	
167	Notice of Motion	01/04/2021	3y 0m	Violence against Women and Girls	Cllr Sian Mulholland	SP&R	Nora Largey	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	To be progressed as resources become available
				10 Per Cent Pay Increase for Council Workers						Work continues to develop an updated Pay and Grading Structure in line with the rate setting process for FY 2024/25. It is anticipated that an update will be brought to SP&R on the P&G structure and assimilation ahead of finalising the rate. Proposals for an updated Pay and Grading Structure were brought to SP&R in February in line with the rate setting process for FY 2024/25. TU is in the process of balloting members on the formal offer."
171	Notice of Motion	01/04/2021	3y 0m		Cllr Matt Collins	SP&R	John Tully	City & Organisational Strategy	Ongoing	
				Mater Hospital Services						This motion related to provision of services during the pandemic - this was resolved with services returning to normal from November 2022. 12.03.23 This motion recommendation for closure was rejected at Feb SP&R and therefore remains on-going
176	Notice of Motion	04/05/2021	2y 11m		Cllr Fiona Ferguson	SP&R	Nora Largey	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	
				Local Government Pension Scheme - Responsible Investment Strategy						Letter sent 2/7/21. Meeting with NILGOSC requested by S P and R 20/8/21 - to be arranged
187	Notice of Motion	01/06/2021	2y 10m		Cllr Ryan Murphy	SP&R	Nora Largey	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	
189	Notice of Motion	01/06/2021	2y 10m	PEACE IV to PEACE PLUS Programmes	Cllr John Kyle	SP&R	Nora Largey	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	Letters sent 2/7/21. Response received from SEUPB 20/7/21 - TEO yet to respond
195	Notice of Motion	01/07/2021	2y 9m	Chat Bench and Tackling Loneliness	Cllr Carole Howard	SP&R	Sinead Grimes	Property & Projects	Ongoing	To be progressed as resources become available. The NoM is wider than just physical projects.

197	Notice of Motion	01/09/2021	2y 7m	The Rights of Nature	Cllr Brian Smyth	SP&R	John Tully	City & Organisational Strategy	Ongoing	Research and engagement ongoing to understand related initiatives such as biodiversity net gain and nature positive as part of Council Climate Action Plan which will be brought to Council for approval in due course.
199	Notice of Motion	01/09/2021	2y 7m	Four-Day Working Week	Cllr Matt Garrett	SP&R	Christine Sheridan	Human Resources	Ongoing	Management to bring a report to future SP&R committee regarding proposals for a 4 day working week pilot.
203	Notice of Motion	04/10/2021	2y 6m	Electric Charging Points	Ald George Dorrian	SP&R	Nora Largey	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	Responses from Ministers being considered by officers
209	Notice of Motion	04/10/2021	2y 6m	Environmentally Sustainable Event Spaces	Cllr Matt Garrett	SP&R	Sinead Grimes	Property & Projects	Ongoing	A report is required to SP&R Committee to outline the next steps. To be discussed at CMT.
225	Issue Raised in Advance	17/12/2021	2y 3m	City Centre Built Heritage	Cllr Ryan Murphy	SP&R	Cathy Reynolds	Place & Economy	Ongoing	Work is ongoing.
228	Notice of Motion	10/01/2022	2y 2m	Playing Pitches in Belfast	Cllr David Brooks	SP&R	David Sales	City & Neighbourhood Services	Ongoing	
235	Notice of Motion	22/02/2022	2y 1m	Energy Price Crises	Cllr Brian Smyth	SP&R	John Tully	City & Organisational Strategy	Ongoing	The Climate Team are currently developing an EV Strategy for Belfast which will consider community needs and opportunities. The Belfast Local Area Energy Plan is under development, due to complete in March 2024, this will consider opportunities for community energy initiatives. In parallel discussions are ongoing with projects such as Edenderry District Energy initiative, to explore opportunities to support community ambitions.
243	Notice of Motion	14/03/2022	2y 0m	Cost of Living	Cllr Matt Garrett	SP&R	John Tully	City & Organisational Strategy	Ongoing	UPDATE (March 2024) - the 2023/2024 £1m+ hardship programme will be completed on 31 March 2024, with monitoring information on deliverables to be submitted by delivery partners by the 10 May 2024. Correspondence issued to the Department for Communities seeking conformation on whether hardship funding will be allocated for the 2024/2025 financial year.
257	Issue Raised in Advance	17/06/2022	1y 9m	City Cemetery - Bi-lingual Signage	Cllr Ciaran Beattie	SP&R	Sinead Grimes	Property & Projects	Ongoing	The new City Cemetery visitor centre is open and operational. Dual language signage on the visitor centre is complete. External dual language signs are scheduled to be installation the end of March 2024.
264	Issue Raised in Advance	19/08/2022	1y 7m	Electric Vehicle Charging Points Strategy	Cllr Michael Long	SP&R	John Tully	City & Organisational Strategy	Ongoing	The Climate Team plan to present the draft Belfast EV Strategy to SP&R Committee for approval in May 2024 in advance of a public consultation in June. A Belfast EV City group will be established thereafter to support its
280	Issue Raised in Advance	21/10/2022	1y 5m	Fuel Poverty Hardship Fund	Cllr Anthony Flynn	SP&R	David Sales	City & Neighbourhood Services	Ongoing	
283	Issue Raised in Advance	18/11/2022	1y 4m	Memorial to Baroness May Blood	Cllr Micky Murray	SP&R	Sinead Grimes	Property & Projects	Ongoing	Discussed at the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group. To be considered as part of the City Hall statues project under the Capital Programme.
284	Issue Raised in Advance	18/11/2022	1y 4m	Use of the Ceremony Room, City Hall	Cllr Michelle Kelly	SP&R	Sinead Grimes	Property & Projects	Ongoing	A report on the potential reinstatement of the Ceremony Room to be submitted to a future Committee meeting.
297	Notice of Motion	05/01/2023	1y 3m	Comber Greenway	Cllr Anthony Flynn	SP&R	Sinead Grimes	Property & Projects	Ongoing	Project has significant resource and financial implications. Officers are starting the process of reengaging with DfI on the Comber Greenway.

298	Notice of Motion	05/01/2023	1y 3m	School Street Schemes	Cllr Seamas de Faoite	SP&R	Nora Largey	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	Letters issued to DfI on 17 Apr 2023 in relation to Rosetta Way "quietway" and also to DAERA on 12 Feb 2024 re School Streets Air Quality but no letter specifically on School Streets Schemes appears to have issued to DfI
										UPDATE (March 2024): •Since the announcement of Levelling Up Fund Round 3 and the fact that this did not apply to Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Executive has been restored and has been given a spending settlement worth over £3.3 billion. Noting these developments, rather than apply a Levelling Up Fund Round 3 competition in Northern Ireland, ministers opted to fund one additional LUF culture project in Northern Ireland directly, drawing from the list of bids submitted in Round 2. Ministers opted to fund the highest-scoring cultural bid within the funding available from the list of unfunded projects submitted at LUF Round 2. From a list of all remaining unfunded Round 2 projects, the Shore Road Skills Centre was selected for NI at a value of £2.2 million to fund
300	Issue Raised in Advance	20/01/2023	1y 2m	Levelling Up Fund	Cllr Ronan McLaughlin	SP&R	John Tully	City & Organisational Strategy	Ongoing	Adopted at Standards and Business Committee. Progress to be reported to SP&R
	Notice of Motion	24/01/2023	1y 2m	Support for striking Health Workers	Cllr Matt Collins	SP&R	Nora Largey	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	Research and benchmarking complete, proposals have been developed consultation ongoing with management and trade unions in accordance with the IR Framework. Aim to have policy agreed at April JNCC.
306	Notice of Motion	21/02/2023	1y 1m	Maternity Leave Provision for Mothers of Babies defined as Premature	Cllr Gareth Spratt	SP&R	Christine Sheridan	Human Resources	Ongoing	At SP&R on 24th November the Committee agreed that, at the request of Councillor Smyth, that a report be submitted at its next monthly meeting with specific reference made to meetings held, legal advice sought and partners engaged with - see no. 346 for reference.
	Notice of Motion	21/02/2023	1y 1m	Overdose Prevention Facility in Belfast	Cllr Mal O'Hara	SP&R	Nora Largey	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	
319	Notice of Motion	27/06/2023	0y 9m	CPR Training and Circuit	Cllr Christina Black	SP&R	Nora Largey	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	
325	Issue Raised in Advance	18/08/2023	0y 7m	Request for Artwork to Celebrate the Oscar Winning Film 'An Irish Goodbye'	Cllr Christina Black	SP&R	John Greer	Place & Economy	Ongoing	As previously reported, Officers been considering how to meet this request from within existing programmes and budgets. A paper for SP&R Committee's consideration will be presented at a future date to secure appropriate funding.
326	Issue Raised in Advance	18/08/2023	0y 7m	Data Protection	Cllr Ciaran Beattie	SP&R	Nora Largey	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	
330	Notice of Motion	29/08/2023	0y 7m	Clean Indoor Air Motion	Cllr Jenna Maghie	SP&R	Nora Largey	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	
331				Save West Wellbeing Suicide Awareness						Following discussion at Party Leaders and SP&R, and on the basis there were no funds available for reallocation, it was agreed that all requests for funding would be dealt with via the discretionary payments policy, which is currently being reviewed and revised. This was due to a specified reserve being available for this purpose. Following discussion at SP&R on 24th November, criteria to be revised slightly and a scoring matrix developed and brought back to SP&R in December. This will allow organisations to apply for funding
	Notice of Motion	29/08/2023	0y 7m		Cllr Michael Collins	SP&R	Trevor Wallace	Finance & Resources	Ongoing	

337	Notice of Motion	26/09/2023	0y 6m	Right to Food Campaign	Cllr Paul Doherty	SP&R	Nora Largey	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	Response presented to S P and R 24/11/23 - Referred to Social Policy Working Group
341	Notice of Motion	24/10/2023	0y 5m	Childcare Provision	Cllr Jenna Maghie	SP&R	David Sales	City & Neighbourhood Services	Ongoing	Report to be brought back to S P and R
342	Notice of Motion	24/10/2023	0y 5m	Mental Health Accessibility Audit	Cllr Matt Garrett	SP&R	David Sales	City & Neighbourhood Services	Ongoing	Report to be brought back to S P and R
344	Motion	24/10/2023	0y 5m	Rugby World Cup	Cllr Donal Lyons	SP&R	Nora Largey	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	Motion adopted at S P and R 24/11/23
				Right to Grow on Council owned land						Internal cross-departmental discussions are taking place to understand how this might be taken forward in Belfast. Sustain who lead the campaign are running a 'good to grow week' in April and BCC is linking in as part of the UPSURGE project and the Belfast Learning Festival programme. Needs to be considered as part of community growing needs so is being integrated with this work programme, with a report and recommendations due to come back to the Council at a future date.
351	Notice of Motion	28/11/2023	0y 4m		Cllr David Bell	SP&R	John Tully	City & Organisational Strategy	Ongoing	letter sent to Linen Quarter Bid re Trademark Belfast's request to take over the short-term lease of a portion of land on Bankmore Square
355	Issue Raised in Advance	15/12/2023	0y 3m	Trademark Belfast - Future Location	Cllr Micky Murray	SP&R	Nora Largey	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	
356	Notice of Motion	04/01/2024	0y 3m	Memorial Wall - Covid-19	Cllr Emmett McDonou	SP&R	Nora Largey	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	
359	Issue Raised in Advance	19/01/2024	0y 2m	Request for BCC to act as a Sponsor for a Community Asset Transfer for West Belfast Partnership Board	Cllr Christina Black	SP&R	Nora Largey	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	
360	Notice of Motion	23/01/2024	0y 2m	Transparency by Default at Belfast City Council	Cllr Gary McKeown	SP&R	Nora Largey	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	
361	Notice of Motion	23/01/2024	0y 2m	Rights-based Ethical Procurement Policy	Cllr Bronach Anglin	SP&R	Nora Largey	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	
366	Notice of Motion	22/02/2024	0y 1m	Gender Pay Gap Recording and Reporting	Cllr Tara Brooks	SP&R	Christine Sheridan	Human Resources	Ongoing	A meeting has been organised with the Local Government Staff Commission with a view to seeking support from ECNI on how the council might progress gender pay gap reporting. The meeting will take place 12 April 2024.
367	Notice of Motion	22/02/2024	0y 1m	Housing Crisis	Cllr Aine Groogan	SP&R	Cathy Reynolds	Place & Economy	Ongoing	

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Subject:	Response received from Department for Communities re Notice of Motion – Anti-Poverty Strategy
Date:	19th April, 2024
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
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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
1.1	To note the correspondence received from the Department for Communities.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the correspondence as set out in the report.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The Committee will recall that, at the Council meeting held on 4th March, 2024, it was agreed to write to the Minister for Communities, Mr Gordon Lyons advising him of the Notice of Motion in relation to Anti-Poverty Strategy.
3.2	The Committee is advised that a response has been received from Mr Carl Savage, Deputy Director Central Policy Division, Department for Communities.
3.3	In his response he advises that addressing poverty in all its forms is a key priority for Minister Lyons and he is committed to delivering long-term sustainable solutions to poverty in all its forms for our communities right across Northern Ireland.
3.4	Poverty is a complex and multi-faceted issue, and the Minister is considering work to date and the next steps to be taken in relation to the development of the Executive's Anti-Poverty Strategy. He will be engaging with his Executive colleagues over the coming weeks and months to ensure that the Anti-Poverty Strategy is taken forward in the most effective way possible and that the actions in the Strategy are deliverable and can make a lasting difference.
3.5	As this is an Executive Strategy, they will be seeking input from all Ministers and their Departments.
3.6	Minister Lyons is determined to deliver a Strategy that helps people get the best start in life, that they have the opportunity to live in safe, stable homes, to have a good education and a good job. Final decisions on the content and implementation of the Anti-Poverty Strategy will be subject to Executive agreement.
3.7	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>

3.8	<p>None associated with this report.</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
	Appendix 1 – Response from Minister for Communities

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From Carl Savage
Deputy Director Central Policy Division

Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Belfast
BT2 7EG

e-mail: Carl.Savage@communities-ni.gov.uk

Our Ref: TOF-1149-2024

Date: 28 March 2024

Eilish McGoldrick

Via email: mcgoldricke@belfastcity.gov.uk

Dear Eilish

Motion - Anti-Poverty Strategy

I refer to your correspondence of 13 March 2024 to Minister Lyons in which you advised him of the motion passed by Council on 4th March 2024 relating to the Anti-Poverty Strategy. Your letter has been passed to me for reply.

Addressing poverty in all its forms is a key priority for Minister Lyons and he is committed to delivering long-term, sustainable solutions to poverty in all its forms for our communities right across Northern Ireland.

Poverty is a complex and multi-faceted issue, and the Minister is considering work to date and the next steps to be taken in relation to the development of the Executive's Anti-Poverty Strategy. He will be engaging with his Executive colleagues over the coming weeks and months to ensure that the Anti-Poverty Strategy is taken forward in the most effective way possible and that the actions in the Strategy are deliverable and can make a lasting difference.



As this is an Executive Strategy, we will be seeking input from all Ministers and their Departments.

Minister Lyons is determined to deliver a Strategy that helps people get the best start in life, that they have the opportunity to live in safe, stable homes, to have a good education and a good job.

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

I hope that you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Carl Savage
Deputy Director Central Policy Division
Department for Communities



Subject:	Response received from Department for Infrastructure re Living With Water (LWW)
Date:	19th April, 2024
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, Interim 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 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%;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td><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	To note the correspondence received from the Permanent Secretary, Department for Infrastructure.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the correspondence as set out in the report.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The Committee will recall that, at the Strategic Policy and Resources meeting held on 19th January, 2024, it was agreed to write to Dr. Denis McMahon, Permanent Secretary, Department for Infrastructure, inviting him to a future meeting of the Committee to discuss the review of the Strategic Drainage Infrastructure Plan for Belfast.
3.2	The Committee is advised that a response has been received from the Permanent Secretary.
3.3	In his response he advises that Department officials are continuing to engage with stakeholders to gather views and comments which will inform the recommendations within the review report, and he understands Simon Richardson, Director of the Living with Water Programme, will be providing further presentations to a number of other Belfast City Council Committees. A major contributing factor to the review recommendations will be the outcome of the Utility Regulator's Mid-Term Review of NI Water's PC21 Business Plan. The publication of this has been delayed and is expected in June, so the LWW review will conclude after this.
3.4	At this stage there is no significant update that can be provided over and above the information provided at the January Committee meeting. Any further comments, to be considered as part of the LWW review, can be provided through the Belfast City Council representative on the LWW Board, and would be greatly welcomed.
3.5	Since the presentation at the Committee meeting on 19th January, Ministers have returned to the NI Executive and Mr John O'Dowd MLA has taken up the post of Minister for Infrastructure. The Minister will consider the recommendations within the LWW Review Report and decide on the most appropriate way forward.
3.6	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> None associated with this report.

3.7	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None associated with this report.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Response from Department for Infrastructure

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From the Permanent Secretary
Dr Denis McMahon

Your Reference: JH/MOH
Our Reference: SINV-0045-2024

Jim Hanna
Democratic Services & Governance Manager
Belfast City Council
Legal and Civic Services Department
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

Room 701
Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
BELFAST
BT2 8GB
Telephone (028) 9054 1175
Email: perm.sec@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Via email: hannajim@belfastcity.gov.uk

21 March 2023

Dear Mr Hanna

LIVING WITH WATER (LWW)

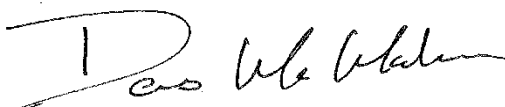
Thank you for your invitation to attend a meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to discuss the review of the Living With Water in Belfast Plan. As part of the Department's engagement with key stakeholders on the LWW review I understand my colleague Simon Richardson, Director of the Living with Water Programme, provided an update at the Committee's January Meeting.

Department officials are continuing to engage with stakeholders to gather views and comments which will inform the recommendations within the review report, and I understand Simon will be providing further presentations to a number of other Belfast City Council Committees. A major contributing factor to the review recommendations will be the outcome of the Utility Regulator's Mid-Term Review of NI Water's PC21 Business Plan. The publication of this has been delayed and is expected in June, so the LWW review will conclude after this.

At this stage there is no significant update that can be provided over and above the information provided in January. Any further comments, to be considered as part of the LWW review, can be provided through the Belfast City Council representative on the LWW Board, and would be greatly welcomed.

Since the presentation in January, Ministers have returned to the NI Executive and Mr John O'Dowd MLA has taken up the post of Minister for Infrastructure. The Minister will consider the recommendations within the LWW Review Report and decide on the most appropriate way forward.

Yours sincerely



DR DENIS McMAHON
DfI Permanent Secretary

cc: Declan McGeown
Simon Richardson
Stuart Wightman
Marie-Louise Wise
Anne-Marie Wylie



Subject:	Response received from Minister of Finance re adopting the Scottish model of setting the business rate poundage
Date:	19th April, 2024
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance

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 or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To note the correspondence received from the Minister of Finance.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the correspondence as set out in the report.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The Committee will recall that, at the Council meeting held on 1st February, 2024, it was agreed to write to the Minister of Finance to ask the Department to consider adopting the same model used by the Scottish Government of setting its own business rates to help pay for local services.
3.2	The Committee is advised that a response has been received from the Minister of Finance, Dr Caoimhe Archibald.
3.3	In her response she advises that her Department is currently engaging with Ulster University on the potential for new research on the issue of rate poundage differentials across Council areas here, how this operates within the wider non-domestic rating system and any economic effects.
3.4	She points out though that any structural changes to the rate striking process for non-domestic rates would be a complex one. District Council rate setting sits outside her Ministerial portfolio, local government finance falls within the Minister for Communities' policy and legislative competency.
3.5	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> None associated with this report.
3.6	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None associated with this report.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Response from Minister of Finance

From the Minister of Finance

Sara Steele
SteeleSara@BelfastCity.gov.uk

Private Office
2nd Floor
Clare House
303 Airport Road West
BELFAST
BT3 9ED

Tel: 028 9081 6236
Email: private.office@finance-ni.gov.uk

Your reference: CLL 1.02.2024 SS/JT
Our reference: COR-1097-2024
Date: 11 March 2024

Ms Steele, a chara

BUSINESS RATES

Thank you for your letter of 29 February about adopting the Scottish model of setting the business rate poundage.

This letter is quite timely as it comes as my Department is currently engaging with Ulster University on the potential for new research on the issue of rate poundage differentials across Council areas here, how this operates within the wider non-domestic rating system and any economic effects.

I should point out though that any structural changes to the rate striking process for non-domestic rates would be a complex one. District Council rate setting sits outside my Ministerial portfolio, local government finance falls within the Minister for Communities' policy and legislative competency.

I am, however, open to considering views on this matter alongside Executive colleagues.

Is mise le meas



DR CAOIMHE ARCHIBALD MLA
MINISTER OF FINANCE

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Subject:	<u>Request for Finaghy Community Association to use Wedderburn Park to host their annual festival</u>
Date:	Friday 19 th April 2024
Reporting Officer:	David Sales, Strategic Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Stephen Leonard, Operational Director of Resources, Fleet and OSS

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

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

Insert number

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

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The Committee is asked to note that this event was approved at the People and Communities committee held on Tuesday 05th March however was deferred at the meeting of full Council on Monday 08th April pending exploration by Council officers into whether the event has been delivered in previous years without issue.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to grant authority to the applicant for the proposed event on the dates noted and to delegate authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to ensure satisfactory terms and conditions of use via an appropriate legal agreement prepared by the City Solicitor, including managing final booking confirmation dates and flexibility around 'set up' & take down' periods, and booking amendments, subject to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The organizers resolving any operational issues to the Council's satisfaction. - The organizers carrying out appropriate resident & community engagement. - The organizers meeting all the statutory requirements of the Planning and Building Control Service including the terms and conditions of the Park's Entertainment Licence.
2.2	Please note that the above recommendations are taken as a pre-policy position in advance of the Council agreeing a more structured framework and policy for 'Events', which is currently being taken forward in conjunction with the Councils Commercial team.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The event organisers are Finaghy Community Association. The group formed in 2020 in response to COVID and successfully operated a foodbank in the area supporting elderly and vulnerable people during difficult times. The group then started volunteering and organising events for the community delivering their first festival event in 2021 and again in 2022.</p>
3.2	Since forming back in 2020 the group have been building capacity to deliver a range of community-based support.
3.3	Council received this year's event booking form from the organisers in January 2024. Since receipt of the booking form the organisers have further submitted their event management plan.
3.4	The festival will take place over 3 days from Friday 16 th August to Sunday 18 th August. The event involves family fun entertainment during the day and live music at night. Other activity includes a history exhibition and walk, a seniors tea dance and a food tasting session.
3.5	The live music element will be serviced with a bar serving alcohol so a drinks license will be in place.
3.6	The group have applied to the Police Property Fund to help fund the event.
3.7	The entertainment license for the park will be transferred to the organisers via an appropriate site legal agreement.

3.8	Colleagues in building control are aware of the application made to City and Neighbourhood services and will be engaging with the event organiser to ensure the terms of the entertainment license are adhered to.
3.9	Building control have checked their previous files on this event for issues and have noted some noise disturbance at the 2021 event that was addressed and rectified for the 2022 event with no further issues or complaints received.
3.10	The PSNI have confirmed that they have no issues recorded specific to the running of the event in 2021 or 2022. The only note they have on record was the need for the entertainment license to be in place prior to them making a recommendation to the courts to grant the liquor license.
3.11	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no known financial or resource implications with these requests.</p>
3.12	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>There are no known implications.</p>
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – Event booking form</p> <p>Appendix 2 – E-mail from Finaghy Residents Group.</p> <p>Appendix 3 – E-mail from Building Control.</p> <p>Appendix 4 – E-mail from PSNI</p>

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Event Enquiry/Booking Form

The Council requires this form to be completed so that requests for an event or activity to take place in a Council location such as a park or open space can be considered and this form provides guidance and support regarding event requests.

Applications for events must be submitted to the Council at least **30 working days** prior to the event taking place. If your event will require committee approval, Council will need at least 4 months prior notice. In exceptional circumstances, applications may be submitted within a shorter timeframe, by agreement with the Council. The Council reserves the right to stipulate a longer application period for any event, if this is deemed necessary.

Once completed return this form to the Parks Events & Outreach Unit at leisureo@belfastcity.gov.uk

1. Please provide your contact details below:

Contact Name:	
Organisation:	Finaghy community association
Address:	
Postcode:	
Phone:	
Mobile:	
Email:	

2. Please complete the details regarding your event below:

Name of Event:	Finaghy festival					
Location(s):	Wedderburn pavilion					
Areas of site required i.e. Great Lawn, grass area beside playground:	Pavilion, small grass area at the side of pavilion and the area at the side of pitch two					
Hire of Pitch/Pavilion:	Hire of pavilion					
Date(s) of Event:	16/08/24 to 18/08/24					
Time(s) of Event:	16 th 4pm 18 th 6pm					
Date and time arrive on site: (Set up time)	15 th 12pm					
Date and time of site exit: (Event dismantle)	19 th 1:30pm					
Anticipated number of attendees, select category below:						
0 - 30	31 - 50	51 - 200	201 – 500	501 - 1000	1001- 5000	5001+

3. Please indicate who is responsible for the delivery of this event? Select as appropriate:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Belfast City Council (Departments within Council only)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	External event organiser in receipt of funding from Belfast City Council
<input type="checkbox"/>	External event organiser requesting use of Belfast City Council's facilities/parks/open space

4. Will there be an admission charge to your event? Please indicate: Yes No ☒

If Yes, please indicate method of payment:

Payment on-site

On Site Registration

Pre-registration (Online)

Both of the above (registration)

Charity collections (bucket)

Other (Please specify below)

***If Charity Collections**, please state if all or a percentage of the proceeds from the event will be donated to a designated charity: _____ %

Registered Charity Number: _____

****Please note we will need a headed letter/email correspondence from your designated charity confirming that they will receive all or a percentage of the proceeds from your proposed event***

5. Further Information, please indicate where applicable:

<u>Amusement/Fairground Rides</u>	X	<u>Stage/Gantry</u>	X	BBQ/barbeque	X
<u>Food Vendor(s)</u>	X	<u>Fireworks/Pyrotechnics</u>		Street Entertainment	
<u>Inflatable(s)</u>	X	<u>Parade/Rally/Carnival</u>		Arts & Crafts	X
<u>Marquee(s)</u>		<u>Gas appliances</u>		Picnic/Guided Walk	X
<u>Live animals/Petting Farm</u>	X	Generator(s) – diesel only		Running/Orienteering/Athletics/Cycling	
<u>Market stalls</u>		Gazebo(s)	X	Horticultural/Environmental activities	
<u>Live Music/Concert</u>	X	Toilets	X	Stewards/Car parking	X
<u>Alcohol Sales</u>	X	Face painting/balloon modelling	X	Pavilion/Pitch Hire	X

PLEASE NOTE – If you intend to have sub-contractors at your event such as for inflatables, marquees, animals or other suppliers, you will need to also obtain those suppliers proof of public liability insurance and professional

risk assessments for the services they are providing at your event and you are required to provide a copy to the Council.

You should also ensure that said subcontractors are fully certified and compliant with current industry best practice standards as indicated in Appendix A. The Council accepts no responsibility for the use of subcontractors at your event and you shall indemnify the Council against any injury, loss or damage arising as a result of the subcontractor's activities in relation to the event. You bring subcontractors on to the premises entirely at your own risk.

The Council does not make any warranty as to the suitability of the premises for the event nor its suitability for use by any subcontractor and the Council shall not be liable should the event be cancelled or postponed as a result of any act of a third party or otherwise. It shall be your responsibility to ensure that the premises are suitable for your proposed use.

6. Please provide additional information on your event

Please give us a brief description about your organisation, the purpose of the event, registration (if applicable detailing a breakdown of registration fee costings) and charity collections (if applicable).

We are a community lead programme, to enhance and provide our local area which is socially deprived and diverse families can suffer from isolation. We are having this event to meet the needs of all residents regarding of race, age, abilities and gender. We strive to develop community spirit and give the community something to look forward too.

7. Safeguarding:

Please select as appropriate - Y/N:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Please confirm that your organisation has in place their own policies and procedures for the safeguarding of young people and adults at risk of harm, consistent with current legislation and best practice.
X	If your organisation does not meet the above requirement, please indicate if your organisation agrees to adhere to the Council's Policy & Procedures for the Protection of Children & Vulnerable Adults

8. Additional Information:

Please confirm if you have made provision of the following elements at your event, if applicable i.e. Yes, No or N/A

Yes	Fire safety
Yes	First Aid
Yes	Traffic Management
Yes	On-site communications i.e. radio control/lost children point
Yes	Public address system

Yes	Accessibility
Yes	Barriers/fencing (pedestrian/vehicle segregation)
Yes	Waste Management plan

9. Privacy Notice

The Council is the Data Controller under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) for the personal data it gathers for the purposes of managing events which take place within the Council's parks and open spaces. You are providing your personal data to the Council whose lawful basis for processing is for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest.

The personal data may be shared internally within the Council with staff who are involved in providing this service and where necessary, between internal departments with the purpose of supporting an effective delivery of service. Your personal data will not be shared or disclosed to any other organisation without your consent, unless the law permits or places an obligation on the Council to do so.

The personal data is held and stored by the Council in a safe and secure manner and in compliance with Data Protection legislation and in line with the Council's Records Retention and Disposal Schedule. If you have any queries regarding the processing of your personal data, please contact the Parks Events & Outreach Manager, City & Neighbourhood Services, The Cecil Ward Building, 4-10 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BP. If you wish to contact the Council's Data Protection Officer, please write to Belfast City Council, City Hall, Belfast, BT1 5GS or send an email to records@belfastcity.gov.uk.

10. Indemnity Clause (please complete and sign)

In consideration of Belfast City Council making available to you (the premises) for the purpose of (proposed event) from Thursday to Monday you will undertake to indemnify Belfast City against all losses, damages and expenses which may be sustained or incurred by Belfast City Council and all actions, proceedings claims and demands which may be brought or made against Belfast City Council in respect of any personal injury, loss or damage which in any way arises out of or is in any way either directly or indirectly due to the use or occupation by you of the premises referred to above and any operation in connection therewith whether caused by the negligence of you, your servants or agents, or otherwise.

Signature

[Redacted Signature]

Date 11/01/2024

Please note: if you are returning this form by email, it must have a full and true electronic signature. This means a scanned copy of your handwritten signature. We will not accept a typed name instead of a signature.

11. Event Application Process

- Each application will be considered on a case by case basis.
- Once we are in receipt of your completed form and if there are no issues, you will be required to complete and submit the relevant documentation to the Parks events & Outreach unit, **a minimum of 30 working days before your event is due to take place** or as otherwise agreed with the Council. Documentation may include an event plan, risk assessment, evidence of Public Liability insurance (£5M indemnity) and supporting documentation. A template of a risk assessment and event plan will be provided to the event organiser, for completion.
- In certain circumstances if your event is low scale/low risk we will process your application in a shorter timeframe (10 working days). On receipt of this completed form, we will inform you if your event falls within this category and the level of documentation you will be required to submit.
- The event documentation will be reviewed by Council officers and if there are no issues, your event request should be approved. If the Council require further information from you, the event organiser will be required to provide this information in a timely manner, to the PE&O Unit.
- Once your event request has been approved, you will receive a permission letter which will outline any conditions particular to use of the site.**

For Office Use: Event Classification

<i>Level of Risk</i>	<i>Tick as appropriate</i>

Appendix A

Event feature	Sources of further information
General event management (e.g. live music events, sports events, street events etc.)	HSE website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event safety https://www.hse.gov.uk/event-safety/index.htm Construction (Design and Management) Regulations https://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/cdm-2015/
Marquees, stages etc.	HSE website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporary Demountable Structures https://www.hse.gov.uk/event-safety/temporary-demountable-structures.htm Construction (Design and Management) Regulations https://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/cdm-2015/
Food vendors	Belfast City Council website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permits and licencing https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/buildingcontrol-environment/licences-permits/licenses-about.aspx Food safety https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/buildingcontrol-environment/foodsafety/foodsafety-about.aspx Environmental Health (H&S) http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/buildingcontrol-environment/health-safety/healthandsafety-about.aspx HSE website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gas safety https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l56.htm
Market stalls	HSE website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://www.hse.gov.uk/violence/markettrader.htm https://www.hse.gov.uk/event-safety/index.htm

Event feature	Sources of further information
Funfair rides / attractions	HSE website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and safety guidance for fairgrounds https://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/fairgrounds/ Fairgrounds and amusement parks: Guidance on safe practice https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg175.htm
Inflatables	HSE Website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bouncy castles and other play inflatables: safety advice https://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/fairgrounds/inflatables.htm
Animals e.g. petting attractions	HSE website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preventing or controlling ill health from animal contact at visitor attractions or open farms https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/topics/visitor-attractions.htm
Pyrotechnics / Fireworks	HSE website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fireworks https://www.hse.gov.uk/explosives/fireworks/
Advice on risk assessments	HSE website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk assessments https://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/

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Appendix 2

Paula

Should it assist, comments also provided by the attending officer from our Service

Darren McCamphill | Lead Building Control Surveyor | Building Control | Place and Economy Department
Belfast City Council | Cecil Ward Building | 4-10 Linenhall Street, Belfast | BT2 8BP
☎ 028 9027 0615 | Internal ext: 2444 | Mobile: 07711 022004 | ✉ buildingcontrollicensing@belfastcity.gov.uk
www.belfastcity.gov.uk | www.facebook.com/belfastcitycouncil | www.twitter.com/belfastcc

For information on how Belfast City Council may use your personal data visit www.belfastcity.gov.uk/privacy

From: Laura Hillis <HillisL@BelfastCity.gov.uk>
Sent: Thursday, April 11, 2024 11:42 AM
To: Darren McCamphill <McCamphillD@BelfastCity.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Wedderburn Playing Fields, 5 Wedderburn Gardens - Finaghy Festival

Darren

I did not receive any complaints about 2022 event. None recorded on system either and I have checked my emails.

They must not have had an event in 2023?

The organiser was aware about the previous year's 2021 complaint which was about going on after 11/noise of people leaving the site, and she said they would make sure to end by 11 and ask people to be quiet leaving etc, Afterwards she said had been no issues, and several Cllrs had attended etc, Was awful weather I recall and numbers not large – but the wind may have carried noise quite far. But no one must have officially reported any complaint that made it through to us,

Laura

Laura Hillis, Principal Building Control Surveyor (Commercial and Licensing)
Building Control | Place and Economy Department | Belfast City Council
Cecil Ward Building, 4-10 Linenhall Street Belfast | BT2 8BP
☎ 028 9027 0622 | Internal ext: 2469 | Mobile: 07802 489 720 | ✉ hillisl@belfastcity.gov.uk
www.belfastcity.gov.uk | www.facebook.com/belfastcitycouncil | www.twitter.com/belfastcc

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Appendix 3

From:

Sent: Tuesday, April 9, 2024 12:16 PM

To: Christina Black <BlackChristina@BelfastCity.gov.uk>; Jim Hanna (Chief Exec) <HannaJim@BelfastCity.gov.uk>

Subject: [EXTERNAL]Finaghy festival

Dear Chair of Strategic Policy & Resources committee My name is [REDACTED] vice-chair of Finaghy Residents Group, who are one of the groups who organise, and volunteer at, the Finaghy Festival. I am writing to you as I have been deeply saddened to hear of the objections to the Finaghy Festival being held at Wedderburn Park. To my knowledge the past two festivals have happened without any issues with people of all backgrounds in attendance. As the vice chair with a mixed race family, this has always been very important to me. I am deeply upset that people would think that I would take part in a racist or sectarian festival. We have previously held a multicultural day which included local residents from eight different nationalities and was a huge success and was attended by Cllr Sarah Bunting. Cllr Bunting supports most of our community activities, festivals and she was a big support when we ran the food bank during Covid. Cllr Lyons has never attended any of our events, nor did he lend support to our food bank. Cllr Lyon's mentioned the spray painting of a man's house in Finaghy while talking about the festival. I'm not sure if that was meant separately or in relation to the festival but our group would never condone such acts. We welcomed this man to the area and also supported him as he settled in with his children.

I would be really saddened if Cllr Lyons was trying to insinuate that we are in any way racist. I'm not sure what the term blood and thunder band means or why it was mentioned but the band parade on Finaghy Road South is not related to the festival as we try our utmost to keep it neutral.

I would appreciate if this information could be shared at the committee meeting as we as a group are extremely disappointed in the accusations which seem to be being levied against us. Kind regards [REDACTED]

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Appendix 4

From:

Sent: Thursday, April 11, 2024 10:44 AM

To: Darren McCamphill <McCamphillD@BelfastCity.gov.uk>

Subject: [EXTERNAL]OFFICIAL [PARTNERS]: RE: RE: Wedderburn Playing Fields, 5 Wedderburn Gardens - Finaghy Festival

This e-mail has been marked OFFICIAL [PARTNERS]

Darren

I was trying to get into the older mails between myself and Moira, but it looks like the main issues in 2021 were outdoor EL related and the fact they didn't have one. That's the issues that I'm remembering.

I've checked the general area of 'Wedderburn Playing Fields' there are the usual ASB, YCA issues related to Parks/ playing fields/ looks like it is used as a bonfire site also, there are reports of rowdy and inconsiderate behaviour between 'rival factions' in and around 2022 / 2023.

If you have the dates of the actual Festival/ events in 22/23 I could do a larger search to check for incidents reported relating to the event, but it would take time.

Donna

From: TOLAN Donna

Sent: 11 April 2024 09:36

To: 'Darren McCamphill' <McCamphillD@BelfastCity.gov.uk>

Subject: OFFICIAL [PARTNERS]: RE: Wedderburn Playing Fields, 5 Wedderburn Gardens - Finaghy Festival

This e-mail has been marked OFFICIAL [PARTNERS]

I do know it Darren..... I pronounce it wrong.

We did have issues a couple of years ago, I'll get details and email you straight back

From: Darren McCamphill <McCamphillD@BelfastCity.gov.uk>

Sent: 11 April 2024 09:23

To: TOLAN Donna

Cc: Paula Irvine <IrvinePaula@BelfastCity.gov.uk>

Subject: Wedderburn Playing Fields, 5 Wedderburn Gardens - Finaghy Festival

Hi Donna

RE:- Wedderburn Playing Fields, 5 Wedderburn Gardens - Finaghy Festival

Further to our discussion, it would assist greatly if you could confirm as to whether the PSNI have complaints raised in respect of the above festival. Issues may have been raised in 2023 and/or 2022

This information would also assist the Service should the event organisers wish to organise a similar event in the forthcoming months

Many thanks

Darren McCamphill | Lead Building Control Surveyor | Building Control | Place and Economy Department
Belfast City Council | Cecil Ward Building | 4-10 Linenhall Street, Belfast | BT2 8BP

☎ 028 9027 0615 | Internal ext: 2444 | Mobile: 07711 022004 | ✉ buildingcontrollicensing@belfastcity.gov.uk
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Subject:	Local Government Ability to Hold Remote Meetings
Date:	19 April 2024
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To inform Members that the Communities Minister, Gordon Lyons is proposing to bring forward legislation to provide for councils to continue to hold remote / hybrid meetings.

2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The Department for Communities has written to Council Chief Executives (letter attached at Appendix A) advising that Minister Lyons is committed to giving councils the flexibility to hold meetings by remote/hybrid means and will be bringing forward regulations, as soon as possible, using the powers in the Local Government (Meetings and Performance) Act (NI) 2021. The Minister considers this to be more appropriate than continuing to use powers under the Coronavirus Act 2020, which was intended as emergency legislation, and will ensure that councils will have powers for remote/hybrid meetings but based upon more regularised legislation. A copy of the draft regulations is attached at Appendix 2.
3.2	The Council had previously responded to a Call for Evidence from the Department for Communities back in early 2022 indicating that it supported proposals to have legislation put in place which would allow remote/hybrid meetings to be held on a permanent basis.
3.3	The City Solicitor has responded to this most recent letter to indicate the Council support for the draft regulations. Members are asked to note the response at Appendix 3.
3.4	Officers understand that the Minister intends to bring the regulations in as soon as possible so as to allow councils to reinstate remote meetings as soon as possible. The legislation is intended to be permissive, in other words it empowers councils to establish their own rule in relation to how and when meetings can be held remotely or in hybrid version. It is anticipated that the legislation will be in place in the coming months.
3.5	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None.</p>
3.6	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>None.</p>
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – Letter to Council Chief Executives</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Draft Regulations</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Response letter from the City Solicitor</p>



To: Council Chief Executives

**Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Belfast
BT2 7EG**

Telephone: (028) 90582 3346
e-mail: anthonycarleton@communities-ni.gov.uk
Our ref:
Date: 12 March 2024

Dear Chief Executive

Council Remote/Hybrid Meetings

My letter of 1 March 2024 refers.

Minister Lyons is committed to giving councils the flexibility to hold meetings by remote/hybrid means and will be bringing forward regulations, as soon as possible, using the powers in the Local Government (Meetings and Performance) Act (NI) 2021. The Minister considers this to be more appropriate than continuing to use powers under the Coronavirus Act 2020, which was intended as emergency legislation, and will ensure that councils will have powers for remote/hybrid meetings but based upon more regularised legislation.

A draft of the proposed regulations has been sent to the Department's solicitors for scrutiny. In order to keep the gap in legislative provision for remote meetings to a minimum, the Department, in parallel with obtaining legal scrutiny of the draft regulations, is seeking your input. A first draft of the regulations is attached for your information and comment.

The proposed regulations are very similar to the previous regulations, the Local Government (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (NI) 2020.

The Department had previously carried out a public call for evidence on remote meetings (from December 2021 to February 2022) and the responses indicated



general support for the arrangements made by the 2020 Regulations and for permanent provision on remote meetings being made.

Please examine the draft regulations and respond by 26 March 2024 with any comments you may have.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Carleton
Director
Local Government & Housing Regulation

DRAFT STATUTORY RULES OF NORTHERN
IRELAND

2024 No.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**The Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations
(Northern Ireland) 2024**

Made - - - - *X Month 2024*
Coming into operation - *X Month 2024*

The Department for Communities^(a) makes these Regulations in exercise of the powers conferred by section 2(1) to (4) of the Local Government (Meetings and Performance) Act (Northern Ireland) 2021^(b).

Citation, commencement and interpretation

1.—(1) These Regulations may be cited as the Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 and shall come into operation on X Month 2024.

(2) In these Regulations—

“the 2014 Act” means the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014^(c);

“council” means a district council;

“council meeting” means a meeting of—

- (a) a council;
- (b) an executive of a council (within the meaning of Part 6 of the 2014 Act);
- (c) a joint committee of two or more councils; and
- (d) a committee or sub-committee of anything within subparagraphs (a), (b) or (c).

“remote access” means the ability to attend or participate in a meeting by electronic means, including by telephone conference, video conference, live webcasts, and live interactive streaming; and

“remote attendance” is to be construed in accordance with regulation 2(2) and (3).

^(a) Formerly known as the Department for Social Development; *see* the Departments Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 c. 5 (N.I.). Article 8 of and Schedule 5 to the Departments (Transfer of Functions) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (S.R. 2016 No. 76) transferred functions to the Department for Communities which were previously exercisable by the Department of the Environment.

^(b) 2021 c. 8 (N.I.).

^(c) 2014 c. 8 (N.I.).

Remote attendance

2.—(1) A reference in any enactment to a council meeting is not limited to a meeting of persons all of whom, or any of whom, are present in the same place and any reference to a “place” where a meeting is held, or to be held, includes reference to more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers.

(2) For the purposes of any such enactment, a member of a council (“a member in remote attendance”) attends the meeting at any time if all of the conditions in paragraph (3) are satisfied.

(3) Those conditions are that the member in remote attendance is able at that time—

- (a) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, the other members in attendance;
- (b) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, any members of the public in attendance in order to exercise a right to speak at the meeting; and
- (c) to be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public in attendance.

(4) In this regulation, any reference to a member, or a member of the public, attending a meeting or being in attendance includes that person attending by remote access.

(5) The provision made in this regulation applies notwithstanding any prohibition or other restriction contained in the standing orders or any other rules of the council governing the meeting and any such prohibition or restriction has no effect.

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

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

whenever such meetings are to be held remotely.

3. In section 28(7) (overview and scrutiny committees: supplementary provision) and paragraph 9 of Schedule 5 to the 2014 Act, a reference to a person attending before a meeting includes that person attending by remote access.

4. Schedule 5 to the 2014 Act (meetings and proceedings) applies as follows—

- (a) any reference to being “present” at a meeting includes being present through remote attendance;
- (b) any reference to a “place” where a meeting is held, or is to be held, includes reference to more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers; and
- (c) in paragraph 5(1)(a) after “the offices of the council” insert “and on the council’s website”.

Decision-making

5. In sections 39 (simple majority) and 40 (qualified majority) of the 2014 Act references to “members present and voting on the decision” includes a member being present through remote attendance.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the Department for Communities on X Month 202x.

(L.S.)

Anthony Carleton

A senior officer of the Department for Communities

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Regulations)

These Regulations are made under section 2(1) to (4) of the Local Government (Meetings and Performance) Act (Northern Ireland) 2021. These Regulations make provision regarding the running of district council meetings by making amendments to the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Regulation 1 sets out preliminary matters and defines terms used in these Regulations.

Regulations 2, 3 and 4 make provision for remote attendance at council meetings by members of the council. They also require a council to make standing orders regarding the decision to hold a meeting remotely, the conducting of the meeting and access by the public.

Regulation 5 amends the governance provisions of councils to ensure that “members present and voting on the decision” includes members in remote attendance.



Our Ref:

Your Ref:

Date 21 March 2024

Anthony Carleton
Director of Local Government
and Housing Regulation Division
Level 4
Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
BELFAST BT2 7EG

Dear Mr Carleton

COUNCIL REMOTE / HYBRID MEETINGS – RESPONSE FROM BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

I am writing in response to your letter dated 12 March 2024 to Council Chief Executives in relation to Minister Lyons' proposal to bring forward regulations giving councils the flexibility to hold meetings by remote/hybrid means using the powers in the Local Government (Meetings and Performance) Act (NI) 2021.

The Council is fully supportive of the proposal to introduce legislation which would allow remote/hybrid meetings to be held on a permanent basis.

The Council would wish to query the requirement for Regulation 2 Paragraph 5. This paragraph formed part of the original regulations (The Local Government (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020).

This paragraph is applicable where only remote meetings are permitted and in person meetings are not available. If, as per Paragraph 6, Councils are to have discretion around whether or whenever to have remote meetings then Regulation 2 (5) is no longer required.

Yours sincerely

Two handwritten signatures in blue ink. The first signature is 'Nora' and the second is 'Largey'.

Nora Largey
Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal & Civic Services



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Subject:	Appointment of Members to the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners
Date:	19th April, 2024
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Civic and Legal Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance 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	To consider the process to be used to identify between 10 and 12 elected Members to be considered under a public appointment's process to fill 4 places on the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners.

2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is recommended to employ a one-off proportionality exercise, using the Sainte Lague method, for the purpose of identifying the political nomination of between 10 and 12 members for consideration for appointment to the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The Committee will recall that, at its meeting on 23 February, it had considered correspondence dated 30 January from the Public Appointments Unit regarding the submission of Council nominees to be considered by the Permanent Secretary for the Department for appointment to the Board of the Belfast Harbor Commissioners.
3.2	The letter had indicated that there were currently three Councillors in post with one vacancy. One Councillor had served two terms of appointment and cannot be reappointed after 31 March 2024. The remaining two Councillors were due to complete their first term on 31 March 2024 and the DfI Permanent Secretary had decided that he was minded reappointing them for a further term to ensure continuity on the Board. If both eligible Councillors accepted the reappointments, then the DfI would be recruiting for two vacancies with the terms due to commence from 1 April 2024.
3.3	Accordingly, the Council has been asked to nominate at least six Councillors for appointment for the remaining two places.
3.4	In discussing the matter, the Committee was of the view that this was a step change from previous years when Councillors currently serving on the Board had to submit an application and be subject to an open and transparent recruitment process.
3.5	Accordingly, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the matter on the appointment of Members to the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners and requested that a letter be forwarded to the Minister stating that it was the Council's view that all 4 positions on the Board should be subject to an open recruitment/selection process as in previous years.
3.6	Further correspondence has now been received from the Public Appointments Unit which states the following: <i>"When I first wrote to the Council on 30 January 2024, it was on the basis that, in the absence of Ministers, the Department had taken decisions under powers provided by the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2022 to temporarily set aside the previous Ministerial decision that required all public appointments made by DfI to be via open competition (as opposed to renewing appointments for second terms without a competition)."</i>

This was in the context of the Department facing an unprecedented resource budget position with difficult decisions required on how best to prioritise available funding.

3.7 *However, since then, we have seen the return of Ministers and John O'Dowd MLA, Minister for Infrastructure, has recently reviewed this decision and decided that all public appointments made by the Department should revert to open competition to attract a wider pool of candidates and improve diversity. In light of this, and in recognition of the Council's concerns, the Minister has confirmed that he is content that all four Councillor positions be appointed via open competition. The two Councillors that were scheduled to be reappointed have been informed of this decision. I would therefore be grateful if you could provide me with 10-12 nominees to be considered for the four Councillor positions. This will help ensure a choice of nominees, as required by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland. Please note that the process remains as set out in my letter of 30 January 2024, with the only exception being that the Minister will decide who to appoint, not the Permanent Secretary. Can you please provide the Council nominees by 12 noon on Friday 3 May 2024"*

3.8 In November 2019 in considering the appointment of Members to the Board, the Council agreed to a one-off selection process using the Sainte Lague system.

3.9 In keeping with that principle, the Sainte Lague system would provide the following result:

1	SF
2	DUP
3	ALL
4	SF
5	SDLP
6	DUP
7	SF
8	ALL
9	SF
10	Green
11	DUP
12	SF

Financial and Resource Implications

3.10 There are not any financial implications for the Council associated with this report.

3.11	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The suggested approach to be employed to select Members for consideration for appointment to the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners is in keeping with the principles of proportionality established in the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014. Therefore, there are not any equality or good relations considerations associated with this report.</p>
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	None



Subject:	Corporate Seal: Agreements made pursuant to Section 76 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011
Date:	19 April 2024
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, Interim City Solicitor and Director of Legal & Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Una McMullen, Solicitor – Regulatory and Planning

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/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To seek Committee approval to delegate authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to affix the corporate seal to agreements made under Section 76 of the Planning Act

	(Northern Ireland) 2011 that are entered into under delegated authority by the Planning Service.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	It is recommended that Members give delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to affix the corporate seal to Section 76 Planning Agreements that are entered into under delegated authority by the Planning Service.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Members will be aware that the Council routinely enters into planning agreements (“Section 76 Agreements”) with landowners pursuant to Section 76 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (the “2011 Act”). These Section 76 Agreements are used where it is considered that a development will have a significant impact on the local area that cannot be moderated by a condition contained in the planning permission.
3.2	Whilst most of these Section 76 Agreements are subject to Committee scrutiny and are sealed by the Chief Executive and the Lord Mayor with the corporate seal when complete, there are occasions when such agreements are entered into on foot of planning decisions which are delegated to officers pursuant to the Council’s Scheme of Delegation. Members will be aware that pursuant to Section 31 of the 2011 Act, the Council operates a planning scheme of delegation.
3.3	In those instances where, pursuant to the scheme of delegation, Section 76 Agreements are not brought through the Committee scrutiny process, it is therefore recommended that formal authority is delegated to the Planning Committee to authorise the Director of Planning and Building Control to present agreements to the Lord Mayor & Chief Executive to affix the corporate seal.
3.4	<p>The relevant pieces of legislation relating to the corporate seal are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 100 of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 1972 (the “1972 Act”) provides that a seal must be attached to any document which is a deed or a contract that has a value of over £30,000. • Section 120 of the 1972 Act provides that instruments executed by a council under its seal if otherwise valid shall have full force and effect notwithstanding that Council authority has not been given or that the use of the seal is not in accordance with standing orders. • Section 76(10) of the 2011 Act provides that planning agreements may not be entered into except by an instrument under seal.
3.5	In addition, the Council’s Standing Order 52(b) states in summary that anything requires the corporate seal has to be subject to Council approval by way of a resolution.

3.6	Members should note that officers intend to bring a monthly report to the Planning Committee, which will list those delegated decisions that are subject to Section 76 Agreements to seek authorisation to affix the seal.
3.7	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> None
3.8	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	None

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Subject:	Social Supermarket Fund 24/25
Date:	19 th April 2024
Reporting Officer:	David Sales, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Nicola Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager Margaret Higgins, Lead Officer Community Provision

Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
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After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								

Is this report eligible for call in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
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1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to advise members on the following matters; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the outcome of the recent open call for applications to the Social Supermarket Fund 24/25.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the current finance available to support successful applicants to the Social Supermarket fund the finance available to support delivery of a Hardship Programme in 24/25 and; to ask members to; consider options for funding successful applicants to the Social Supermarket Fund 24/25 and recommend an option to Council. grant delegated authority for the Operational Director of Neighbourhood Services to make further allocations to agreed organisations, based on the agreed option, if further funding becomes available. agree that a meeting of the Cost of Living Working Group will be scheduled for May 24 and that a further update on delivery of the 23/24 Hardship programme will be provided at that point when monitoring returns have been collated.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>That members consider the following report and note the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the outcome of the recent open call for applications to the Social Supermarket Fund 24/25. the current finance available to support successful applicants to the Social Supermarket fund the finance available to support delivery of a Hardship Programme in 24/25 <p>Members are also asked to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider the identified options for funding successful applicants to the Social Supermarket Fund 24/25 and recommend an option to Council. grant delegated authority for the Operational Director of Neighbourhood Services to make further allocations to agreed organisations, based on the agreed option, if further funding becomes available. agree that a meeting of the Cost of Living Working Group will be scheduled for May 24 and that a further update on delivery of the 23/24 Hardship programme will be provided at that point when monitoring returns have been collated.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>In response to recommendations in the Welfare Reform Mitigations report, the Department for Communities (DfC) has operated a Social Supermarket Pilot programme since October 2017. Following positive evaluation of the Social Supermarket Pilot Programme, funding was made available through the CSP in 20/21 to expand the concept to all council areas.</p> <p>The aim of a social supermarket is to offer a sustainable response to food insecurity by seeking to help address the root causes of poverty rather than simply provide food. This is achieved by providing, in addition to food support, a referral network for wraparound support.</p>
3.2	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Previously, Council has worked with identified partners to develop models for delivery. The People and Communities Committee granted approval on 9 November 2023 to operate an open call for grant applications to the Social Supermarket Fund in 2024/25. Members were advised at this point that because activity is 100% funded by DfC, there was a risk that funding to support successful applications might not be in place from April 24.</p>
3.3	<p>However, on balance, it was agreed that it was preferable to undertake the application process so that funding could be issued as soon as it became available from the</p>

department. Members agreed that funding of up to £50,000 would be available for each individual project; this in line with other large grant funding programmes.

The 2024/25 Social Supermarket Support Fund received 28 applications totalling £946,619.70 by the closing date of 12 noon on Friday 26 January 2024. Following assessment and independent moderation the recommendations for awards provided in Appendix 1.

3.4

Funding for Social Supermarkets is primarily drawn from the DfC Community Support Programme (CSP) Letter of Offer, which includes a 100% DfC funded funding stream for this work. DfC advised on 29th March that the available budget for 24/25, at this stage, is £104,686, which is based on a quarter of the direct award to BCC last year. However, there is no confirmation of the total allocation for 24/25.

3.5

Members will recall that as part of the 24/25 Hardship Programme, SP&R approved that £150,000 be allocated to Social Supermarkets in addition to the DfC funding.

3.6

Members of People and Communities committee were provided with an update on the outcome of the open call application process on 9th April and asked to approve delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to approve funding awards to Social Supermarkets as funds become available. Members of P&C were keen that SP&R consider possible support to these projects so that as many as possible could be supported.

3.7

DFC issued accounts direction to councils on 16th January to enable any unspent Hardship funding to be transferred to a useable reserve in 2023/24 and ringfenced for Hardship programmes within the 2024/25 financial year. This guidance also states that COVID-19 funding underspends can be carried forward and used for this purpose.

3.8

At present the identified underspends that are available for the 24/25 Hardship Programme are £223,400. This figure may rise when financial returns for the 23/24 programme have been provided by delivery organisations. Members are asked to consider the options in the table below and advise if they are content to approve an allocation to Social Supermarkets from the 24/25 budget.

3.9

A Cost of Living Working Group was established to consider the development and funding allocations for the 23/24 Hardship Programme, which was agreed by SP&R in December and is outlined in Appendix 2. Members are asked to agree that a further meeting of this group will be convened in May 24 to provide Members with an overview of programme delivery highlights and to inform members decision making in relation to the delivery of a Hardship Programme for 2024/25.

3.10

However, given the current lack of available DfC budget, members are asked to consider and approve one of the options below in advance of the next meeting of the Cost of Living working group.

Option	Detail	Pros	Cons
Option1	Fund top 13 scoring projects on a 100% basis. Issue 25% of funding initially and	Follows good practice to support scores of 60 and above.	No indication from DfC on when decision on full allocation will be available. Note: in 23/24 BCC received confirmation of full allocation in July 23.

		<p>increase as total DfC allocation is confirmed.</p> <p>Total Cost - £490,508.70 25% - £122,627.18</p>	<p>Minimises risk to council by only providing funding on a quarterly basis until the annual allocation if confirmed by DfC.</p> <p>Should funding not become available in a timely manner from DfC it is possible that Hardship Programme could provide further funding to these 13 projects for a further time period.</p>	<p>No security of funding for organisations who completed strong applications.</p>
	Option 2	<p>Fund 21 projects on a 70% basis. Issue 25% of funding initially and increase as total DfC allocation is confirmed.</p> <p>Total Cost - £550,021 25% - £196,436</p>	<p>This option is based on projected total DfC allocation and £100,000 allocation from Hardship Programme and is therefore within anticipated budget.</p> <p>Provides funding for all 21 projects and ensures service delivery to a larger number of individuals.</p>	<p>No indication from DfC on when decision on full allocation will be available and no confirmation of what final allocation will be. Note: in 23/24 BCC received confirmation of full allocation in July.</p> <p>Any reduction in % of funding may impact on viability of delivery for individual projects.</p> <p>If the Hardship programme finances are directed towards supporting social supermarkets there is limited budget available to support other initiatives through a 24/25 Hardship programme.</p>
3.11	Further detail on the outcome of the Social Supermarket Fund application is provided in the full People & Communities committee paper attached in Appendix 3.			
3.12	<p><u>Financial implications</u></p> <p>At present the identified underspend from 21.22 and 22.23 Hardship Programmes is £60,300. A further £163,100 has been identified to date from Covid funding underspends. Members may wish to note that Covid underspends cover a number of grant programmes, Micro/Medium grants in 20/21, 21/22 and 22/23 as well as Kitchen Equipment Grants 20/21</p>			

3.13	<p>and 21/22 and Thematic and Strategic Partner funding awards 20/21 and 21/22. This provides a total available Hardship budget of £223,400 for 24/25.</p> <p>DfC advised on 29th March that the available budget for 24/25, at this stage, is £104,686, which is based on a quarter of the direct award to BCC last year. However, there is no confirmation of the total allocation for 24/25. DfC have advised that they will include the balance of their funding to Footprints Women's Centre (funded directly through the DfC pilot) in the CSP contract. This is likely to be in the region of £50,000, which will create a potential contribution from DfC of £468,744, although this is not confirmed.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="260 483 1445 642"> <tr> <td>Confirmed DfC budget 25%</td><td>£104, 686</td></tr> <tr> <td>Projected DfC budget 100% (based on 23/24 and Footprints allocation)</td><td>£468,744</td></tr> <tr> <td>Current available Hardship Programme 24/25 budget (from identified underspends)</td><td>£223,400*</td></tr> </table> <p>*Note - Additional funds may be identified following financial returns for 23/24 programme</p>	Confirmed DfC budget 25%	£104, 686	Projected DfC budget 100% (based on 23/24 and Footprints allocation)	£468,744	Current available Hardship Programme 24/25 budget (from identified underspends)	£223,400*
Confirmed DfC budget 25%	£104, 686						
Projected DfC budget 100% (based on 23/24 and Footprints allocation)	£468,744						
Current available Hardship Programme 24/25 budget (from identified underspends)	£223,400*						
3.14	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The 24/25 Social Supermarket Fund open call has been screened for Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Implications.</p>						
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached						
4.1	<p>Appendix 1: Application List, Scores & Awards based on options</p> <p>Appendix 2: Hardship Programme 2023/24 Allocations</p> <p>Appendix 3: People and Communities Paper – Social Supermarket Fund 24/25 (09.04.23)</p>						

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Appendix 1 - Social Supermarket Fund 24/25 (Application, Scores & Options)

	Organisation	Amount Requested	Score %	Amount Awarded Option 1 (25%)	Amount Awarded Option 1 (100%)	Amount Awarded Option 2 (25%)	Amount Awarded Option 2 (70%)
1	Footprints Women's Centre	£49,697.53	97.5	£12,424.38	£49,697.53	£12,424.38	£34,788.27
2	Disability Action	£35,000.00	91.3	£8,750.00	£35,000.00	£8,750.00	£24,500.00
3	Forward South Partnership	£49,500.00	88.8	£12,375.00	£49,500.00	£12,375.00	£34,650.00
4	Southcity Resource & Development Centre	£50,000.00	80.0	£12,500.00	£50,000.00	£12,500.00	£35,000.00
5	Vine Centre (NBAP)	£49,500.00	80.0	£12,375.00	£49,500.00	£12,375.00	£34,650.00
6	Street Soccer NI	£22,000.00	76.3	£5,500.00	£22,000.00	£5,500.00	£15,400.00
7	Ashton Community Trust	£50,000.00	76.3	£12,500.00	£50,000.00	£12,500.00	£35,000.00
8	Upper Springfield Development Trust	£50,000.00	67.5	£12,500.00	£50,000.00	£12,500.00	£35,000.00
9	Donegall Pass Community Forum	£37,112.00	65.0	£9,278.00	£37,112.00	£9,278.00	£25,978.40
10	Grace Women's Development	£2,500.00	63.8	£312.50	£2,500.00	£312.50	£875.00
11	HEReNI	£16,449.17	62.5	£4,112.29	£16,449.17	£4,112.29	£11,514.42
12	In This Together	£50,000.00	61.3	£12,500.00	£50,000.00	£12,500.00	£35,000.00
13	Hanwood Trust	£30,000.00	60.0	£7,500.00	£30,000.00	£7,500.00	£21,000.00
14	West Belfast Partnership Board	£49,500.00	57.5	0	0	£12,375.00	£34,650.00
15	LORAG	£44,000.00	57.5	0	0	£11,000.00	£30,800.00
16	Glencolin Residents' Association	£10,000.00	55.0	0	0	£2,500.00	£7,000.00
17	Loughview Community Action Partnership	£49,936.00	55.0	0	0	£12,484.00	£34,955.20
18	Boring Wells (The Larder)	£50,000.00	53.8	0	0	£12,500.00	£35,000.00
19	Compass Counselling	£11,800.00	52.5	0	0	£2,950.00	£8,260.00
20	Belfast Women's Aid	£30,000.00	50.0	0	0	£7,500.00	£21,000.00
21	Blackie River Community Groups	£50,000.00	47.5	0	0	£12,500.00	£35,000.00
22	Phoenix Education Centre (NI)	£34,835.00	42.5	0	0	0	0
23	Glentoran Social Partnership	£12,600.00	40.0	0	0	0	0
24	Ag Togáil Clainne le gaeilge	£2,430.00	32.5	0	0	0	0
25	Homeplus NI	£49,960.00	32.5	0	0	0	0

26	EMSONI	£42,500.00	32.5	0	0	0	0
27	Glor na Mona	£10,000.00	31.3	0	0	0	0
28	University of Atypical	£7,300.00	27.5	0	0	0	0
	Total	£946,619.70		£122,627.18	£490,508.70	£196,436.18	£550,021.29

Those organisations highlighted were funded by the Social Supermarket Funding 2023/24.
Footprints Women's Centre was funded directly by DfC in 2023/24.

Appendix 2 – Hardship Programme 2023/24 Allocations

Theme	Partner(s)	Funding Allocation (indicative)
1. Support to Children and Families	Schools via Education Authority	£250,000
	Sponsored/Community Day-Care (Children 0-10 years age / vulnerable children)	£24,000
	Save the Children	£100,000
	Family Support Hubs (network of 10)	£175,000
2. Support for Individuals & Families in Immediate (Emergency) Need	SVDP	£75,000
	Age NI	£50,000
	Generalist Advice Providers	£20,000
	Trussell Trust	£30,000
	Fareshare	£40,000
3. Enhance Capacity of Existing Structures & Programmes	Winter Wellbeing Community Programmes	£15,000
	Warm & Well Programme	£75,000
	Social Supermarkets	£165,000
	TOTAL	£1,019,000

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Subject:	Social Supermarket Fund 24/25
Date:	9 th April 2024
Reporting Officer:	Jim Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Nicola Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager Margaret Higgins, Lead Officer Community Provision

Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
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Never	<input type="checkbox"/>									

Is this report eligible for call in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to advise members on the outcome of the recent open call for applications to the Social Supermarket Fund. Members are asked to note;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The outcome of the recent open call process for 24/25

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That there is no current budget available to support applications to the Social Supermarket Fund as this is funded 100% from the Department for Communities. • Grant delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to issue Letters of Offer on the basis of quality scores as budget becomes available through the Community Support Programme or other sources. • Note that a paper on the outcome of the open call process 24/25 will also be provided to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee so that it can be considered by the Cost Of Living working group should any underspends/ additional funding for the Hardship Programme be identified in year.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>It is recommended that Committee;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the outcome of the recent open call process. • Note that there is no current budget available to support any applications as the Social Supermarket Fund is 100% funded by the Department for Communities. • Grant delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to issue Letters of Offer on the basis of quality scores as budget becomes available through the Community Support Programme or other sources. • Note that a paper on the outcome of the open call process 24/25 will also be provided to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee so that it can be considered by the Cost Of Living working group should any underspends/ additional funding for Hardship programme be identified in year.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	<p>In response to recommendations in the Welfare Reform Mitigations report, the Department for Communities (DfC) has operated a Social Supermarket Pilot programme since October 2017. Following positive evaluation of the Social Supermarket Pilot Programme, funding was made available through the CSP in 20/21 to expand the concept to all council areas.</p>
3.2	<p>The aim of a social supermarket is to offer a sustainable response to food insecurity by seeking to help address the root causes of poverty rather than simply provide food. This is achieved by providing, in addition to food support, a referral network for wraparound support. The overriding aim should be to support and work towards holistic, flexible and sustainable social supermarket type approaches to food insecurity/food poverty addressing both the underlying cause and the immediate need. Food supply should ideally come from donations, surplus, or purchased at a discount, however, funding can also be used towards the purchase of food vouchers.</p> <p>The key principles that models should take account of are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing support 'beyond food', such as, access to wraparound support services which transition people out of food poverty and respect the dignity of clients. • Maximising existing structures, services, and partnerships to provide wraparound support.
3.3	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Previously, Council has worked with identified partners to develop models for delivery. The People and Communities Committee granted approval on 9 November 2023 to operate an open call for grant applications to the Social Supermarket Fund in 2024/25. Members were</p>

	advised at this point that because activity is 100% funded by DfC, there was a risk that funding to support successful applications might not be in place from April 24.
3.4	However, on balance, it was agreed that it was preferable to undertake the application process so that funding could be issued as soon as it became available from the department. Members agreed that funding of up to £50,000 would be available for each individual project; this in line with other large grant funding programmes.
3.5	The Social Supermarket Support Fund was opened on 5 December 2023 for applications and council launched a campaign to advertise and promote the fund. Advertisements were placed in local and regional newspapers and were also promoted across Belfast City Council website and social media. During December 2023 and January 2024, three online information sessions were held to advise potential applicants on the process. This was administered through the Central Grants Unit.
3.6	<p>The 2024/25 Social Supermarket Support Fund received 28 applications totalling £946,619.70 by the closing date of 12 noon on Friday 26 January 2024.</p> <p>When an application is submitted, the following process is followed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receipt and log of applications • Eligibility check of applications (allowing a 5 day response for omitted information) • Prepare and supply applications that have met eligibility criteria to Unit Officers to score against agreed set criteria • Score each eligible application against the set criteria as outlined in the guidance notes • Moderate applications between scoring officers to ensure fairness and consistency in scoring • An independent assessment panel to review a sample of applications. The role of the independent assessment panel is 'to ensure that the scoring of applications has been undertaken in an appropriate fashion and to provide verification or validation of sampled applications and the overall process' (Williamson Consulting, 2012).
3.7	The independent assessment panels were satisfied with the scoring and application of the criteria for the grants and agreed to recommend the unit's recommendations for awards as shown in Appendix 1 .
3.8	Funding for Social Supermarkets is primarily drawn from the DfC Community Support Programme (CSP) Letter of Offer, which includes a 100% DfC funded funding stream for this work. At March committee, members were advised that council has not yet received a Letter of Offer for 24/25 and that Council does not have any budget to support activity that is 100% funded through the CSP. Council wrote to the Department at the end of February requesting an update but at the time of writing, no further information has been received.
3.9	In order to enable payments to organisations as quickly as possible, members are asked to grant delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to issue Letters of Offer on the basis of quality scores as budget becomes available from CSP or other sources. If the budget from the DFC is released on a 25% basis, officers will calculate the 100% allocation and issue indicative Letters of Offer and 25% payment to those projects which can be funded through the indicative total allocation.

3.10	Social Supermarkets also received an allocation of £150,000 from the Hardship Programme in 23/24 through the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee. A paper advising of the outcome of the open call applications will be brought to April SP&R so that the potential to make an allocation for 24/25 can be considered by the Cost of Living Working group in the context of the Hardship Programme 24/25.
3.11	Members may wish to note that six organisations funded during 23/24 did not apply for the 24/25 funding, namely: Storehouse NI, Cara-Friend, The Parent Rooms, Greater Shankill Community Council, People's Kitchen and Foodstock. Of the 21 organisations recommended for funding, four are working with communities in north Belfast, four in south, three in east and six in west as well as four organisations working with specific communities of interest across the city.
3.12	<p><u>Financial implications</u></p> <p>Grants to the value of £785,744.70 are recommended should a budget be available. Current projections suggest that there will be available funding from DfC to fund the highest scoring 12/13 projects, which would require £460,508/£490,508.70.</p> <p>Council does not have a budget for this work at present, the 23/24 DfC award for Social Supermarket Fund was £418,744.00, this was an increase of £190,000 on the previous year (22/23).</p> <p>DfC have advised that they will include the balance of their funding to Footprints Women's Centre (funded directly through the DfC pilot) in the CSP contract. This is likely to be in the region of £50,000, which will create a potential contribution from DfC of £468,744, although this is not confirmed.</p>
3.14	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The 24/25 Social Supermarket Fund open call has been screened for Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Implications.</p>
4.0	Appendices
4.1	Appendix 1: Application List, Scores & Recommended Awards



Subject:	Dual Language Street Signs Gaeltacht Quarter Proposal update
Date:	Friday 19 th April 2024
Reporting Officer:	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control
Contact Officer:	Ian Harper, Building Control 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"/>								
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	At the meeting of the Strategic Policy and resources Committee on 20 th October 2023, ratified at Council on 1 st November 2023, it was agreed to proceed with the proposal for the erection of dual language street signs in the Gaeltacht Quarter, in line with the process set out in the report.
1.2	This report is to update members on the results of the work undertaken to consult with the occupiers of the streets within boundary agreed by the Committee on the 20 th October. It also updates members on the progress made in considering the proposal for the erection of new signage.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to consider the contents of the report and to:
2.2	a. Agree to the erection of dual language street nameplates, with the second language being Irish, in the list of 301 streets contained in Appendix A which were included in the consultation and where any level of objections raised did not meet the agreed 15% threshold, including the following 10 streets in the list, for which there are no occupiers:
2.3	Ardmonagh Way, Ballymurphy Street, Dairy Street, Divismore Way, Monagh By Pass, Mulhouse Road, Springview Street, Stanley Street, Theodore Street, Turin Street
2.4	b. Agree that a full survey be carried out for Clovelly Street for which the level of objections to the proposed approach met the 15% threshold.
3.0	Background
3.1	At the meeting of the Strategic Policy and resources Committee on 20 th October 2023 it was agreed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. to proceed with the erection of Dual language Street signs in the Gaeltacht Quarter, in line with the process outlined within the report; ii. that the threshold for objections to this process which would trigger the requirement for an application and engagement of the current full process for a specific street within the Gaeltacht Quarter be set at 15% of residents;

	<p>iii. that applications which are deemed subject to the full process due to the threshold of objections being met be dealt with alongside existing applications;</p> <p>iv. that the project be added to the Capital Programme as a capital project and prioritised; and</p> <p>v. that those streets which form the boundary of the Gaeltacht Quarter also be included as part of the area, with only that portion of the Donegall Road within the boundary of the Gaeltacht Quarter, as set out in the appendix to the report, to be included.</p> <p>This was ratified by full council on 1st November 2023.</p> <p><u>Consultation</u></p>
3.2	<p>Significant work was undertaken to identify and review the streets within the boundary agreed for the Gaeltacht Quarter project which did not already have dual language street signs in place, and also to identify the individual addresses within each of these streets, for consultation. Particular attention was taken along the agreed boundary, where streets continued through the boundary and on either side of the peace line wall and gates, to ensure letters were only delivered to properties within the boundary. This resulted in 8887 addresses being identified for the purposes of the consultation with residents. Letters were issued to all residents through a mail drop using an external company 'Postal Sort'. The purpose of this letter was to advise residents about the proposal to erect dual language street signage and also to give residents the opportunity to object to the proposal for their street.</p>
3.3	<p>Elected members were given the list of streets subject to the proposal in advance of the resident consultation to allow for any potential for adverse impacts to be raised.</p>
3.4	<p>A public advert was placed in both the Irish News and the Andersonstown News to inform residents of the Gaeltacht Quarter of the approach being taken and how an objection could be made.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Results</u></p> <p>Of the 302 remaining streets identified within the Gaeltacht Quarter which did not already have dual language street signage in place, 10 did not have any occupiers. These are included in the recommendations section above.</p>

3.6	The consultation with residents of 8777 properties in the remaining 292 streets, was issued on 24 th January 2024 with a closing date for objections of 4pm on 23 rd February 2024
3.7	In total, 21 objections were received from residents of 16 individual streets using the reply form provided.
3.8	From the analysis of these objections, there was one street (Clovelly Street) where the level of objection to the proposal met the agreed 15% threshold as agreed by members. Of the 15 letters issued to residents in this street there were 3 objectors to the proposal which is a 20% objection rate. One resident provided comment, "as this is mixed area I think this would cause tension for us and our neighbours"
3.9	The remaining 18 objections were spread across 15 streets with no objection rate over 6% for any of these streets.
	<u>Additional project tasks</u>
3.10	Work and discussions are ongoing between staff within Property and Projects and Building Control to consider the next part of the project, to erect the nameplates. The proposal is to follow the existing process and utilise the current street signage contract and contractor. Whilst the project will be managed by Property and Projects, the Building Control Service will work in conjunction with the project manager to provide the necessary guidance, assistance and oversight. This may also require a resource to be provided by the Building Control Service to carry out some of the duties associated with the project.
3.11	<p>It is suggested that the erection of the nameplates will be undertaken in a number of established clusters, potentially clusters of approximately 30 streets. The main tasks associated with the project include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On site identification of all existing nameplates in each street to supplement data already collected as a desktop exercise using google street view. • Engagement with homeowners where signs are on properties and to advise about the need for access to their property for the erection of new nameplates. (From

	<p>existing desktop work to date there are approximately 75% of signs erected on private property)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A work order to be raised for each street with the location, type of sign and the translation for every identified existing sign using information captured at site survey stage. • Quality checks of work orders prior to issue to contractor and also of manufactured signs prior to erection on site. • Checks of nameplates once erected and payment of invoices and dealing with any on site issues regarding installation.
3.12	<p>The project has been discussed with our street signs contractor who has confirmed they have the necessary capacity to carry out the work within the project subject to agreement of detailed project plan timescales. Our current estimates for the project are based on completion within 6 months following Council ratification of the project moving to Stage 3 – Committed under the Capital Programme.</p>
3.13	<p>As discussed above a desktop analysis had found that the majority of the existing street nameplates are erected on the walls of private properties. BCC will need to engage with each resident of these properties to inform them of the proposal to change to a dual language nameplate. This is a more time-consuming exercise and therefore the staffing to carry out this engagement and the tasks associated with identifying the location and type of signage are being considered to avoid any detrimental impact on the current processing times for the existing applications.</p> <p><u>Translations</u></p>
3.14	<p>Translations for the streets have been requested from Queens University who intend to have these completed this month.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p>
3.15	<p>Following consideration at SP&R Committee in March 2024, Members moved the project to <i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted</i> on the Capital Programme. The Physical Programme Update report also presented to Members this month seeks approval to move this project to</p>

	<p><i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> in line with the agreed three stage approval process for capital projects.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.16	<p>A draft equality screening has been carried out on the decision to erect dual language street signs en bloc within the Gaeltacht Quarter. The decision has been screened out as having minor impacts, but with the additional consultation actions set out in the previous report and agreed by members. The screening finds that the measures proposed align closely with the Council's Language and Good Relations strategies. In general, this equality screening indicates that there are sufficient safeguards, within the new procedure, to ensure there are no adverse impacts in relation to equality of opportunity and good relations issues.</p>
3.17	<p>The consultation with residents provided an opportunity for feedback of any equality or good relations issues associated with the proposed approach. Only one comment was received from a resident in Clovelly Street as discussed above at 3.8.</p>
3.18	<p>The consultation actions have now been carried out and results are being brought to committee for consideration.</p>
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix A – List of 301 streets for consideration

Street
ABERCORN STREET NORTH
ABERCORN WALK
ABYSSINIA WALK
ALBERT COURT
ALBERT STREET
AMCOMRI STREET
ANDERSONSTOWN DRIVE
ANDERSONSTOWN GARDENS
ANDERSONSTOWN GROVE
ANDERSONSTOWN PARADE
ANDERSONSTOWN PARK SOUTH
ANDERSONSTOWN PARK WEST
ARDMONAGH WAY
ARDMOULIN AVENUE
ARDMOULIN CLOSE
ARDMOULIN PLACE
ARDMOULIN STREET
ARDMOULIN TERRACE
ARDNACLOWNEY DRIVE
ARD-NA-VA ROAD
ARIZONA STREET
ARUNDEL COURTS
ARUNDEL WALK
BALKAN COURT
BALKAN STREET
BALLYMURPHY CRESCENT
BALLYMURPHY ROAD
BALLYMURPHY STREET
BARRACK STREET
BEECHMOUNT CLOSE
BEECHMOUNT CRESCENT
BEECHMOUNT GARDENS
BEECHMOUNT GROVE
BEECHMOUNT LINK
BEECHMOUNT PARADE
BEECHMOUNT PASS
BEECHMOUNT STREET
BEECHMOUNT WALK
BEECHVIEW PARK
BLACKSTAFF ROAD
BLACKSTAFF WAY
BLACKWATER WAY
BRASSEY STREET
BREAD STREET
BRITTONS COURT
BRITTONS DRIVE
BRITTONS PARADE
BROADWAY COURT
BURNABY COURT

BURNABY PARK
BURNABY PLACE
BURNABY WALK
BURNABY WAY
CARNMORE PLACE
CHRISTIAN PLACE
CLONARD COURT
CLONARD GARDENS
CLONAVOGIE GARDENS
CLONDARA PARADE
CLONDARA STREET
CLONFADDAN CRESCENT
CLONFADDAN STREET
CLOWNEY STREET
CLUAIN MOR AVENUE
CLUAIN MOR CLOSE
CLUAIN MOR DRIVE
CLUAIN MOR GARDENS
CLUAIN MOR LANE
CLUAIN MOR PARK
CONWAY STREET**
CROCUS STREET
CULLINGTREE ROAD
CUPAR STREET LOWER
DAIRY STREET
DENEWOOD DRIVE
DENEWOOD PARK
DERMOTT HILL GARDENS
DERMOTT HILL GREEN
DERMOTT HILL GROVE
DERMOTT HILL WAY
DEVONSHIRE CLOSE
DEVONSHIRE PLACE
DEVONSHIRE STREET
DISTILLERY COURT
DISTILLERY STREET
DIVIS DRIVE
DIVIS STREET* (Including Divis Tower)
DIVISMORE CRESCENT
DIVISMORE PARK
DIVISMORE WAY
DONEGALL ROAD*
DOWNFINE GARDENS
DOWNFINE PARK
DOWNFINE WALK
DUNLEWEY STREET
DUNVILLE STREET
DURHAM COURT
DURHAM STREET*
EMMA COURT

EXCISE WALK
FINGALS COURT
FINN SQUARE
GENOA STREET
GIBSON STREET
GLEN ROAD*
GLENALINA CRESCENT
GLENALINA GARDENS
GLENALINA GREEN
GLENALINA PARK
GLENALINA PASS
GLENALINA ROAD
GORTNAMONA COURT
GORTNAMONA HEIGHTS
GORTNAMONA PLACE
GORTNAMONA RISE
GORTNAMONA VIEW
GORTNAMONA WAY
GRANSHA AVENUE
GRANSHA CRESCENT
GRANSHA DRIVE
GRANSHA GARDENS
GRANSHA GREEN
GRANSHA GROVE
GRANSHA PARADE
GRANSHA PARK
GRANSHA RISE
GRANVILLE PLACE
GROSVENOR COURT
GROSVENOR ROAD*
GROVE TREE NORTH
GROVE TREE SOUTH
HARROGATE STREET
HAWTHORN STREET
HUGO STREET
IRIS CLOSE
IRIS GROVE
IRIS MEWS
IRIS STREET
IRWELL COURT
IVEAGH CRESCENT
IVEAGH STREET
JUDE STREET
LA SALLE MEWS
LADY STREET
LADYMAR COURT
LADYMAR GROVE
LADYMAR PARK
LADYMAR WALK
LAKE GLEN AVENUE

LAKE GLEN CLOSE
LAKE GLEN CRESCENT
LAKE GLEN GREEN
LAKE GLEN PARADE
LAKE GLEN PARK
LANARK WAY**
LEESON STREET
LINCOLN SQUARE
LISFADDAN CRESCENT
LISFADDAN DRIVE
LISFADDAN PLACE
LISFADDAN WAY
LISVARNA HEIGHTS
LISVARNA PLACE
LOCAN STREET
LOWER CLONARD STREET
MARCHIONESS GREEN
MARCHIONESS STREET
MCDONNELL COURT
MCDONNELL STREET
MICA STREET
MILFORD CLOSE
MILFORD PLACE
MILFORD RISE
MILFORD STREET
MILL RACE
MILLTOWN ROW
MONAGH BY PASS
MONAGH LINK
MOUNT ALVERNO
MOYARD CRESCENT
MOYARD GROVE
MOYARD PARADE
MOYARD PARK
MULHOUSE ROAD
NEW BARNSLEY CRESCENT
NEW BARNSLEY DRIVE
NEW BARNSLEY GARDENS
NEW BARNSLEY GREEN
NEW BARNSLEY GROVE
NEW BARNSLEY PARADE
NEW BARNSLEY PARK
NORBURY STREET
NORFOLK DRIVE
NORFOLK GARDENS
NORFOLK GROVE
NORFOLK ROAD
NORFOLK WAY
NORGLEN COURT
NORGLEN CRESCENT

NORGLEN DRIVE
NORGLEN GROVE
NORTHUMBERLAND STREET**
OAKMAN STREET
O'NEILLS LANE
OSMAN STREET
OWENVALE MEWS
PERCY STREET**
PLEVNA PARK
QUADRANT PLACE
RIVERSIDE SQUARE
ROCK GROVE
ROCKDALE STREET
ROCKMORE ROAD
ROCKMOUNT STREET
RODEN PASS
RODEN SQUARE
RODEN STREET*
RODEN WAY
RODNEY DRIVE
RODNEY PARADE
ROSS COURT
ROSS MILL AVENUE
ROSS RISE
ROSS ROAD
ROSS STREET
ROUMANIA RISE
SELBY COURT
SELBY WALK
SERVIA STREET
SHANVIS COURT
SLIABH DUBH GLEN
SLIABH DUBH LANE
SLIABH DUBH PATH
SLIABH DUBH VIEW
SLIABH DUBH WALK
SLIABH MOR HEIGHTS
SORELLA STREET
SPINNER SQUARE
SPRINGFIELD CLOSE
SPRINGFIELD COURT
SPRINGFIELD HEIGHTS
SPRINGFIELD PARK
SPRINGHILL AVENUE
SPRINGHILL CLOSE
SPRINGHILL CRESCENT
SPRINGHILL DRIVE
SPRINGHILL GARDENS
SPRINGHILL GROVE
SPRINGHILL HEIGHTS

SPRINGMADDEN COURT
SPRINGMEADOW
SPRINGVIEW STREET
ST BERNADETTE'S AVENUE
ST GERARDS MANOR
ST JAMES AVENUE
ST JAMES CRESCENT
ST JAMES DRIVE
ST JAMES GARDENS
ST JAMES PARK
ST JAMES PLACE
ST JAMES ROAD
ST KATHARINES ROAD
ST MARYS GARDENS
ST PETERS CLOSE
ST PETERS COURT
ST PETERS PLACE
ST PETERS SQUARE EAST
ST PETERS SQUARE NORTH
STANLEY COURT
STANLEY STREET
SULTAN SQUARE
SULTAN WAY
THAMES COURT
THEODORE STREET
TOWNSEND STREET**
TURIN STREET
UPPER SPRINGFIELD ROAD*
UPTON COTTAGES
UPTON COURT
VERE FOSTER WALK
WATERMOUTH CRESCENT*
WESTHILL WAY
WESTROCK COURT
WESTROCK DRIVE
WESTROCK GARDENS
WESTROCK GREEN
WESTROCK GROVE
WESTROCK MEWS
WESTROCK PARADE
WESTROCK PARK
WESTROCK PLACE
WESTROCK SQUARE
WESTROCK WAY
WESTVIEW PASS
WHITECLIFF CRESCENT
WHITECLIFF DRIVE
WHITECLIFF PARADE
WHITEROCK CRESCENT
WHITEROCK DRIVE

WHITEROCK GROVE (INC BLEACH GREEN TERRACE)
WHITEROCK PARADE

* Only the portion within the Gaeltacht Quarter boundary

** Only the portion within the Gaeltacht Quarter boundary up to the peace line wall/peace line gates.

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Subject:	Physical Programme Update
Date:	19 April 2024
Reporting Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Property & Projects
Contact Officer:	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; 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 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 a stage movement approval under the Capital Programme, along with updates on capital letters of offer and contracts awarded.						
2.0	Recommendations						
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Capital Programme - Dual Language Street Signs - Gaeltacht Quarter project - Agree that this project is moved to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> with a maximum budget of up to £170,000.• Leisure Transformation Phase 4 – note that an update on this will be part of the Party Group briefings being scheduled to inform work on future capital prioritie.• Capital Letters of Offer – to note the update in relation to capital letters of offer.• Contracts awarded in Q2 2023/24 – to note the update in relation to contracts awarded.						
3.0	Main report						
	<u>Key Issues</u>						
3.1	<p>Capital Programme - Proposed Movement</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. Members are advised that the Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange a site visit to any projects that have been completed or are underway.</p>						
3.2	<p>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>Dual Language Street Signs - Gaeltacht Quarter</td><td>The erection of dual language street signs en bloc within the Gaeltacht Quarter.</td><td>Move to Stage 3 – Committed</td></tr></table>	Project	Overview	Stage movement	Dual Language Street Signs - Gaeltacht Quarter	The erection of dual language street signs en bloc within the Gaeltacht Quarter.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed
Project	Overview	Stage movement					
Dual Language Street Signs - Gaeltacht Quarter	The erection of dual language street signs en bloc within the Gaeltacht Quarter.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed					
3.3	Dual Language Street Signs - Gaeltacht Quarter						

	<p>In March, SP&R Committee agreed to move the Gaeltacht Quarter Dual Language Street signs project to <i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted</i>. As per the three stage approvals process, an Outline Business Case has been completed and the team can now progress to delivery stage.</p> <p>Members are asked to agree that this project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a budget of up to £170,000. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.</p>
3.4	<p>Leisure Transformation – Phase 4</p> <p>Members will recall that last month it was agreed to hold a series of party briefings to inform the future proposed workshop with Members on capital priorities. As Members are aware Space and Place Architects have been engaged by the Council to carry a review of current leisure provision across the city including a review of metrics such as facilities mix, usage, catchment, condition, revenue costs and current subvention levels of the leisure facilities which have not been taken forward as part of the leisure programme to date and also those independently managed community centres which have a focus on leisure. The review has also considered the impact of the LTP to date. Leisure has already been identified by Members as a key priority for the next few years and it is therefore proposed that an update on leisure and the S&P repot will be part of the party group briefings to be held prior to the future capital workshop.</p>
3.5	<p>Capital Letters of Offer</p> <p>Members are asked to note the update in relation to capital letters of offer from December 2023 to March 2024 at Appendix 1.</p>
3.6	<p>Contracts Awarded</p> <p>Members are asked to note the award of tenders for capital works including services related to works in Q2 2023/24 at Appendix 2.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p><i>Financial</i> – Dual Language Street Signs - Gaeltacht Quarter – Maximum budget of £170,000. <i>Resources</i> – Officer time to deliver as required</p>
3.8	<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	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 - Capital Letters of Offer - December 2023 to March 2024 Appendix 2 – Contracts Awarded in Q2 2023/24 - January to March 2024</p>

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Appendix 1

Capital Letters of Offer 30 November 2023 – 30 March 2024

Project	Funder	Amount
<i>2 Royal Avenue - Bank Square Enhancement (Amendment)</i>	DfC	£335,300
<i>Grey to Green - Blue/Green Projects (Amendment)</i>	DfI	£400,000
<i>The Lockhouse - Gateway to the River/ Walkway (Amendment)</i>	TEO	£2,737,467
<i>Hosford Community Homes; Inclusion Hub (Amendment)</i>	TEO	£843,703
<i>ABC Health Trust Supplemental Letter of Offer</i>	TEO	£1,194,060
<i>BCC Cleansing Fleet Enhancement Project - Phase II (Amendment)</i>	DfC	£50,000
<i>Girdwood Indoor Sports Site - Procurement of Integrated Consultant Team (Amendment)</i>	DfC	£127,088
<i>Shankill Shared Women's Centre (Amendment)</i>	SEUPB	€9,197,908
<i>Active Travel Enablers - Pilot Bike Shed for Bike Bus</i>	DfI	£20,000
<i>Titanic People</i>	TEO	£1,219,208
<i>Covid-19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme (Amendment)</i>	DfC	£4,039,000

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Appendix 2

Schedule of Contracts Awarded (Works and Works Related) for Notation (December 2023 – March 2024)

Contract Awarded	Supplier	Date of Award
Tender for the design, supply and installation of phase 3 of covered cycle stands in Belfast	Externiture	20/12/2023
MTC small engineering & general metalwork for callouts, repairs and planned maintenance to all Council properties & locations	WJM Building Services	04/01/2024
Tender for Design and Build Contractor for the construction of a new Changing Facility at Brook 3G Intermediate Pitch	CivCo Ltd	10/01/2024
Installation of New Variable Refrigerant Flow (VRF) Air Conditioning at City Hall	BL Refrigeration	22/01/2024
UV_Main Contractor for Hosford Community Homes	McKelvey Construction Ltd	09/02/2024
UV_The Lockhouse Community Wellbeing Centre & Cafe - Main Contractor	Hugh J O'Boyle	09/02/2024
Woodvale 3G Pitch replacement	Struell Contracts	13/03/2024
MTC for drain clearance and camera surveys	Glenvale Waste Ltd	21/03/2024
UV_Main Contractor for Titanic People Exhibition	JPM Contracts	27/03/2024
UV_Arts & Digital Hub Main Contractor	OB Construction	28/03/2024

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Subject:	i) Station Street car park – Licence Renewal ii) Cherryvale Park - Licence for the siting of a container iii) Conacre / Grazing Agreements
Date:	19 th April 2024
Reporting Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Property and Projects
Contact Officer:	Pamela Davison, Estates 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="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"/>

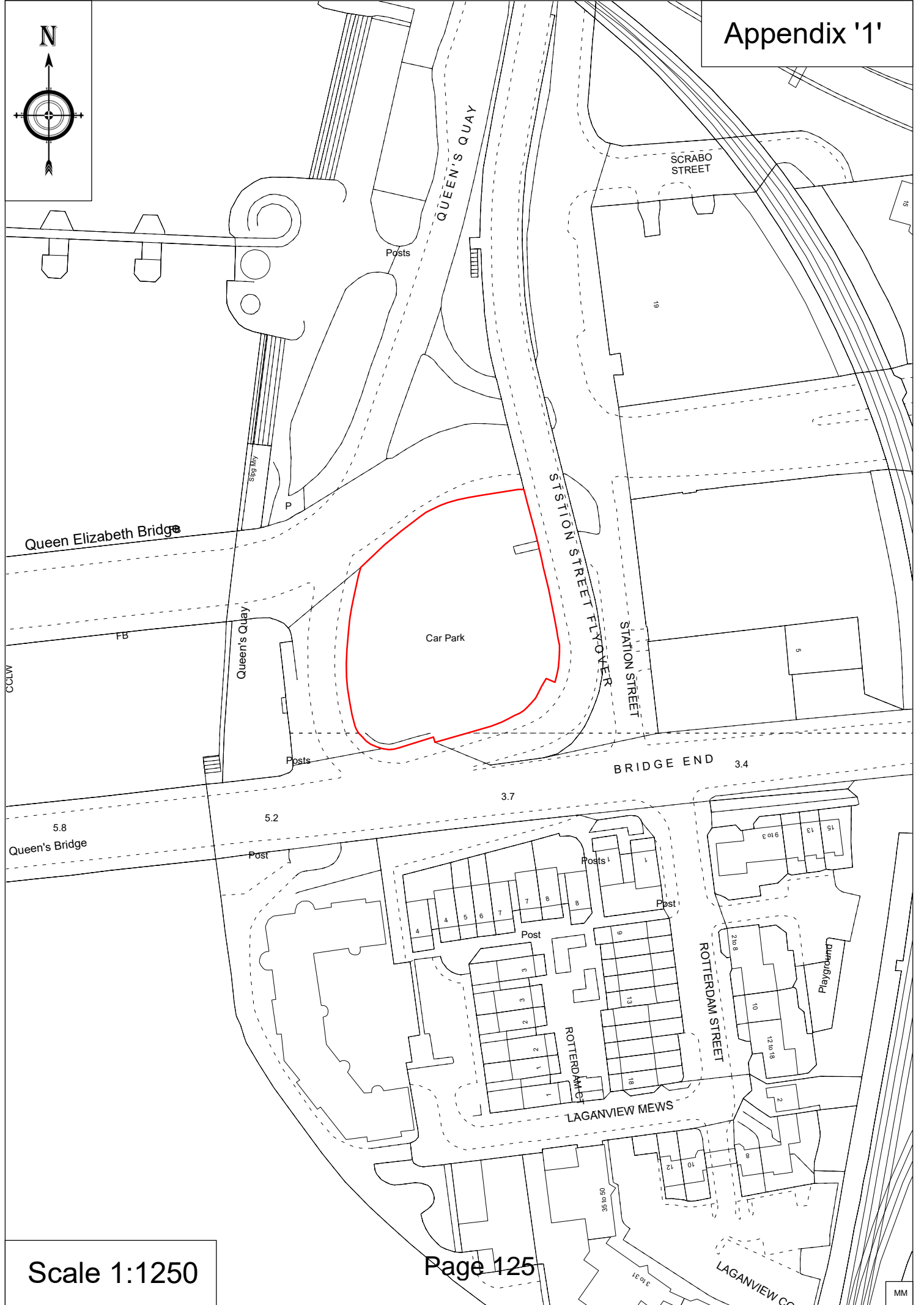
Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
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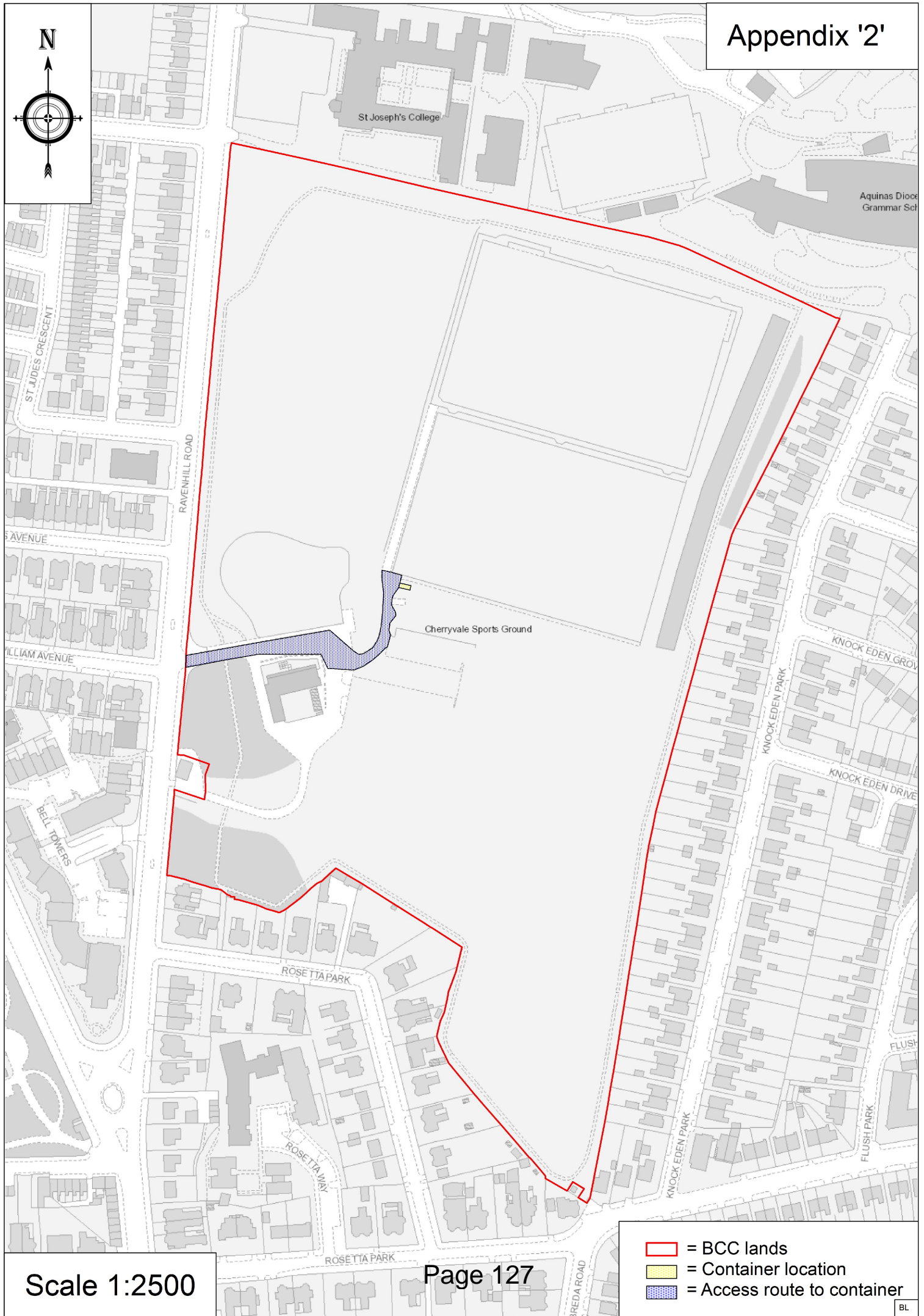
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Committee on asset related disposal, acquisition, and estates matters.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <p>i) Station Street car park – Licence Renewal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - approve the renewal of a Licence agreement from the Department for Communities to the Council in relation to the Council operated off-street car park at Station Street. <p>ii) Cherryvale Park – Licence for the siting of a container</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - approve the grant of a licence to Bredagh Gaelic Athletic Club for the siting of a container at Cherryvale Park. <p>iii) Conacre / Grazing Agreements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - approve conacre licences for a 1-year term for grazing and grass cutting of agricultural Council lands at Glencairn, Lagan Meadows, Ballygomartin Road North, Clement Wilson Park, and Roselawn.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>i) Station Street car park – Licence Renewal</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>As part of the Transfer of Functions legislation for off-street car parking, the car park at Station Street transferred to Council on 01 April 2015 from the Department of Communities (DfC). See location map at Appendix 1. The current Licence from DfC is for a term of 1 year however it expires on 30/06/2024. Negotiations have taken place between the Council & DfC who have subsequently agreed to enter into a new Licence for a further term of 1 year up to 30/06/2025 subject to a Licence fee to be assessed by Land & Property Services (LPS) based on the actual income the car park generated in the previous year. It has also been agreed that once in place, Council will continue to retain all revenue generated from its operation of the car park. A mutual break option shall be implemented into the licence given the nearby Queens Quay development plans.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Legal Services shall act on the instructions of the Estates Management Unit.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>

3.2	<p>ii) Cherryvale Park - Licence for the siting of a container</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Bredagh Gaelic Athletic Club (GAC) have requested a licence agreement to permit the siting of a 20x8ft metal container on a small plot of land adjoining the pitches at Cherryvale Playing Fields. The container is being supplied and installed by the Council under the Local Investment Fund with Bredagh GAC assuming ownership and responsibility for it once in situ. The licence shall be for an initial term of 2-years then month to month thereafter. A general container use provision shall be included in the licence. See Location Map and route of access at Appendix 2.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resources Implications</u></p> <p>Legal Services shall act on the instructions of the Estates Management Unit.</p> <p><u>Equality and Good Relations / Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.3	<p>iii) Conacre / Grazing Agreements</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Following an Expression of Interest process advertised in January 2024, the Council received bids for Conacre / Grazing Agreements for sites at Glencairn, Lagan Meadows, Ballygomartin Road North, Clement Wilson Park, and Roselawn. Approval is sought to grant new 1-year Conacre / Grazing agreements from the 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025. It is proposed that agreements are entered into with the three successful bidders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glencairn (18.77 acres) - £50 per annum, Lagan Meadows (26.35 acres) - £200 per annum and Ballygomartin Road North (13.77 acres) - £50 per annum. • Clement Wilson Park (7.83 acres) - £50 per annum. • Roselawn (19.28 acres) - £2,000 per annum. <p><u>Financial and Resources Implications</u></p> <p>The Agreements will generate total fees for the council of £2,350 per annum. Legal Services shall act on the instructions of the Estates Management Unit.</p> <p><u>Equality and Good Relations / Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices - Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Station Street car park.</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Indicating agreed route of access shaded blue and proposed licence area for siting of the container coloured yellow at Cherryvale Park.</p>

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Scale 1:2500

- = BCC lands
- = Container location
- = Access route to container

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Subject:	Contracts Update
Date:	19 th April 2024
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"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time 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	<p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek approval from members for tenders and Single Tender Actions (STA) over £30,000 <p>And to ask members to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note an update on quarterly reporting on STAs and Contracts <£30k – see section 5.0 of this report.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<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
3.1	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
3.2	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.
3.3	Standing Order 54 states that every contract shall comply with the relevant requirements of national and European legislation.
3.4	The Committee is asked to approve the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1)
	Single Tender Actions (STAs)
3.5	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 Public Contracts Regulations 2015 'PCRs' and internal governance arrangements including required controls and approvals. It mirrors the PCRs setting out the exceptional and specific circumstances when a STA can be used (see STA/ Direct Award Reasons Table in Appendix 1).
3.6	To support Officers understanding and to build capability CPS also offer STA Process training on a regular basis.
3.7	In line with Standing Order 55 the following STAs are being submitted for approval: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract for up to £210,000, for up to 36 months, awarded to Microsoft, for the provision of premier account and application support for Microsoft products. Microsoft are the only supplier to offer the level of support the Council requires.
3.8	Further details on these STAs is set out in Appendix 1 (Table 2) including the reason selected to support justification of each STA.
	STA and Contracts <£30k Reporting
3.9	At SP&R in October 24 the Committee agreed that 'the quarterly finance report should, in future, include information on expenditure on Single Tender Actions and on the number and value of contracts under £30,000'.

3.10	Information on expenditure broken down by individual STA contract records is not readily available from the Council's current financial system.				
3.11	<p>However, CPS centrally record the number and maximum total value of STA contract records that are approved by SP&R. Quarter 4 2024/25 is provided below:</p> <p>STAs awarded FY 24/25 Qtr 4</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <th>Number of STA contracts</th><th>Total value of STA contracts</th></tr> <tr> <td>8</td><td>£1,864,822</td></tr> </table>	Number of STA contracts	Total value of STA contracts	8	£1,864,822
Number of STA contracts	Total value of STA contracts				
8	£1,864,822				
3.12	<p>Records for contracts (including title; supplier name; value; duration etc) valued below £30,000 are not centrally held by CPS and are maintained on departmental registers. Below is a quarterly return by all departments on contracts awarded valued below £30,000 during FY 24/25 Qtr 4.</p> <p>Contracts <£30k awarded FY 24/25 Qtr 4</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <th>Number of <£30k contracts</th><th>Total value of <£30k contracts</th></tr> <tr> <td>41</td><td>£639,436</td></tr> </table>	Number of <£30k contracts	Total value of <£30k contracts	41	£639,436
Number of <£30k contracts	Total value of <£30k contracts				
41	£639,436				
	Financial & Resource Implications				
3.13	The financial resources for these contracts are within approved corporate or departmental budgets				
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment				
3.14	None				
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached				
	<p>Appendix 1</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) 				

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Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Microsoft Enterprise Subscription Agreement (ESA)	Up to 3 years	£2,200,000	P Gribben	To support current technology and hardware used throughout the Council.
Provision of Fuels from CCS RM6177 – National Fuels 2 Framework Agreement for Gas Oil, Diesel, Kerosene, Gas Oil class D	Up to 2 years	£3,000,000	D Sales	The fuels are used throughout the Council sites to ensure the operation of vehicles and the heating of buildings
Roller shutter repairs/ maintenance	Up to 4 years	£130,000	S Grimes	To support maintenance teams in maintaining roller shutter doors throughout Council estate.
Glazing repairs/ maintenance	Up to 4 years	£60,000	S Grimes	To support maintenance teams in repairing windows throughout Council estate.
Occupational health services	2 + 1 year extension	£380,000	C Sheridan	Provision of occupational health services for staff
Building maintenance	Up to 4 years	£800,000	S Grimes	To support maintenance teams in maintaining wide range of buildings and assets throughout Council estate.
High level lighting repairs/maintenance	4 years	£600,000	S Grimes	To support maintenance teams in maintaining high level lighting at buildings, car parks, pitches and other assets throughout Council estate.
Air conditioning systems repairs/maintenance	4 years	£400,000	S Grimes	To support maintenance teams in maintaining air conditioning systems at buildings throughout Council estate.
Provision of temporary agency workers (for specialist roles)	2 years	£2,000,000	John Tully	<p>Framework to support the current contract with Matrix SCM for circumstances where Matrix SCM Ltd cannot provide a suitable candidate for a required role. This tends to be for specialist/niche roles.</p> <p>Call off contracts will be awarded via the Crown Commercial Services framework RM6277 using direct award to local suppliers who have availability at the time.</p>

Appendix 1

				This will ensure this spend is regularised using a compliant procurement route with this spend historically been awarded under STAs.
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Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason Code
Premier account and application support for Microsoft products	Up to 3 years	£210,000	S McNicholl	Microsoft support for all of the Council Microsoft products. Microsoft are the only supplier to offer the level of support the Council requires.	Microsoft	3

STA/ Direct Award Reasons

Reason Code	Reasons in line with Public Contract Regulations
1	No response following advertised procurement exercise
2	Creation or acquisition of a unique work of art or artistic performance
3	Competition is absent for technical reasons (no reasonable substitute exists)
4	The protection of exclusive rights, including intellectual property rights
5	Extreme urgency brought about by events unforeseeable by BCC, the time limits for a procurement cannot be complied with.
6	Products manufactured purely for the purpose of research, experimentation, study or development
7	Additional deliveries which are intended either as a partial or extended replacement of supplies or installations where a change of supplier would result in supplies of different technical characteristics causing incompatibility or disproportionate technical difficulties in operation and maintenance
8	Supplies quoted and purchased on a commodity market
9	Supplies or services on particularly time-limited advantageous terms e.g. supplier winding up its business activities
10	New works and services consisting of the repetition of similar works or services, provided that the possibility of a direct award is disclosed during the original tender process
11	Other – Reason not in line with Public Contract Regulations (PCR 2015)



Belfast
City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	West Belfast Well-Being Hub
Date:	19 th April 2024
Reporting Officer:	Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance
Contact Officer:	Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance

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 or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to advise members the Notice of Motion referred back to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (SP&R) from March's Council.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> note the report and agree on whether the request should be dealt with via the discretionary payments process or via the end of year finance report.
3.0	Main report
3.1	A Notice of Motion was brought to the Standards and Business Committee on 29 th August 2023 to explore all options to fund the West Well Being Suicide Prevention Centre, including using reserve funds, if necessary, to source up to £50,000 so the organisation can continue to deliver its full range of services for the remainder of 2023. It was proposed by Councillor Collins and seconded by Councillor McCusker. The Standards and Business Committee agreed that, in the first instance, the motion be referred to SP&R.
3.2	At the SP&R committee meeting of 22 nd September 2023, the Committee considered the motion and agreed that the request be considered as part of the Quarter 2 Financial Report.
3.3	The Quarter 2 Financial Report as presented to members at SP&R on 24 th November 2023 highlighted the Q2 financial position and the forecast position of the council. Members agreed that reallocation of forecast underspends be considered as part of the year-end finance report.
3.4	The Committee's attention was drawn to the motion calling for emergency funding of £50K to be allocated to West Wellbeing Suicide Prevention Centre which the Committee, at its meeting on 22 nd September 2023, had agreed to consider as part of the Quarter 2 Financial Report. It was noted that requests of this nature were dependent upon funding being available for reallocation and the Director of Finance pointed out that the Quarter 2 finance report, which had been considered earlier in the meeting, had indicated that none was available. The request would, therefore, be dealt with as part of the year-end financial report.
3.4	Subsequently information was provided to the Chair of West Well Being advising of the Discretionary Payments Fund that was being reviewed, and in January 2024 the application pack was sent directly to the Chair. No application, or further correspondence, was received.

3.5	On this basis it was then recommend that the Notice of Motion was closed. Subsequently, at the Council meeting of 4 th March 2024, it was agreed that the Motion would not be closed and referred to SP&R committee for further discussion.
3.6	<p>Members are therefore asked on how they wish this motion to proceed, either:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Via the year-end reallocation process, which would be dependent on monies being available; or 2. Via the Discretionary Payment Process which will open in June but will again be capped at £20k. <p>As per any funding, either option would require due diligence to be carried out prior to funding being provided.</p>
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.7	None at this stage
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.8	None
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None

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Subject:	Draft Language Strategy Action Plan
Date:	19 th April 2024
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, Interim City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Russell Connelly, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer

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 style="width: 40px;" 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 or summary of main issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Committee of the results of the consultation on the draft Language Strategy Action Plan and present a revised Draft Action Plan to Members for approval.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the contents of this report; • Note the findings contained in the Consultation Report attached at Appendix 1; • Approve the revised the Draft Language Strategy Action Plan at Appendix 2.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>Background</p> <p>Belfast City Council launched its Language Strategy in 2018. An initial Action Plan covered the period until September 2018, with a second, more comprehensive Action Plan covering the period after that until March 2020.</p> <p>The onset of Covid-19 caused significant delay in rolling out the Language Strategy. Officers did, however, work on a range of issues in the intervening time such as the consultation on the decision to erect bilingual/multilingual signage at the Council's four citywide leisure centres and the revision of the dual language street signage policy.</p>
3.2	<p>Officers then developed a comprehensive draft Action Plan to roll out the Language Strategy. This Action Plan and the actions therein were the subject of significant discussion at managerial level across the Council with input being sought from the relevant departments. Officers also benchmarked the actions in the action plan against the work carried out in other Councils. The Action Plan was then subject to pre-consultation with relevant stakeholders before being brought to Strategic Policy and Resources on 22nd September 2023. .</p>
3.3	<p>Key issues</p> <p>A public consultation was launched on 16th October 2023 and ran until 22nd January 2024. Respondents could fill in an online questionnaire in English or Irish and submit their own written responses. There were four public meetings and focus groups were held with the Council's Irish Language and Ulster-Scots Stakeholder Fora, as well as the Migrant Forum.</p>
3.4	<p>The draft Action Plan has been subject to a Section 75 Equality Screening and has been screened out. This has been updated on foot of feedback received during the consultation.</p>
3.5	<p>A number of themes appeared consistently throughout the responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A concern over the cost of these actions • The need for the Council to do more for Ethnic Minority Communities • The need for the Council to do more for Deaf and Disabled people • The need for more actions in relation to the promotion of Irish and Ulster Scots.

3.6	The consultation in relation to the Draft Language Strategy Action Plan has shown a spectrum of opinions within the public and language community and voluntary sectors. Whilst the indications that there was strong disagreement with the proposals in the Action Plan, for the most part this was due to those responding not believing that the proposed action go far enough. Interrogation of the majority of those responses show support for the measures which have been proposed, albeit one response suggested that the actions were too heavily weighted in terms of Irish Language.
3.7	Officers carried out significant consultation on the proposed Action Plan through its various stakeholder groups to identify actions which could improve access to Council Services as well as language visibility. As part of that engagement, it was recognised that there are capacity issues for some language groups/communities and that is something that officers are considering how best to address. Members will also note that the Action Plan commits to bringing forward an Ulster Scots Policy and work on the promotion of language initiatives for the purposes of cultural tourism.
3.8	A separate report on existing support for non-verbal and neurodivergent children and adults at Council facilities will be brought to the Disability and Language Strategy Working Groups in the coming months.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.9	The costs for implementing the actions in the Draft Action Plan will be found within existing departmental budgets.
	Equality, good relations or rural needs implications
3.10	The Draft Language Strategy Action Plan has been the subject of a Section 75 Equality Screening and a Draft Rural Needs Impact Assessment.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Consultation Report on the Draft Language Strategy Action Plan Appendix 2: Revised Draft Language Strategy Action Plan

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Report on the Consultation Conducted by Belfast City Council into the Draft Language Strategy Action Plan 2024- 2026

March 2024

1. Introduction

Belfast City Council launched its Language Strategy 2018-2023 in April 2018. The Language Strategy covers five areas of work: Irish, Ulster Scots; Sign Languages; Newcomer Languages and Languages and Communications for People with Disabilities.

An initial action plan was agreed soon after the launch of the Strategy, and a further action plan was developed and agreed by Council in December 2018. This action plan covered the period up to March 2020. Updating of the action plan was severely delayed by the onset of Covid-19 in March 2020, with the Council going into a “holding pattern” in relation to languages and individual actions being dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

During this time the Language Officer and Irish Language Officer worked on a range of different issues including:

- The erection of bilingual signage at Andersonstown and Brooke Leisure Centres
- Organising events for Ulster-Scots Language Week, Burns Night, Sign Language Week and Seachtain na Gaeilge, including online events
- Disability Communications training, Autism NI Impact Award Champion and JAM Card training programmes for front-line staff at Belfast City Hall, Belfast Castle and Malone House.
- Sign Language provision – Sign Language accredited courses for front-line staff. A course was completed in June 2023 and a new course has been arranged as from April 2024
- Provision of SignVideo (Video Remote Interpreting) at all leisure centres and at several council venues including City Hall and Belfast Zoo
- Dealing with translation and interpreting language requests. Examples include documents translated from English to a different language e.g. Polish, Irish and Somali and organising language interpreters for meeting between council officers and members of the public
- The Equality Impact Assessment on the revised Dual Language Street Signage Policy
- Developing governance arrangements for and setting up the elected member Language Strategy Working Group and Irish Language and Ulster Scots stakeholder Fora.

During this period officers also began work on the current action plan. The actions in this Draft Action Plan were based on engagement with members and stakeholders and benchmarked against services provided by other councils and public bodies in Northern Ireland and elsewhere. The action plan then received input from managers across the Council and was subjected to discussion and pre-consultation with elected members in the Language Strategy Working Group and stakeholders.

The September 2023 meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee then gave consent for the Draft Language Strategy Action Plan to be put out to public consultation. Council officers conducted a 14-week public consultation between 16th October 2023 and 22nd January 2024 which included an online questionnaire, online engagement sessions and the opportunity to submit written comments on the Draft Action Plan.

The following report will summarise the main findings and themes of the consultation and present elected members with recommendations for potential changes to the Action Plan or for actions that could be carried forward into the Action Plan's next iteration.

1.1 Layout of the Draft Language Strategy Action Plan

The actions in the draft Language Strategy Action Plan are divided into 5 key themes:

1. Access to Council Services;
2. Branding;
3. Community, Education and Business;
4. Staff Awareness and Training;
5. Engagement.

The online consultation questionnaire asked respondents their opinion on the actions under each one of these headings and whether they agreed or disagreed with the suggested actions. Respondents were also asked if they had any further comments to add under each heading.

2. Responses from the online consultation questionnaire

Respondents were able to respond to an English or Irish version of the questionnaire. The results from both of these were then aggregated and analysed. In total there were 56 responses to the English version of the survey and 28 responses to the Irish version, a total of 84 responses.

2.1 Access to Council Services

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the proposed actions in Section 1 of the Action Plan, Access to Council Services.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the draft actions in section 1.0 Access to Council Services?	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
English Survey	12	10	4	11	19	56
Irish survey	2	0	0	0	26	28
Total	14	10	4	11	45	84
Percentage	16.7	11.9	4.8	13.1	53.5	100

The statistics above show that a majority of respondents (66.6%) across both surveys disagreed with the suggested actions in this section of the action plan, with a smaller percentage (28.6%) agreeing with the proposed actions.

Whilst the majority of respondents are not entirely satisfied with the action plan as currently drafted, the comments received demonstrate that they welcome the Action Plan and the opportunity to communicate a range of proposed improvements and amendments across the various themes and specific actions.

Key themes in the survey responses

A detailed examination of the comments received in relation to Council Services reveals a number of themes. One of the key themes is the issue of cost, and the cost to the Council of rolling out these services in languages other than English.

A range of comments noted the disparity between services which would be rolled out in relation to the Irish language compared to the proposed services which would be available in Ulster Scots. A number of respondents also pointed to the possibility that any services offered in Irish would have to be also delivered in Ulster Scots, thus creating a further cost.

A number of respondents highlighted the perceived damage that rolling out some of these actions could have on good relations in the city, and claimed that the Council's approach to language was politically motivated. Others however noted that the actions had the potential to contribute to good relations in a positive manner.

Some of the comments focused on the need for services for newcomer communities and the availability of English language classes and support for them. Another repeated theme was the need for Sign Language support and support for people with various disabilities and Autism.

A range of responses focused on the Council's approach to the promotion of Irish. Some of these came in the form of a pro-forma response which members of the Irish language

community submitted individually. The main points from this response under this question were:

- The need for a corporate Irish-Language Policy, developed in conjunction with the Irish language community;
- An audit of the Irish-language capability of Council staff and an assessment of willingness of staff to deliver services through Irish;
- Learning Irish to be made part of staff development;
- Translation of key Council documents to Irish and these being made available at the same time as the English version;
- Irish content on the Council's social media to relating to all Council initiatives, not just those aimed at the Irish-language community;
- A publicity campaign to highlight the Council's new approach to Irish.

Respondents from the Irish language community clearly felt that the above actions would have a positive impact on the Irish language community and on the promotion of Irish.

2.2 Branding

Respondents were asked to give their opinions on the proposed actions in the Draft Language Strategy Action plan in relation to Branding. A similar statistical pattern was borne out in the responses here.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the draft actions in section 2.0 Branding	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
English Survey	11	10	6	9	20	56
Irish survey	2	0	0	0	26	28
Total	13	10	6	9	46	84
Percentage	15.5	11.9	7.1	10.7	54.8	100

65.5% of respondents in to this question disagreed or strongly disagreed with these proposed actions, with 27.4% agreeing with the actions as currently drafted.

A number of themes apparent in the response to the first question were also apparent here, including the potential cost implications to having Irish language and Ulster Scots branding throughout the Council.

A small number of comments suggested that the use of Irish or Ulster Scots in the branding of the Council would politicize these languages and that this could lead to damaging good relations in Belfast. A range of comments highlighted the need for a greater focus on Sign Languages and disability communications.

Several responses were in favour of the use of the Irish language in branding. Responses suggested that the initial work on developing a bilingual Irish/English logo and Council branding, similar to what other Councils in Northern Ireland have, should be done now. Respondents here gave the opinion that a bilingual Irish/English logo and branding should become the de facto branding of the Council.

2.3 Community, Education and Business

Those filling in the survey were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the proposed actions under the heading of Community, Education and Business in the action plan.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the draft actions in section 3.0 Community, Education and Business?	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
English Survey	13	8	5	12	19	57
Irish survey	2	0	0	0	26	28
Total	15	8	5	12	45	85
Percentage	17.6	9.5	5.9	14.1	52.9	100

57% of respondents to this question either disagreed or strongly disagreed with these proposed actions, with 27.1% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing.

The issue of cost again featured heavily in the responses here, with some respondents feeling that this would incur additional costs to the Council. A number of respondents pointed out that some of these actions are or should be carried out by other public sector bodies, namely the Department for Education, Foras na Gaeilge and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta.

Some respondents felt that the proposed actions for the Irish language should also be rolled out for Ulster Scots.

The responses which specifically focused on the Irish language sections of the action plan contained a number of recommendations, namely:

- The development of an Gaeltacht Bursary Scheme for young people in the city;
- The use of already existing material on the origin of placenames in a booklet and for this to be distributed through City Hall and other Council facilities;
- A recurring section in Irish in City Matters which includes material aimed at learners of Irish.

While an initial examination of the statistics for this question might suggest that there was strong opposition to these proposed actions in this section of the action plan, an analysis of the written responses, especially those in relation to the Irish language suggest a need for the Council to do more here and for more specificity within the individual actions.

2.4 Staff awareness and training

The next question in the survey focused on the proposed actions in relation to Staff awareness and training.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the draft actions in section 4.0 Staff Awareness and Training?	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
English Survey	14	12	8	8	14	56
Irish survey	2	0	0	0	26	28
Total	16	12	8	8	40	84
Percentage	19	14.4	9.5	9.5	47.6	100

It can be seen again that the majority of responses to this question were in disagreement with the suggested actions – 57.1%. 33.4% of respondents to this question agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed actions.

Respondents who left a written comment noted the potential cost of these actions and the impact that it could have on staff. Some respondents also indicated that staff should not only be facilitated to learn and to use Irish, but also to learn and use Ulster Scots and to be trained in how to communicate with Deaf and Disabled people.

In relation to the learning and use of Irish by staff, a recurring theme across the commentary was that staff who chose to learn or improve their Irish should be allowed to do so during the workday and that this should not place them at a disadvantage.

2.5 Engagement

The last question which related specifically to the actions in the Draft Language Strategy Action Plan asked respondents for their opinions on the suggested actions under the heading Engagement.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the draft actions in section Engagement?	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
English Survey	14	14	6	7	15	56
Irish survey	2	0	0	0	25	27
Total	16	14	6	7	40	83
Percentage	19.3	16.9	7.1	8.4	48.3	100

A majority of respondents – 56.7% disagreed or disagreed strongly with the proposed actions here, with 36.2% being in agreement.

Similar themes were apparent in the written commentary that appeared in the above questions focusing on cost. One comment suggested that the Language Strategy should help newcomer communities learn English in an effort to help them assimilate into society here.

The overwhelming commentary in relation to the Irish language was that any communication with the Irish language youth sector or with the Irish-medium education sector should be conducted through the medium of Irish and during school hours.

2.6 Other Comments

Respondents were then given the opportunity to make any other comments they might have in relation to the Draft Language Strategy Action Plan. Many of the same comments and themes that were made in relation to the action-specific questions above were reinforced in this section.

These included the perceived cost and resource implications of the action plan, the need for actions being suggested for Irish to be replicated for Ulster Scots, and also comments opposing the promotion of Irish and Ulster Scots. Respondents also noted the need to support Deaf people and those with disabilities. One comment again stressed the need for newcomer communities to be offered English lessons.

The pro-forma responses in relation to the Irish language focused on two main issues. The first was the disappointment that it has taken so long to develop the Draft Language Strategy Action Plan and to put this out for public consultation. The second was to note that the Section S75 Equality Screening exercise into the action plan had screened the Draft Action Plan out which was welcomed by respondents who suggested that this should be the approach to language issues in the future.

3. Key themes across the whole consultation

A number of core themes were present across all responses to the various questions. These were: cost: disparity between Irish and Ulster Scots in the proposed actions; the potential impact on good relations; services for Deaf and disabled communities, and the need for the promotion of Irish.

3.1 Cost

Repeatedly across all questions respondents commented on the potential cost of implementing the actions in the Draft Action Plan. Respondents also pointed to the increased financial pressure on the Council and the current cost of living crisis and questioned the sagacity of spending money on these issues at this time.

3.2 Disparity between Irish and Ulster Scots

A number of respondents voiced the opinion that any services or proposed actions that aim to promote Irish should also be rolled out for Ulster Scots. One respondent felt that this would promote “parity of esteem”, and that any work around bilingual Irish/English branding should be replicated to create an equivalent Ulster Scots branding, or for the logo to include English, Irish and Ulster Scots.

3.3 Impact on Good Relations

There was a range of comments across the various questions, often not relating to the substance of the question itself, suggesting that the Draft Language strategy Action Plan, particularly the actions aimed at the promotion of Irish and Ulster Scots, could damage good relations and was being driven by a “political agenda”. Comments referred to these proposals as “political point scoring”, with one respondent stating that the idea of the use of Irish in branding was little different from the erection of flags and painting of kerbstones.

Any assertions of this nature should, however, be caveated heavily. In its response to the Education Authority’s draft Interim Policies for the Irish and Ulster Scots Languages, The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland described the use of Irish and Ulster Scots for official purposes as a “neutral act” which would not be discriminatory.

3.4 Services for Deaf and Disabled Communities

One repeated theme across the answers here was that the Council should focus their energies and the resources from the Language Strategy on providing services for the Deaf community and people with disabilities. These comments often drew contrasts between the proposals to promote Irish and Ulster Scots and the perceived lack of focus in the action plan on services for Deaf and disabled people. A number of comments also suggested that Belfast City Council staff would benefit from training in relation to British Sign Language and Irish Sign Language, along with awareness raising on communicating with people with disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorder.

3.5 Promotion of Irish

One of the most prominent themes across the questions related to the promotion of the Irish language. Comments in relation to the promotion of the Irish language were made both in individual responses but also in what could be described as a pro-forma response from the Irish language community. While the general tone of these comments was that the promotion of Irish is a positive thing, the proforma answers from the Irish language community strongly voiced the opinion that the Council is not doing enough to promote the language.

The key suggestions from this response were:

- The development of bilingual branding for the Council
- The development of a corporate Irish Language Policy
- The provision of the most commonly-used forms and webpages in Irish
- A Gaeltacht Bursary scheme
- The development of a booklet focusing on placenames, basic Irish and the benefits of bilingualism
- Allowing staff to use and improve their Irish during work hours
- An Irish language page in City Matters
- An awareness raising campaign to highlight the services offered by the Council in Irish

A separate written submission was sent to the Council by a number of Irish language groups in the city, echoing the comments above and making a range of specific recommendations. This will be discussed in further detail below. It is evident from this submission that there is a strong feeling within the Irish language community that the Council is not going far enough in terms of promoting Irish.

4. Written submissions

Over the course of the consultation period the Council received a written response to the survey from the British Deaf Association, the DUP party group within Belfast City Council and from a range of groups in the Irish language community.

4.1 Submission from the British Deaf Association

The submission from the British Deaf Association made specific reference and recommendations in relation to points throughout the Draft Action Plan.

In relation to point 1.1, the provision of translation and interpretation services across the Council, the BDA stated that the Council should work to provide a Video Relay Service for Deaf customers at Council facilities. It was also noted that the needs of Irish Sign Language users (as opposed to British Sign Language users) should be considered here, and queried whether a UK based company would be able to provide ISL service.

The BDA state that where possible, any Sign Language translation/interpreting is carried out by Deaf translators and that these translators are paid on an equal basis to their hearing counterparts.

A number of the recommendations in the submission focused on Council staff and how staff should be empowered to assist with Deaf customers through awareness raising and the establishment of an informal group for Deaf and signing staff or staff who wish to learn Sign Language. Further to this, the BDA suggest that the Council actively consider hiring Deaf and Disabled people into roles where there will be contact with Deaf and Disabled members of the public. the BDA did comment, however, that being Deaf or a Sign Language user in a non-

Signing environment can be particularly challenging, and that any Deaf employees, especially younger Deaf employees should be supported effectively.

The BDA have also suggested that the Council look at holding a festival or large event every year specific to the Deaf community and Sign Language users. Further recommendations include appointed a BSL/ISL poet laureate and developing BSL/ISL creative events and activities that are led by Deaf people and BSL/ISL users.

This submission noted the importance of engagement between the Council and the Deaf and Sign Language community and felt that setting up a BSL/ISL community forum to allow for the Deaf community to actively engage with the Council. The importance of having a younger Sign Language user on this forum was also stressed in this response.

The submission can be read in full at Appendix 1.

4.2 Democratic Unionist Party submission

The Democratic Unionist Party made a written submission to the consultation outlining their opinions and concerns on the proposals therein. One of the key themes in this submission is cost, with the party stating that it felt that the Draft Action Plan is quite ambitious and does not serve the interests of the rate payer.

The DUP stated their opinion that there should be a greater focus on Disability Communications and Sign Language and that the Draft Language Strategy Action Plan presents the Council with an opportunity to take the lead on these issues in Belfast. The DUP make specific reference to the provision of services in Makaton as well as Sign Language and communication boards and visual supports at Council facilities for non-verbal and neurodivergent children and adults.

The submission also suggests training for staff in Sign Language, Makaton and how to communicate with neurodivergent members of the public and those who find communication challenging. The DUP felt that the Council should continue to provide as many job opportunities as possible for members of the public who are in the supported employment sector as possible.

There was a particular emphasis in the DUP submission on the provision of English classes for newcomer communities. The DUP noted that this was needed for Home Office applications for residency here.

One of the points that came across most strongly in the DUP submission was their opinion that the Council has already committed significant time and resources to the promotion of the Irish language through signage and the Dual Language Street Signage policy. The DUP used the submission as an opportunity to highlight their ongoing opposition to the 15% threshold for the erection of a dual language street sign.

The submission makes particular reference to a number of the proposed actions in relation to the promotion of the Irish language and states that these are not within the Council's bailiwick. There is specific reference to the proposals to deliver a one-off course on teaching methods to community based Irish language teachers and the deliver of upskilling academies to Irish-language classroom assistants. The DUP feel that these would fall within the remit of an Irish Language Commissioner once appointed. They further state that the proposal to produce a booklet of Irish language phrases and facts about the benefits of bilingualism would come under the remit of the Office of Identity and Cultural expression once established.

The submission can be read in full at Appendix 2.

4.3 Submission by the Irish Language Community

A range of Irish language groups submitted written feedback to the consultation. This feedback was uniform across the groups, with the organisations attaching their own branding to the submission. Submissions were received from:

- Cultúrlann McAdam – Ó Fiaich;
- Seachtain na Gaeilge;
- Fís an Phobail;
- Conradh na Gaeilge; and,
- Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain

An example of one of these submissions has been included in Appendix 3.

The preamble to these submissions outlined the disappointment within the Irish language community around how the Council has approached Irish language issues. It is noted that despite the Strategy being launched in 2018, and there being significant community and legislative developments since then, the first update of this is coming more than five years later. Reference is also made to what is described as “vague” or “general” commitments in relation to the promotion of the Irish language. The submissions also highlight the opinion within these groups that the Strategy points towards possible scenarios where the use or display of Irish would be “inappropriate” and that this calls the Council’s commitment to the promotion of the language into question.

The submissions then outline the commitments towards the promotion of Irish in the Language Strategy and list occasions where this was not done. This includes the erection of English-only signage at Council facilities, the lack of Irish in the Council’s City Matters magazine and the lack of reference to the Irish language and its history in the visitors’ exhibition in Belfast City Hall. The submissions note that some positive steps have been taken, however, in relation to the language. These include: the appointment of the Irish Language Officer; the revision of the Dual Language Street Signage policy; setting up the Irish language community stakeholder forum; and, the commitment to bringing in an Irish language policy.

The submissions then make a number of specific recommendations in relation to the actions in the Draft Language Strategy Action Plan. Some of the specific recommendations are discussed below. These have been laid out below according to the section of the section of the Action Plan they were in.

1. Access to Council services

Active Offer - The submission highlighted the concept of active offer, that is that members of the public will be informed that they can use Irish when dealing with the Council at their earliest interaction with the Council. The submission suggested that the webpage informing residents what services can be accessed through the medium of Irish be completely bilingual.

Standing Orders - The Irish language sector also suggested that the Council’s standing orders be changed to allow for elected members to speak for longer in Council or committee if they are using both Irish and English.

Media output - Reference was made to the use of Irish in the Council’s social media output and in press releases. The opinion of the respondents here was that this should not solely relate to Irish language issues but to the full scope of Council work and output. It was also suggested that an Irish speaking spokesperson be made available to the media where possible. The possibility of an awareness raising campaign to highlight the Council’s Irish language services was also raised.

2. Signage and Branding

The significant ask in this section was that bilingual Irish/English branding should become the de facto branding for the Council. It was noted that any group or third party delivering services on behalf of the Council should also use the bilingual logo.

3. Community, Education and Business

One of the main recommendations here was that the Irish language be made a central facet of the Belfast Stories Programme and that the content of the programme is presented bilingually. It was also suggested that there is regular contact between the Belfast Stories programme team and the Irish language community.

It was suggested in the submission that the teaching methods course be a recurring yearly event and that any workshops aimed at schools delivered in Irish be held throughout the year and the summer. It was also suggested that the Council host a range of events and workshops aimed at combatting negative attitudes to the Irish language. Respondents also suggested that the Council examine the possibility of developing a Gaeltacht Bursary Scheme allowing for young people in the Belfast City Council area to attend summer courses in the Gaeltacht.

4. Staff Awareness and Training

The submission here suggested that the staff be allowed to attend weekly Irish classes during work hours, and that any informal discussion group meet once a week a be resourced adequately. The issue of staff training in relation to these issues was also raised, and the submission noted that staff should receive mandatory training on the European Charter for Regional and Minority Language and the relevant local legislation in relation to the Irish language.

5. Engagement

The response suggested here that any engagement with the Irish medium youth sector be conducted through Irish.

The above is not exhaustive and the full list of suggestions can be seen in Appendix 3 where a copy of the submission has been reproduced in English.

The submissions also highlighted what were felt to be a number of significant gaps in the information in the Draft Language Strategy Action Plan. These included a lack of contextual information about the Irish language in Belfast and clear time scales for the implementation of the proposed actions. The submissions also suggested that the Council undertake work to prepare for the implementation of the Language and Identity Bill through the development of Language Standards in conjunction with the Irish Language Stakeholder Forum. It was also suggested that the Council give regular reports and updates on the implementation of the Language Strategy and that a “language screening” process is developed allowing for the consideration of the impact or potential impacts on the Irish language and Irish language community.

The respondents here were also keen to see the further development of the Council’s commitment to Seachtain an Gaeilge/Irish language week through the development of a specific funding stream for Seachtain na Gaeilge and that the Council increases the number of events it increases. The submission also suggests that the Council do more to highlight its Dual Language Street Signage policy and highlight the culture of townland names in Belfast, as well as outlining what steps it will take to deal with damage to these signs.

It should be noted, at this juncture, that at the time of consultation and writing this report (March 2023), work is ongoing on developing a corporate Irish Language Policy for Belfast City Council. A range of the suggestions made in the submission from the Irish language community would be resolved through this policy, if enacted. This Action Plan and the Irish Language Policy would be subject to review and change in light of any direction from central government under the Language and Identity Act.

5. Amendments to the Language Strategy Action Plan based on consultation feedback

Based on feedback from both the online consultation and written responses, Council officers have made some amendments to the draft Language Strategy Action Plan. These include the clarification of the wording of some points and other minor amendments such as actions relating to specific languages being changed to cover all languages.

A number of actions have been removed and new actions included. These can be seen in the Draft Action Plan itself but are summarised below. The following new actions have been added and amendments have been made to existing actions:

- The promotion of ESOL courses provided at Belfast Metropolitan College.
- Exploring provision of Makaton training for Council staff.
- The development of a recurring page in Irish in City Matters.
- The action committing to exploring linguistic diversity in business has been amended to include tourism.
- The action committing to the audit of staff capability in a language other than English has been amended to reflect that this audit will ask their willingness to provide services in these languages.
- The action committing to including young people on the Council's Language Fora has been amended to include a commitment to liaise with the Irish language youth sector through Irish.

The action committing to exploring bringing Oireachtas na Gaeilge to Belfast has been removed, as this is already agreed, and work is ongoing on this. The actions below have been removed as it is felt that officers will not have the capacity to deliver on these within the lifespan of this Action Plan:

- Delivery of a one-off course on teaching methods for those teaching Irish in the community.
- Exploration of tourism and cultural initiatives through Irish, including in the Gaeltacht Quarter.
- Creative writing competition for students in Irish-medium schools and those learning Irish.

A range of other recommendations were made in the submission from the Irish language community which have not been included in the Draft Action Plan. Some of these may not be deliverable within the lifespan of this Action Plan, while other will be dealt with under the Council's Irish Language Policy, which is currently being developed.

Members will also note that indicative dates have been included next to each action. Members are asked to approve or reject these additions to the Draft Language Strategy Action Plan.

6. Conclusions

The consultation into the Draft Language Strategy Action Plan has shown a spectrum of opinions within the public and language community and voluntary sectors. Whilst the majority of respondents are not entirely satisfied with the action plan as currently drafted, the comments received demonstrate that they welcome the Action Plan and the opportunity to communicate a range of proposed improvements and amendments across the various themes and specific actions.

While there have been a range of comments about the potential cost of rolling out the actions in the Language Strategy Action Plan and the perception that these are politically motivated, this has to be weighted against the commentary in support of various aspects of the Strategy and the Draft Action Plan.

These comments showed support for services for Deaf and Disabled people, services to support ethnic minority communities and the Irish language and Ulster Scots.

One of the most prominent themes, in fact, was the perception amongst the Irish language community that the Council was not doing enough and could do more. This was also matched by some, although admittedly fewer, comments that more the Council needed to make similar efforts in relation to the Ulster Scots as it is making in relation to Irish.

Appendix 1 British Deaf Association Submission

BDA Response to Belfast Language Strategy Consultation

Deadline Jan 22 2024

Consultation: <https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/language-action-plan-draft/surveys/language-action-plan>

Each section in the consultation has a link to the relevant section in the draft Language Plan.

Access to Council Services

Q1 STRONGLY AGREE

Q2 Action 1.1 – Please contract with a VRS (Video Relay Service) provider to provide on-call BSL/ISL translation to enable Deaf signers to more easily contact and engage with Belfast council services. Several UK councils and local services (eg GP services etc) already use similar services for BSL. For ISL, VRS may not be available in the UK, but an Ireland provider may be able to cover this.

(BSL= British Sign Language, ISL = Irish Sign Language)

Actions 1.4, 1.7, 1.13, and 1.19 – please have a policy that BSL / ISL translations are carried out by Deaf translators whenever possible, and please make sure they are paid on an equal basis to hearing BSL translators for the same work.

Regarding action 1.7, please look at having a specific ‘Festival of ISL and BSL’ to showcase and highlight ISL and BSL.

Branding

Q3 STRONGLY AGREE

Q4 Action 2.5 on installing ‘welcome screens’ featuring BSL and ISL is a wonderful proposal. Please consider giving staff a short simple process for providing support when a Deaf signer approaches staff with a query.

Community, Education and Business

Q5 STRONGLY AGREE

Q6 Please consider taking similar actions to promote ISL / BSL eg appointing an ISL Poet Laureate and a BSL Poet Laureate, and promoting BSL / ISL – led creative activities led by Deaf people, eg visual storytelling or cultural events or Deaf-led arts and museum tours.

Staff Awareness and Training

Q7 STRONGLY AGREE

Q8 Regarding 4.4, establishing an informal Irish Language staff group, please consider doing the same for BSL / ISL – establishing an informal staff group for signing staff, and for staff who wish to practice their signing.

Regarding 4.5, please consult with Deaf staff and NI Deaf-led organisations on what barriers exist for Deaf signers who wish to work for Belfast Council and look at what can be done to remove these barriers.

Please consider specifically focusing on hiring Deaf and Disabled people into all areas associated with Belfast Council's services for Deaf and Disabled people.

Engagement

Q9 STRONGLY AGREE

Q10 Regarding actions 5.1 and 5.2, please consider doing similar for BSL/ISL, i.e. establishing a BSL/ISL stakeholder forum, and also including a young signer in the Council's external Language Strategy Engagement Fora.

Note that being the only signer in a non-signing environment is intimidating, especially when young. Please consider having two young signers to work together / provide mutual support, and please consider bringing in mentoring from an older Deaf signing professional to support the young signers.

Equality Screening and Rural Needs

Q11 Please consult with a NI Deaf-led organisation to check that the draft Section 75 Equality Screening / rural needs assessment has taken into account the equity needs of Belfast's BSL / ISL communities.

Other comments

Q12 The British Deaf Association's Northern Ireland team is happy to work with Belfast City Council on any matters relating to ISL and BSL.

ENDS

Appendix 2 Democratic Unionist Party submission

The Democratic Unionist Party group in Belfast City Council have read the draft Language strategy and wish to make the following remarks:

1. We have concerns that the Draft Action Plan is quite ambitious and without confirmation of a budget to deliver, we feel that the priority list **does not** best serve the overarching public interest or the ratepayer.
2. Comments made from Council Officers during the Language Strategy Working Group meeting on the 1st September 2023, indicated that the Irish Language groups were putting significant pressure on Council for delivery of their agenda.

We note that the **Disability Working Group** was established to engage with groups who have additional needs and to ensure that Council plays its role in providing the best possible service for everybody, regardless of disability. Since it's conception in autumn 2022, the group has met on *less than 3 occasions*. We believe that greater attention priority should be given by Council to ensure:

- i. The times of these meetings are co-ordinated to suit members of the group to ensure that quorum is met;
 - ii. Consideration is given to the provision of monthly meetings to meet with a variety of stakeholders with additional needs and broaden understanding of addressing the needs of those who use sign language and disability communications; and
 - iii. Recommendations to improving these two strands of the Language Strategy should be made at pace to the Strategic Resource & Policy Communication for approval.
3. We feel that significant attention and council resources have already been provided to the provision of Irish Language, particularly with the Irish language sign monthly consultations, translation, creation, and installation of street signs, mostly in the Gaeltacht Quarter We continue to disagree with the 15% bilingual sign policy and note that the positive response rate to the provision of Irish language signs remains low.
4. Our focus will always be on providing the ratepayer with the best service possible, with the lowest possible rates. As a priority, basic council services such as the provision of smaller waste collection vehicles, street cleansing, upgrading our playparks and leisure facilities.
5. We believe that Council should give a wider consideration to implementing Disability Communications at pace. We acknowledge that there are a large number of

residents with Belfast City Council area who are neurodivergent or have communication difficulties.

In response to each of the subsections provided in the consultation, we note:

Access to Council Services:

Belfast has a real opportunity to take the lead on the *Language and Communications needs for disabled people*.

Makaton / Communication Boards

6. While welcoming the expansion of Sign Language Translation on popular pages, the increasing use of Makaton should be acknowledged and included within this draft policy. Sign Language is primarily used for those hard of hearing or with no hearing. Makaton is used for those with additional communication needs. The organisation **Sign Simply** have been engaging with Newry, Mourne and Down Council to train staff in Makaton.
7. Cllr. Sarah Bunting was successful in her proposal for the creation and placement of **communication boards** at Tommy Patton Park, located off the Hollywood Road. This playpark is accessed regularly by the pupils of Mitchell House Special School. Significant work has been undertaken between Council and the Speech & Language therapists at the school, to ensure that the content of the boards is appropriate and useful. The understanding is that once these boards have been placed at Tommy Patton Park, additional boards can be replicated in other playparks across the city.
8. We welcome the proposal to expand the provision of *1.19 - Sign Language translation on popular pages on the website* and *1.20 To ensure all operating partners such as GLL provide appropriate language interpretation and translation services*.

Under *1.4 – To develop guidance to support departments in the accessibility to Council documents, services and facilities for a disability perspective*, we believe that council could further expand on **visual supports** to enhance communication for those who are non-verbal. During People & Communities meeting in December 2023, Cllr. Ruth Brooks proposed that the Council website would be updated, mapping out playparks and the equipment that would be most appropriate to children with additional needs.

We believe this strategy could go further to expand on Cllr. Brooks successful proposal, providing short video clips of each council building and facility. This would allow those who are non-verbal or have neurodivergent conditions to **build confidence** and become familiar with council facilities ahead of visiting.

Within council buildings and facilities, a short video should be created that allow conversations with parents have highlighted that children who are non-verbal or have

additional neurological needs would benefit from short videos of facilities, to allow familiarity and prevent overwhelming anxiety, encouraging use of Council facilities.

Branding

9. We welcome the proposals under 2.5 and 2.6 and refer to the above points in relation to the expansion of signage that would reach a far-wide audience.

Community, Education and Business

10. In this section, we have concerns that 3.4 – *One-off external course, developed in consultation with stakeholders, delivered to community-based Irish language teachers on teaching methods*, and 3.5 – *Delivery of Employment / Upskilling Academies for Irish-medium classroom assistances and others working in the Irish medium education sector* are over-stepping the mark of what would be expected at local government level. Under the provisions of New Decade, New Approach, this would be the role of the Irish Language Commissioner. These items should not be considered or provided using Council resources.
11. Similarly, 3.8 – *Production of an Irish language booklet of basic Irish phrases, sayings and facts about the benefits of bilingualism* would fall under the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression, not Belfast City Council.
12. With limited resources and no definitive budget for the implementation of the Language Strategy, we feel that these elements should be removed.

Staff Awareness and Training

13. In addition to the provision of Sign Language courses, we believe that Belfast City Council should include Makaton courses. We believe that this would be of much benefit to staff who have front-line engagement with the public and in addition, provide accessible means of communication with members of the public who have neurodivergent conditions or communication challenges.
14. Under 4.5, we believe that Belfast City Council should continue to provide as many job opportunities as possible within the Supported Employment sector.

Key Area of Work: Engagement

15. We believe that there could be better engagement with those who **do not have** English as their first language. We understand that many of the English classes are fully subscribed by those who need a certified standard of English in order to obtain further leave to remain for Home Office applications.

We want to ensure that everyone arriving into the Belfast City Council area has the opportunity to access English classes, so that can develop confidence in their ability to communicate within their communities.

Appendix 3 Submission from Irish Language Groups

Draft Language Strategy Action Plan 2023-2026

Belfast City Council

This submission is sent as part of Belfast City Council's consultation on the draft action plan which is currently out for consultation. Belfast City Council is invited to accept this document in its entirety as an official submission.

West Belfast Irish Language Network

For the first time ever, areas outside the Gaeltacht were granted official status as areas of particular linguistic importance. In 2018, Foras na Gaeilge granted special status to 'Irish Language Network Areas' and West Belfast was one of the five areas selected throughout Ireland. Funding was provided to develop a language plan for the area in 2018 and since then that plan has been approved by Foras na Gaeilge and given official status by the Irish Government. In September 2022, a language planning co-ordinator was appointed to oversee the implementation of that plan over the next 7 years.

The overall aim of the West Belfast Language Network (Fís an Phobail) is to support the development of a critical mass of speakers to foster and strengthen a sustainable language community over the years. The official recognition of this network provides a national status for our work and the additional resources associated with the project provide the space to implement an ambitious plan that identifies and assesses existing provision and develops an action plan to strengthen and expand them in the years ahead.

In an area of not more than 3 square miles, we have;

- 5 Irish-medium primary schools;
- 6 Irish-medium pre-school providers;
- the largest Irish-medium post-primary school anywhere in Ireland;
- 3 youth clubs and the regional Irish-medium youth body (Fóram na nÓg);
- 2 Irish-medium community organisations with support from Foras na Gaeilge's Language Scheme in the Community (Glór na Móna and Ionad Uibh Eachach);
- 2 childcare providers (Iveagh Centre and Grandma's House);
- an Irish-medium Cultural and Arts Centre (Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiach);
- a full-time community radio station (Ráidió Fáilte);
- a professional theatre company (Aisling Ghéar);

- an Irish Language GAA club (Laochra Loch Lao CLG);
- community learning and social hub (Cumann Chluain Árd);
- a training and careers' organisation (Gaelchúrsaí);
- a Business Agency that is driving the development of an Ceathrún Gaeltachta / Gaeltacht Quarter(Forbairt Feirste) — located in the newly built Áras na bhFál along with other IM companies such as Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and the national advocacy body, Conradh na Gaeilge;
- St Mary's University College, the only provider of third level teacher training for Irish-medium schools located in the area as well as a host of sports, heritage and community projects which will see West Belfast uniquely located to develop bilingual communities in the years ahead.

Introduction:

Belfast City Council has had a language strategy since 2018 with the aim, among others, of ensuring that linguistic diversity is respected by all and that those living, working or visiting Belfast have the opportunity to see the city in a holistic manner and to do so in their language of choice. However, it is not surprising that the Irish language community in the Council area has not always been, and is not always satisfied with the Council's use of the language; notwithstanding the general commitments to the Irish language contained in this language strategy, it is clear that they are not serving the Irish language community in Belfast appropriately. This language strategy was implemented in 2018 and has not been updated since then, despite significant community, statutory and political developments. In addition, it took the Council 6 years to publish a comprehensive action plan for this strategy, which casts doubt on the impact, power, and effectiveness of the strategy itself.

The commitments to Irish in the language strategy are very general and there is an inappropriately negative wording which contends that there are particular circumstances when the use of Irish would be inappropriate. As well as this, the Irish language community often feel that the Council is not operating in accordance with the language strategy and that the burden is on them to advance the case for Irish as the commitments in the language strategy are neither clear nor robust enough.

Commitment to Irish in the language strategy	Example(s) where the commitment has not been met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Increase the visibility and use of the Irish language, as appropriate, through Council services, facilities and events;</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monolingual, English language signage was erected on the community facility of the City Cemetery which is located in the heart of the Gaeltacht Quarter. 2. In October 2023, the Belfast Bikes stall outside Coláiste Feirste was added

	<p>with signage and facilities in English only.</p> <p>3. Temporary signage through Falls Park was updated on the development of a new greenway but again, it was in English only.</p> <p>4. In the Journal published quarterly by the Council, there are no regular Irish language columns. The Council promised that they would be happy to look at this, but it is still in English only.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>To publicise that the Council will facilitate services, as appropriate, in the Irish language;</i> 	<p>1. There is currently no service available in Irish from the Council outside of core Irish language services - the Council had a telephone line between 2006-2017 which was never made public, to deal with Irish language queries from the public. When the media inquired about the number of users, there was not a single user, not because of a lack of demand, but because people did not know the existence of the service. In addition, the service was secondary compared to the service in English. Any service in Irish must be on an equal footing with the equivalent in English and the 'active offer' must be used to indicate its availability.</p> <p>2. The Council has wide ranging funding streams and is affected by many groups operating through Irish or providing services through Irish. However, all information is available in English only on the site and there is no publicity in Irish regarding these streams.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Encourage tourism and cultural initiatives through the medium of Irish;</i> 	<p>1. There was not a single reference to Irish, bilingual signage nor any representation from the Irish language community on a steering group, consultation documents or in the design of 'Belfast Stories'.</p> <p>2. In the majority of tourist attractions, parks and facilities under the responsibility of Belfast City Council, there is no bilingual signage to be specified.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To normalise the use and visibility of the Irish language in general.</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is recommended that there is a derogation on bilingual signage in order to make it acceptable in shared, public spaces (for example, the Olympia Leisure Centre). 2. It took Belfast City Council 2 months to tweet about the 130th anniversary of Conradh na Gaeilge as there was no clear direction in any council policy. (For information, when this was sent out there were among the most successful postings ever by the council.) 3. The story or history of the Irish language is not evident in City Hall, which is one of the biggest tourist attractions in the city. There are multiple sculptures, pieces of art and more aimed at the city's personnel and history but no particular piece is devoted to the question or history of the Irish language.
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It is as a result of this that the Irish language community has been lobbying the Council continuously and effectively for a number of years to adopt a comprehensive Irish language policy, which is based on best practice, and which will set out clearly and comprehensively how exactly the Council should treat the Irish language concerning visibility, services through Irish and others. We are delighted that the Council has now given a commitment that they are to adopt a comprehensive policy on the Irish language in the coming months and we look forward to having a central input from the Irish language community in that process.

We are hopeful that this will provide a particular boost to the Council's proactive approach to the Irish language after many years of dragging its feet. A good basis has been established for the significant, measurable and powerful developments Belfast City Council has made regarding the status, protection and development of the Irish language in recent years. Among the most significant developments:

- An Irish Language Officer was appointed for the first time in the Council's history in 2018;
- The Language Strategy, with specific items regarding the Irish Language 2018;
- Development and implementation of a street name precedent policy in 2022;
- The establishment of Fóram na Gaeilge and the appointment of representatives from the Irish language community to the panel in 2023;
- A commitment received from the council to develop an Irish language policy in 2023.

But those are not enough. The aforementioned problems and weaknesses and much more, besides the fact that there are still clear gaps in the protection and development of the Irish language by Belfast Council. Council officials have recognised that they are limited in what they can do in relation to the Irish language due to lack of policy. An Irish language policy is a priority, but in the vacuum of that policy, the action plan for this

language strategy will serve as a clear plan for the measures that the Council should take for the Irish language between now and 2026. To this end, it is necessary that all measures are clear, that they will stand the test of time and that they will cater appropriately for the Irish language community. We therefore call on the Council to accept all of the recommendations we have made below to strengthen the Draft Action Plan and to adapt it to the growing priorities and expectations of the Belfast Irish language community.

Key

Proposed Amendments: Text in red - Suggested wording to strengthen the proposed action ~~Text with a line like this through -~~
Suggestion that the word/sentence be removed

1.0 Access to Council Services

	Language	Action	Additional commentary
1.1	All Languages	Provision and promotion of translation and interpretation services across the Council. These services will be promoted through an active tender approach; at the earliest point of contact with the Council, the person will be informed that correspondence and communication with the Council is welcome, together with the option of interpretation, in the languages covered by this strategy. This is reinforced by a comprehensive, publicity campaign. The service in Irish must be on the same level and speed as its counterpart in English. No one should be disadvantaged because of their choice of language.	It should be remembered that Irish speakers are bilingual. That is, when not providing services in Irish, they can deal with English speakers.

1.5	Irish	<p>Creation and promotion of a gaeilge@belfastcity.gov.uk email address and website page explaining how the public can contact us in Irish.</p> <p>This page on the website will be completely bilingual, with Irish as a priority as is clearly stated in the best practice. This new service and page will be publicised bilingually as appropriate across the Council's various platforms. This page should be accessible from the site's Home page.</p> <p>There will be no additional delay for residents who contact this email address because they are corresponding through Irish. Practices will be put in place to ensure that requests can be attended to appropriately, even in the event that the Irish Language Officer is absent.</p>	<p>This should not be the only bilingual page on the BCC website. This is not the only Council service that Irish speakers avail of. To that end, it should be a target that, over the three year period of this action plan, all pages on the website should be made available bilingually. We recommend this is done through progressive realisation, that the Council identifies the 5 most popular pages on the website and that it is aimed, during the lifetime of this strategy, that these 5 pages are totally bilingual. This should be done gradually. For example, the page relating to the Council's funding programmes, it would be worthwhile making this available bilingually soon.</p>
1.6, 1.22	Irish	<p>To codify the arrangements regarding the use of Irish at plenary meetings and committees of the Council. The standing orders will be changed to remove the time limit from Councillors if they want to have input through Irish.</p> <p>Investigate the provision of simultaneous interpretation for Members who wish to address the Council through the medium of Irish. In cases where they wish, an interpreter will be made available to elected members or members of the public who want to give a speech or have an input in the meetings through the medium of Irish. The interpreter will simultaneously translate the speech of the member(s).</p> <p>In cases where members of the public are invited to make a speech</p>	<p>While we understand there are costs associated with this, there are ways of doing this in a cost effective manner. For example, this resource may only be initially available at full Council meetings. Members can be surveyed in advance as to whether they intend to use Irish, and if not, an interpreter will not be needed. Software such as "Telegram" can also be used on elected members' phones. The Council can create its own Telegram page for translation services only and for it to be kept private for elected members and others.</p>

		at a plenary meeting of the Council, they will be informed, at the earliest point of contact with the Council, that simultaneous translation is available if they wish to make a speech through Irish.	
1.7	All languages	<p>Ensure Council-run events and festivals have regard to the promotion of different languages and encourage the delivery of relevant events in City Hall.</p> <p>. Priority should have been given to Irish language events and that there will be at least one Irish language event at each festival or other organised by the council.</p>	<p>It is not sufficient that Council events have “regard” to the promotion of languages; it should be done proactively at every opportunity. The Irish language community pay rates in the city and they are entitled to have access to Irish language events from the Council. the latest census figures show that Belfast is one of the strongest cities in Ireland in terms of daily use of Irish.</p>

1.8	Irish	<p>Develop a list of key strategic Council documents and publications to proactively be made available in Irish.</p> <p>These documents will be available in hard copy and digital form. This relates to historical documents and new/updated Council documents. In the case of new documents, the English version is not published before the Irish version.</p> <p>Where a request is made for an Irish version of a strategic document or publication that has not been translated, the Council will provide an Irish version.</p> <p>Effective, comprehensive publicity must be made indicating that these documents are available.</p>	<p>We recommend that this translation is not limited to strategic documents only, they are rarely read. The Council should, as a starting point, develop a list of the 10 most read documents/publications and that these should be translated.</p> <p>We recommend that once these are translated, based on the concept of progressive realisation, that the 10 next most popular/used documents are translated and that this is done gradually across the lifetime of this strategy.</p>
1.9	<p>Ethnic Minority Communities</p> <p>Irish</p>	<p>To provide information on the website (and City Matters) on how to use the translation function on the website, how to telephone the council using BigWord and requesting an interpreter or documents in an alternative language.</p>	<p>This information should also be available on the Council website and City Matters for the Irish language community as well.</p>

1.10	Gaeilge	<p>Develop a protocol for the provision of Irish press statements where the subject relates to Irish or is related to a key strategic Council initiative where resources/timing permit. A spokesperson (in Irish, if possible) will be provided in these circumstances.</p> <p>The Irish and English versions of the press release will be made available on the Council's website and the English version will not be published before/without the Irish version.</p> <p>A comprehensive list of contacts in the Irish media sector will be developed and regularly updated.</p>	In Derry City and Strabane District Council, there is a clear commitment to at least 24 press releases a year in Irish. We suggest the Council makes a similar commitment.
1.11	Irish	<p>Irish Language content will be provided across the Council's social media platforms.</p> <p>on a regular basis when the post relates to a service to the public. That should not be restricted to posts about the Irish language itself. when the subject relates to Irish and where resources/timing permit. This applies to multimedia content and graphics, as well as the text of the content itself. Any graphic or image used in conjunction with any post on social media must also be available through Irish.</p>	This commitment should in no way depend on resources or time.; material, especially material relating to Irish, should be issues regularly from the Council's social media outlets. The Council has access to the Central Translation Hub. The digital services/communications teams should be centrally involved in this aspect of the strategy.

Additi onal item	Irish	The Council will undertake a comprehensive awareness raising campaign, with the aim of promoting the Irish language on social media and advertising on the Council's internal and external platforms and publications.	
1.14	All languages	Develop an approach to provide regular content in other languages in City Matters. This will be developed in line with agreed parameters at Annex 1. A regular, recurring page will be established in City Matters about the Irish language, with comprehensive information about events, trivial facts, useful phrases and the Council's street name policy, for example.	Irish language groups already register their events with City Matters; this magazine could become a platform for the excellent Irish language events that happen across the city.
1.16		To audit the staff of the Council with language ability, to assess, together with their willingness to use that language in service provision and to assess the demand to increase their linguistic skills as part of their professional development.	It is hugely important that this audit should be carried out in a positive manner and that it is emphasised that Irish is an additional skill. The audit will also be a good way of assessing how many staff members wish to learn or improve their Irish.
1.17		Develop a corporate policy for the Irish language based on international best practice in collaboration with the external forum with the Irish language community, including an approach to signage.	Any actions emanating from this policy should be measurable and the stakeholder forum should have the opportunity to provide regular feedback on this and get feedback from the Council on

			<p>implementation.</p> <p>Any Irish language policy should be based on best practice and this is a reasonable demand from the community. As has been repeatedly raised at the Irish language stakeholder forum, this policy should be represent the needs and demands of the Irish language community, and to that end, it makes sense that the Irish language forum would have a central role in the policy being designed.</p> <p>As is recommended in the European Charter, this policy should be designed in conjunction with the Irish language community, it should not be designed on their behalf</p>
1.21		<p>Ensure that operating partners such as GLL, Better or Belfast Bikes provide appropriate interpretation and translation services.</p> <p>The council cannot avoid its duties towards the Irish language by delegating services to an external body.</p>	<p>We recommend that the ability to provide services in Irish is included in any contractual agreements and tender processes with outside groups, and that this is borne in mind during the assessment process.</p>

2.0 Branding

	Language	Action	Additional Commentary
2.2	Irish	<p>Preliminary work on a bilingual corporate logo for consideration, discussion and agreement by the elected representatives in the future.</p> <p>The council should use the bilingual corporate logo as a matter of habit, not only in a story or other related to the Irish language only.</p> <p>If external bodies are providing services on behalf of the council, the same approach must be applied to branding.</p>	<p>As has been recognised by BCC before now, and as stated widely in the best practice, Irish should be ahead of English in any bilingual version of the logo.</p> <p>Elected members should have the opportunity to have input in each step of this process and Council officers should not make any decisions on behalf of the elected members.</p>

3.0 Community, Education and Business

	Language	Action	Additional Commentary
3.2	All Languages	Support the implementation of language-related actions in the Belfast Stories Programme.	The Irish language community have made comprehensive submissions and had worthwhile meetings with the Belfast Stories team about the role of the Irish language in the project. To this end, we recommend that in the absence of a policy, the draft Action Plan and Irish Language Stakeholder forum to discuss
Additional item	Irish	Support the inclusion of Irish as a core subject in the stories and the embedding of Irish as a core part of the bilingual experience by facilitating continuous communication between the Scéalta Béal Feirste team and	

		the forum with the Irish community.	the community's needs and demands in relation to content and experience.
3.3	Irish	Develop and provide a range of workshops or information sessions and events on issues related to the council for example on recycling, biodiversity etc aimed at Gaelscoileanna during the school year and during the summer.	The Council organises important sport and book schemes throughout the year in English only. We recommend that the Council organise similar events in Irish to meet the needs of Irish medium pupils.
3.4	Irish	An external course once a year, developed in consultation with interested parties, made available to community-based Irish teachers using teaching methods.	Based on the growth of night classes in recent years, we do not see that having a workshop this valuable once only is sufficient. To this end, we recommend that this course is provided once a year for anyone thinking of teaching at community level.
3.8	Irish	Issue an Irish booklet containing basic Irish phrases, expressions and facts about the benefits of bilingualism and use the graphics to regularly raise awareness of the Irish language on the Council's social media pages.	<p>These basic phrases would be easily transferred into social media content, especially at particular times of the year, Seachtain na Gaeilge for example.</p> <p>There are examples from Councils in the Republic which can be followed.</p>

Additional Item	Irish	The Council will regularly organise events and workshops in the community, with the aim of increasing tolerance, understanding and awareness of the Irish language.	
Additional Item	Irish	<p>To promote and distribute a booklet on Irish placenames of the north (People & Place by Conradh na Gaeilge) at the City Hall.</p> <p>A permanent map of the Irish place names in Belfast will be created and made available at City Hall to raise awareness of the language and the original meaning of the city's place names.</p>	Placenames are exceptionally important in relation to Irish being made available to everyone in the community. knowledge and understanding of our placenames promote and understanding and positive attitude towards the Irish language.
Additional Item	Irish	Investigate the possibility of a Gaeltacht bursary scheme to support the cost for people under 18 to attend Gaeltacht courses, for a decision by the elected representatives.	<p>Schemes of this nature are long established in other Councils such as Mid-Ulster and Fermanagh and Omagh. We recommend that the grant covers at least 50% of the course fees and that some of the scholarships awarded will be subject to means testing. The funding for the scheme should be raised every year according to demand.</p> <p>It should be noted that there has been a significant increase on the fees for Gaeltacht courses over the last few years and this prohibits children from the most deprived areas from attending these important courses. The majority of Gaelscoileanna in Belfast are in these</p>

			areas.
Additional Item	Irish	A careers day will be organised once a year in the City Hall or another convenient location in the city centre for secondary school students regarding the employment opportunities available to people in the Irish language sector.	Days of this nature are organised in Newry and Mid-Ulster. These could be organised through the Council's Stakeholder forum.
Additional Item	Irish	A quarterly Irish newsletter will be created and sent via email and social media about funding opportunities, events, news from local community groups, number of street sign applications and significant Council stories each month.	

4.0 Staff Awareness and Training

4.1	Additional Item	The Council will provide Irish language classes for the staff (who are interested) once a week. The level of the classes will be based on the results of the inspection of the language ability of the staff. The classes will be organised during working hours.	<p>A group such as Gaelchultúr could provide the classes. Again, this should be offered as part of the professional development of staff members, and that classes should be organised during work hours.</p> <p>See 1.16 regarding a staff audit.</p>
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4.4	Irish	An informal discussion group will be organised for staff who speak Irish and for staff who wish to learn Irish and to encourage the use of Irish among the staff at least once a fortnight to support formal learning and appropriate facilities will be provided to support them.	
Additional Item	Irish	The Council will raise awareness among Council staff of their duties under the European Charter and the Identity and Language Bill through an essential training course.	

5.0 Engagement

5.2	All Languages	Inclusion of young people in the Council's external Language Strategy Engagement Fora It will be ensured that any sessions with young people from the Irish-speaking community are facilitated through the medium of Irish.	We recommend these sessions are held in school hours, or at times when youth groups are being held to ensure that opinions and feedback are collected from a wide audience. There is an Irish-medium youth work sector in the city and they can help organise these sessions.

Missing items from the draft action plan

Lack of context in the language strategy itself

There is a fundamental problem in the language strategy in that there is a large gap in the context of the strategy in relation to current provision in the Council area as a whole. The language strategy itself should set out key figures for:

- a) the number of speakers;
- b) the number of people in the Council area for whom Irish is the main language;
- c) the number of young people in the Council area receiving education through the medium of Irish;
- d) the number of young people studying Irish at GCSE/A Level;
- e) number of adult learners outside formal education;
- f) the number of people directly employed by the Irish language in the city.

These figures would be readily available from NISRA, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and many other organisations. The latest figures from the 2021 census were also recently published. The strategy itself should act as a map, with a clear baseline and ambitious targets that clearly reflect what the public can expect from each action each year.

Lack of clear time targets stated with each action

We recognise that all actions within the draft plan are ranked against immediate and longer-term priorities. However, it is not clear what immediate and long-term means in this case; we recommend adding an additional item to each table under each work area with a completion date for the action mentioned. In this way, it would be easier to assess the success of the language strategy and the draft plan. An action plan or strategy that does not have clear, measurable time targets has no merit; it means that not all strategy and action are merely ambitious.

In addition to a completion date, for some (but not all) policies, there will be resource implications for their effective delivery. Where there are resource implications, this must also be specified, together with a completion date and these developments are included in the report of the language strategy. Often, however, filling a gap or otherwise will incur upfront costs. Over time, these initial costs will fall significantly in the construction of bilingual infrastructure.

Preparing for the implementation of the Identity and Language Bill (2022)

The Council will draft language standards, as set out under the Identity and Language Bill. These will be used as a benchmark for the Current Provision of the Council with regard to the Irish language. These standards will be drafted in conjunction with the Council's external forum with the Irish language community, as well as other relevant stakeholders to ensure that the language standards meet the needs of the community.

Reporting on the success of the language strategy

The draft action plan or the language strategy itself do not mention how the success of the language strategy will be reported upon or assessed; currently, reports from meetings of elected representatives on the language strategy are not published and the public has no mechanism to assess the success of the policies. To this end, we recommend that an annual report be published bilingually setting out each action and how the Council has been successful in complying with those actions. As part of this reporting process, we recommend that the Council's Irish language community forum be consulted to obtain their observations on the success of the Council in implementing the various policies of the action plan and the success of the new services arising from the action plan.

Language Screening

There are plenty of examples of Belfast City Council treating the Irish language as an afterthought, which is frustrating for the Irish-speaking community in the council area. To this end, the Council's new/updated policies, projects or practices will be screened to assess their impact on:

- (i) opportunities for the use and visibility of the Irish language;
- (ii) the performance of the council's duties under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Identity and Language Act (2022) and;
- (iii) the Irish language community itself.

This would mean that the Irish language and the Irish language community are taken into account at the earliest stage and as a result, the Council can take the appropriate steps to ensure that these policies, projects or practices do not have a negative impact on the Irish language nor on the Irish language community. If this is possible, the policy should not be adopted as it is.

Irish Language Week

Seachtain na Gaeilge is the largest Irish language festival in the world; it takes place every year from 1st-17th March with almost one million people taking part. Community groups are at the heart of the festival and communities and groups come together to celebrate the Irish language for the festival. To this end, we propose to meet some of the major goals of the language strategy as a whole;

- That a dedicated funding scheme for Seachtain na Gaeilge is created each year which is marketed and regularly publicised, bilingually on social media, email and newsletters. Applications should be invited from any groups interested in organising an event that promotes the Irish language.
- The Council compiles and publishes a comprehensive programme of events online, on social media and in its newsletter covering all the events taking place from community providers across the Council;
- The Council develops the number of events they organise themselves as part of Seachtain na Gaeilge.
- Particular emphasis is placed on Irish language branding, posters on social media, Irish language exhibitions in City Hall, use of Irish at council meetings etc. during this festival.

Streetnames' Strategy

It is clear that the Council's street names policy has been in high demand since the new policy was adopted in July 2022, with applications coming in from across the city. To this end, it is clear to us that the Council has an opportunity to celebrate the Irish language and to promote the street names policy by raising awareness of the placenames of Belfast. Therefore, we recommend;

- The Council undertakes an awareness raising campaign on the placenames of Belfast on the various platforms (as does Fermanagh and Omagh Council with Townland Tuesdays);
- That the Council initiates an awareness raising campaign on the policy itself and details of the best ways to access the policy;
- The Council clearly sets out how they will address any situation where bilingual street signs will be destroyed.

Suggested responses to the consultation questionnaire

Access to Council Services

1. To what extent do you agree with the draft acts in Section 1.0 Access to Council Services?

- I strongly disagree.

2. Do you have any other views?

- I support the proposal to develop a corporate policy for the Irish language as it has long been recognised as a priority for the Irish language community throughout the city. However, it seems to me that there is an opportunity to reiterate that recommendation in that this policy should be clearly based on best practice and that it would be designed in conjunction with the Irish language community itself, rather than coming to them when it is already ready. The Irish language community will be the ones who will be most affected by this section of the action plan and the European Charter believes that they should play a central role in the development of the policy.

- I strongly commend the audit of Council staff contained in the draft action plan, but it is not entirely clear what the Council will do with the findings; to this end, I recommend that the audit itself be among the staff, with formal questions of **the willingness and ability** of officers to provide a service where they have a high level of competence in a particular language, **and** their interest in building on this potential as part of their professional development. This type of audit was carried out by the Education Authority last year with great success with considerable willingness shown by staff.
- We are pleased that the Council is now looking at and working towards permanent translations of certain documents and an Irish language page on its website. However, the proposed documents for translation (strategic documents and publications) are not among the most used and the Irish language section is not the only section within the Council with which the Irish language community has contact. This action plan has a lifespan of 3 years and it should be possible within that time to identify and translate the most popular 5/10 documents/pages. Then the translation would be completely proportional according to usage. The Council could gradually increase the number of documents and pages translated through progressive identification. **This applies to new/updated Council documents and the English version should not be published in advance of the Irish version in any case.**
- It is important not only that these new Irish language services are available from the Council, but people need to be aware that they exist in order to be successful. I recommend that the Council initiate a comprehensive publicity campaign on its various platforms announcing the changes and that they use the active offer when requesting a council document/service. At the earliest point of contact with the Council, the person will be informed if the document or service they are seeking is available in Irish.
- It is to be commended that material will now be released in Irish on the Council's social media, but this should not be restricted to the text on postings only; multimedia and graphics content should be translated into Irish or created and should be done regularly. In addition, there should be no further delays for residents contacting the Council on the e-mail address gaeilge@belfastcity.gov.uk; a protocol must be put in place to ensure that this email is appropriately and appropriately served according to correspondence received.

Branding

3. To what extent do you agree with the draft actions in Part 2.0 Branding?

- I strongly disagree.

4. Do you have any other views?

- The preparatory work should be carried out on a bilingual corporate logo but at the end of the day this is a decision to be taken by the

elected councillors. To this end, I recommend that preparatory work be carried out, that a new bilingual logo is designed and that all of this is submitted to the councillors to decide. Council officials should not take any decisions before proposals reach the elected representatives.

- As previously recognised by Belfast City Council and as widely embedded in best practice in relation to minority languages, Irish should be above English in any version of the new bilingual logo. Mid Ulster District Council has set a good example.
- The new bilingual logo should be adopted as the de-facto logo of the Council. If someone wants the English version, they can contact the Council itself.

Community, Education and Business

5. To what extent do you agree with the draft actions in Section 3.0 Community, Education and Business?

- I strongly disagree

6. Do you have any other views?

- I think there should be a clear section under the 'Education' section to establish a Gaeltacht bursary scheme within the Council. The Irish language is going from strength to strength in the city, especially among young people and the Council has a role to play in supporting extra-curricular learning. The cost of the Gaeltacht is rising year on year and scholarships are now in increasing demand, more than ever before. A bursary scheme would be of great help to families across the city. The scholarships should be awarded on a needs basis and the total pot fund raised each year, as the cost of the courses themselves increases.
- Over 95% of placenames in the north come directly from the Irish language and the Council has an opportunity to celebrate and promote the native trees through this section of the action plan. Conradh na Gaeilge has produced a comprehensive booklet entitled 'People & Place - Our Shared Placenames' which would be perfect as a booklet to be issued at City Hall to raise awareness of the Irish language.
- It is good that the Council is considering organising events aimed at Gaelscoileanna on issues relevant to the Council itself, but these are likely to be organised during the school year. There are many schemes, events and workshops organised by the Council during the summer and I recommend that consideration be given to the provision of these in Irish to Irish-medium students. This would be particularly important and advantageous for students who do not speak Irish at home.

- I recommend that the booklet of basic Irish phrases, idioms and facts about the benefits of bilingualism be widely distributed to visitors, Council staff and residents. As part of this, I recommend that the Council establish a recurring page in city matters magazine with these phrases and phrases, as well as information on the Council's street names policy to raise awareness of the language and relevant policies of the Council. I recommend that these idioms, phrases and mascots are adapted as graphics for dissemination on the various social media pages of the Council.

Staff Awareness and Training

7. To what extent do you agree with the draft actions in Section 4.0 Staff Awareness and Training?

- I strongly disagree.
- I recommend that the discussion group of Council staff who can speak Irish, or who are interested in learning Irish, be organised during working hours, for example at lunchtime and that a session is organised at least once a week with graduate, accredited classes (by Gaelchultúr, for example) to enhance the officers' ability to provide a service through Irish. No member of staff should be at a time disadvantage because they would like to learn or practice Irish. This Council may offer as part of the professional development of staff.

Participation

8. To what extent do you agree with the draft actions in Part 5.0 Participation?

- I strongly disagree.

9/10 Do you have any other opinion?

- It is vital that any engagement with the Irish language youth community is organised and facilitated through the medium of Irish. The Council could do this during pupils' school hours, in order to give them the best chance of attracting a wide audience, or by consulting with young people attending Irish language youth clubs.

11. Do you have any further comment on the draft Action Plan for the Language Strategy?

- We, as a community are deeply disappointed that it took the Council 5 years to publish a draft action plan for a strategy which came into effect in 2018. However, if the above recommendations are accepted, we will have a good basis in preparing for the introduction of the

Irish language policy, which has been our priority for a long time. This draft action plan will give us the opportunity to lay the foundations for a comprehensive Irish language policy based on best practice.

12. Do you have any views on the Draft Equality Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment?

- It is good to know that the draft action plan has been 'screened out' in equality screening, as the potential positive outcomes have been identified with all the policies mentioned therein. However, it raises questions about the findings of the Council's previous equality screening of Irish-language issues; would it be the same decision to 'screen out' this draft plan if it applied to Irish only, rather than the 5 languages covered by the language strategy? The terminology 'good relations' and 'adverse effect' are often misinterpreted when screening questions such as bilingual signage, but there has never been any basis or evidence to support the arguments put forward. To this end, we hope that this decision marks a new era in the Council where 'screening in' on all issues relating to the Irish language will end.

Language Strategy – Draft Action Plan 2024-2027

This is a draft action plan across the all the language strands in the Council's Language Strategy 2018-23.

The Council launched its Language Strategy in April 2018. The Strategy commits to establishing a transparent set of principles for promoting, protecting and enhancing the linguistic diversity of the city. There are five language strands within the Strategy:

- Irish
- Ulster-Scots
- Minority Ethnic Communities
- Sign Languages (British Sign Language and Irish Sign Language)
- Disability Communications

This Strategy is organised on thematic work streams setting out how the Council will deliver its commitments in the Language Strategy. It identifies both immediate priorities and longer- term goals. Whilst the immediate priorities will be in the initial focus, it is the aspiration to deliver all of the priorities identified within the lifetime of this plan.

The Council's Legal & Civic Services Department will have overall responsibility for monitoring progress of the priorities with the action plan. However, it is the responsibility of each Council Department to ensure that the Language Strategy and this action plan informs the delivery of their functions. This action plan will be subject to annual review with regular update reports brought to the Elected Member Language Strategy Working Group which reports to the Council's Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Language Strategy – Draft Action Plan 2024-2027

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Language Strategy – Draft Action Plan 2024-2027

1.0 Access to Council Services

	Language	Action	Responsible Department (Resourcing to be confirmed)	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
1.1	All Languages	Provision and promotion of interpretation and translation services across the Council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal & Civic Services/EDU 	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
1.2	Minority Ethnic Communities	To explore the development of a signposting database, including identifying already available advice, on how to access public services in Belfast through different languages including an exploration of what may already be available and promoting this information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal & Civic Services/EDU Good Relations Marketing and Comms 	Quarter 4		
1.3	Minority Ethnic Communities	To continue to provide good quality of automated translation software on external website.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing and Comms Legal & Civic Services/EDU 	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
1.4	Disability Communications	To develop guidance to support departments in the accessibility to Council documents, services and facilities from a disability perspective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal & Civic Services/EDU All Departments 	Quarter 3		

Language Strategy – Draft Action Plan 2024-2027

	Language	Action	Responsible Department (Resourcing to be confirmed)	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
1.5	Irish	Creation and promotion of a gaeilge@belfastcity.gov.uk email address and website page explaining how the public can contact us in Irish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing and Comms • Legal & Civic Services/EDU 	Quarter 3		
1.6	Irish	Codify the arrangements for the use of Irish in Council meetings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal & Civic Services/EDU 	Quarter 3		
1.7	All Languages	Ensure Council-run events and festivals have regard to the promotion of different languages and encourage the delivery of relevant events in City Hall.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal and Civic Services/EDU • Place and Economy/Economic Development • City & Neighbourhood Services 	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
1.8	Irish	Develop a list of key strategic Council documents and publications to proactively be made available in Irish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal and Civic Services/EDU • Lead department • Marketing and Comms 	Quarter 4		

Language Strategy – Draft Action Plan 2024-2027

	Language	Action	Responsible Department (Resourcing to be confirmed)	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
1.09	All Languages	To provide information on the website (and City Matters) on how to use the translation function on the website, how to telephone the council using BigWord and requesting an interpreter or documents in an alternative language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing and Comms • Customer Focus • Legal & Civic Services/EDU • Good Relations 	Quarter 4		
1.10	Irish	Develop a protocol for the provision of Irish press statements where the subject relates to Irish or is related to a key strategic Council initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing and Comms • Legal & Civic Services/EDU 	Quarter 3		
1.11	All Languages	Develop a protocol for the provision of Language content across the Council's social media platforms on a regular basis where the subject relates to a service to the public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing and Comms • Legal & Civic Services/EDU 	Quarter 4		
1.12	All Languages	Requests for social media content in other languages where it relates to specific events or celebrations associated with the Council will be accommodated, where possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal & Civic Services/EDU 	Quarter 4		
1.13	Sign Languages	To provide a clear description on website and City Matters of what	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing and Comms 	Quarter 3		

Language Strategy – Draft Action Plan 2024-2027

	Language	Action	Responsible Department (Resourcing to be confirmed)	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
		services are available in Sign Languages to members of the public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal & Civic Services/EDU Customer Focus 			
1.14	All Languages	Develop an approach to provide regular content in other languages in City Matters. This will be developed in line with agreed parameters at Annex 1 .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing and Comms Legal & Civic Services/EDU Good Relations 	Quarter 4		
1.15	Irish	Development of a recurring page in Irish in City Matters with information about the language and Council policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal & Civic Services/EDU Marketing and Comms 		Quarter 1	
1.16	All Languages	Review protocols for staff to support non-English speaking customers to include a code of courtesy for indigenous languages and provision of cultural awareness training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Hub Legal & Civic Services/EDU 	Quarter 4		
1.17	All Languages	Carry out an audit of Council staff to assess language capability and their willingness to provide services in another language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal & Civic Services/EDU Corporate HR 	Quarter 2		

Language Strategy – Draft Action Plan 2024-2027

	Language	Action	Responsible Department (Resourcing to be confirmed)	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
1.18	Irish	Develop a corporate Irish language policy, including an approach to signage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Departments 	Ongoing		
1.19	Ulster-Scots	Develop a corporate Ulster-Scots language policy, including an approach to signage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Departments 	Quarter 4		
1.20	All Languages	Include consideration of opportunities for development of language skills in staff development/ process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Hub Human Resources Legal & Civic Services/EDU 		Quarter 2	
1.21	Sign Languages	To expand the provision of Sign Language translation on popular pages on the website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal & Civic Services/EDU Marketing & Comms 		Quarter 3	
1.22	All Languages	To ensure operating partners such as GLL provide appropriate language interpretation and translation services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal & Civic Services/EDU 		Quarter 4	
1.23	Irish	Explore the provision of simultaneous interpreting for Members who wish to address the Council through the medium of Irish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal & Civic Services 		Quarter 3	

Language Strategy – Draft Action Plan 2024-2027

2.0 Branding

	Language	Action	Responsible Department	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
2.1	Irish	Promote the availability of the Irish language Council logo, use of bilingual English/Irish corporate signatures and Irish language City brand for use in correspondence, documentation, literature etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal and Civic Services/EDU Marketing and Comms 	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
2.2	Irish	Carry out exploratory work on a bilingual corporate logo.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal and Civic Services/EDU Marketing and Comms 		Quarter 4	
2.3	Ulster-Scots and Irish	Work with the stakeholders to develop an approach to raise awareness on Ulster-Scots and Irish place/street names.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal and Civic Services/EDU Place and Economy/Economic Development Good Relations Marketing and Comms 	Quarter 4		
2.4	Ulster-Scots	Develop an Ulster-Scots Language Council logo, bilingual Ulster Scots/Irish corporate signatures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal and Civic Services/EDU 		Quarter 3	

Language Strategy – Draft Action Plan 2024-2027

	Language	Action	Responsible Department	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
		and explore the development of Ulster Scots City brand for use in correspondence, documentation, literature etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing and Comms 			
2.5	Sign Language	Develop an approach to translated Sign Language “welcome” information at identified council venues liaising with relevant departments on the installation and procurement of new screens where appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal and Civic Services/EDU Marketing and Communications Physical Programmes 			Quarter to be decided in 2025-26
	Disability Communications	Develop an approach to signage across Council facilities liaising with relevant departments on the installation and procurement of new Disability signage e.g., braille, tactile maps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical Programmes Legal and Civic Services/EDU Marketing and Communications 			Quarter to be decided in 2025-26

Language Strategy – Draft Action Plan 2024-2027

3.0 Community, Education and Business

	Language	Action	Responsible Department	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
3.1	All Languages	Explore the development of a Language Strategy development fund for internal and external events and continue to host internal and external events promoting all strands of the Language Strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal and Civic Services/EDU Finance Place and Economy/Economic Development 			Quarter to be decided in 2025-26
3.2	All Languages	Support the implementation of language-related actions in the Belfast Stories Programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place and Economy/Belfast Destination Hub Physical Programmes Legal and Civic Services 	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
3.3	Irish	Development of a range of workshops/information sessions and events on council related issues such as recycling biodiversity etc aimed at Irish Medium Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal and Civic Services/EDU City and Neighbourhood 			Quarter to be decided in 2025-26
3.4	Irish	Delivery of Employment/Upskilling Academies for Irish-medium classroom assistants and others working in the Irish medium education sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place and Economy/Economic Development Legal and Civic Services 	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing

Language Strategy – Draft Action Plan 2024-2027

	Language	Action	Responsible Department	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
3.5	Irish	Production of Irish language booklet of basic Irish phrases, sayings and facts about the benefits of bilingualism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal and Civic Services/EDU 		Quarter 3	
3.6	Ulster-Scots	Distribution and promotion of Ulster-Scots Place Name of Belfast booklet at City Hall.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal and Civic Services/EDU 	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
3.7	All Languages	Explore how the benefits of linguistic diversity can be promoted to the business and tourism community in Belfast, including the promotion of cultural initiatives to increase the visibility of other languages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal & Civic Services/EDU Place and Economy/Economic Development 			Quarter to be decided in 2025-26
3.8	Minority Ethnic Communities	Promote ESOL (English for Speakers of other Languages) courses provided by Belfast Metropolitan College and other local providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal and Civic Services/EDU Marketing and Communications 	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing

Language Strategy – Draft Action Plan 2024-2027

4.0 Key Area of Work: Staff Awareness and Training

	Language	Action	Responsible Department	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
4.1	Sign Languages	To provide a range of Sign Language courses to staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal and Civic Services/EDU Human Resources 	Quarter 1	Ongoing	Ongoing
4.2	Disability Communications	To promote awareness to the public through the website and City Matters of how to access Council documents, services and facilities, such as, how to request documents/forms in an alternative format.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing and Communications Legal and Civic Services/EDU Customer Focus 	Quarter 3		
4.3	Disability Communication	To explore introducing Makaton training to staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal and Civic Services/EDU Human Resources 		Quarter 1	
4.4	All Languages	Development and roll-out of Making Communications Accessible Guide to staff and develop guidance for staff on providing accessible options (e.g., subtitles, dubbing) for remote meetings and events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal and Civic Services/EDU Corporate HR Marketing & Communications Digital Services 	Quarter 3		
4.5	Irish	Establish an informal discussion group for Irish speaking staff and staff who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal and Civic Services/EDU 	Quarter 2		

Language Strategy – Draft Action Plan 2024-2027

	Language	Action	Responsible Department	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
		wish to learn Irish and encourage the use of Irish amongst staff.				
4.6	All languages	To support recruitment the Council will aim to extend our reach by, for example, by ensuring that job advertisements are distributed widely and specifically to employability and support organisations associated with particularly under-represented groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human Resources 	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing

Language Strategy – Draft Action Plan 2024-2027

5.0 Key Area of Work: Engagement

	Language	Action	Responsible Department	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
5.1	Minority Ethnic Communities	Establishment of an Minority Ethnic Communities stakeholder forum to give input into action plans and policy development. This forum would be a sub-group from the Migrant Forum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal and Civic Services/EDU Good Relations 		Quarter 4	
5.2	All Languages	Inclusion of young people in the Council's external Language Strategy Engagement Fora. Any engagement with the Irish-medium youth sector will be conducted through Irish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal & Civic Services/EDU 	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing

Language Strategy – Draft Action Plan 2024-2027

Annex 1 – interim approach for selected languages for Minority Ethnic Communities

Information has been gathered from various sources to identify the most in demand language for Minority Ethnic Communities.

The number of language translation/interpreting requests to Council since April 2018 are set out below:

Language	Number of requests
Arabic	15
Russian	4
Polish	4
Somalian	2
Chinese (Mandarin Traditional)	1
Chinese (Mandarin Simplified)	1
Romanian	1
Spanish	1

The Belfast Health & Social Care Trust have provided latest statistics on their most requested languages for interpreting health matters:

Language	Requests
1. Arabic	9235
2. Polish	4697
3. Romanian	3032
4. Somali	2708
5. Slovak	2138

Language Strategy – Draft Action Plan 2024-2027

A collection of Language statistics from Census 2021 were published in September 2022, however more details on Languages will be published during Winter/Spring 2023. Below we have a list of languages spoken at home.

	Main Language		
		Population	%
1	English	310,386	93.000944
2	Polish	3843	1.1514779
3	Irish*	2659	0.7967161
4	Chinese (Mandarin)	2272	0.6807593
5	Arabic	2046	0.6130429
6	Romanian	1460	0.4374597
7	Spanish	960	0.2876448
8	Portuguese	669	0.2004524
9	Slovak	649	0.1944598
10	Malayalam	527	0.157905
11	Tagalog/Filipino	462	0.138429
12	Hungarian	433	0.1297398
13	Chinese (Cantonese)	415	0.1243464
14	Lithuanian	397	0.1189531
15	Russian	228	0.0683156
16	Bulgarian	179	0.0536338
17	Latvian	123	0.0368545
18	Tetan	20	0.0059926
19	Other languages*	6017	1.8028735
	TOTAL	333,745	100

Please note that Census 2021 asked follow up questions on Irish and Ulster-Scots language ability:

Language Strategy – Draft Action Plan 2024-2027

17,986 people in Belfast indicated that they can speak, write, and read Irish Language

2,553 people in Belfast indicated that they can speak, write, and read Ulster-Scots

Recommendation – top 5 Ethnic Minority Communities languages for translating Council material

Based on the Census 2021 statistics and from language requests issued to the Council and the Belfast Trust in recent years, we are recommending that the following languages to be listed as the top five for translating Council material:

1. Polish
2. Chinese (Mandarin & Simplified)
3. Arabic
4. Romanian
5. Somali

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Subject:	Draft Irish Language Policy Update
Date:	19 th April 2024
Reporting Officer(s):	Nora Largey, City Solicitor
Contact Officer(s):	Russell Connelly, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer Colm McGuigan, Irish Language Officer

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 style="width: 30px;" 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

☒

No

☐

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To provide an update on the progress on the development of a Draft Irish Language Policy.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the progress on the development of a Draft Irish Language Policy; 2. Provide approval for the Draft Irish Language Policy to go out to public consultation; 3. Agree the recommended next steps as set out at paragraph 4.0 and in particular to the development of an implementation plan aligned to budgetary considerations.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>Work initially started on a draft Irish Language Policy in 2022. However following initial consultation it was considered more appropriate to focus on the work which had already begun on the Language Strategy Action Plan.</p> <p>The draft Policy was discussed at the Irish Language Stakeholders Forum on 1st February 2024. An updated version of the draft Policy was brought to the Language Strategy Working Group on 9th February 2024 and then Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 23rd February 2024.</p>
3.2	<p>Following feedback from stakeholders and CMT, the draft Policy was presented to SP&R on 23rd February 2024. At that meeting a number of amendments were proposed to the Policy. In addition, parties requested briefings on the draft policy in advance of it being brought back to SP&R for approval in advance of a formal public consultation.</p> <p>A copy of the minutes of that meeting are attached at Appendix One.</p>
3.3	<p>The following issues were raised at the Party briefings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential cost implications, particularly in relation to the proposed amendment to the Policy proposed at SP&R Committee (the adoption of a new bilingual logo); • The impact of any bilingual rebrand on staff; and • The impact on equality and good relations (including community relations).
3.4	<p>The amendments proposed at the Committee's meeting on 23rd February 2024 and subsequently adopted at Council, are as follows:</p> <p><i>"Belfast City Council will adopt a new bilingual (Irish/English) corporate identity and the bilingual logo will become the new, proactive, de-facto council logo to be used comprehensively across all corporate branding. The English-only version of the logo will be available upon request. The same typeface and font-size will be used for both languages and the Irish text will be as visible and legible as the English text."</i></p>

3.5	<p><i>Appendix 1:</i></p> <p><i>To be added into Category 1(a): City Centre Public Realm Signage (street signposts)</i></p> <p><i>To be added into Category 1(b) and 2(b): Dumps, Recycling Centres / stations</i></p> <p><i>To be added into Category 3 (as being upgraded): Bins</i></p> <p><i>Point 14 (page 3):</i></p> <p><i>The Council will develop a list of key strategic Council documents and publications to proactively be made available in Irish. The 10 most common front-facing forms (online and hard copy) will be identified and translated into Irish for immediate use. The Council commits to publishing information leaflets, marketing and promotional materials bilingually in printed form and online. In instances where consultations are being conducted and the subject matter has the potential to impact the use of the Irish language or the Irish language community themselves, consultation questionnaires, engagement sessions and associated documents will be conducted proactively through the medium of Irish/bilingually as part of the active offer.</i></p> <p><i>Point 18 (page 4):</i></p> <p><i>The Council commits to publishing regular and often bilingual English / Irish content across all social media platforms. Information posts, marketing initiatives, community / service announcements will take place in Irish and in English. The relevant officer(s) will work in conjunction with the marketing team to develop a comprehensive strategy on how best to promote the Irish language across the Council's platforms. The Strategy will set out clear annual goals, increasing annually, around the % of social media posts produced.</i></p> <p><i>To be added under 'Communications':</i></p> <p><i>The Council will develop and maintain a functioning bilingual (Irish/English) website. A choice of languages, English/Irish, will first appear on the Council home page and users will be asked which language they wish to view the site in. The Council website will also develop, host and regularly update a specific Irish language page, with information about the Irish language services available from Council, information on classes throughout the city and on Irish medium education."</i></p> <p>Members are reminded that there are already commitments to some of these actions in the draft Language Strategy Action Plan. Consultation arrangements are dealt with through the Council's Equality Scheme which commits the Council to removing barriers to consultation. Therefore there are existing obligations mirroring some aspects of the proposal.</p>
4.0	<p><u>Next Steps</u></p> <p>If Members are content for the Draft Irish Language to issue for public consultation, then officers recommend that the following steps be undertaken as part of the overall policy development process:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Officers will prepare a draft consultation document and associated questionnaire to issue alongside a draft EQIA for formal public consultation;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. staff will be consulted through the Council's Industrial Relations Framework as part of the consultation process; iii. officers will undertake to develop indicative costings of the proposals whilst the public consultation is ongoing; iv. any identified costings to be presented to Committee once the Policy has been subject to consultation and a final policy position proposed; v. that the policy will be subject to a detailed implementation plan which will outline delivery of specific actions arising out of the policy.
5.0	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The financial implications of the implementation of this policy will need to be considered once a final policy position is proposed.</p>
6.0	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations / Rural Needs Implications</u></p> <p>The draft Irish Language Policy is currently being subject to a Section 75 Equality Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment.</p> <p>It is anticipated that an EQIA will be required and consulted upon along with the draft Policy.</p>
7.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1: SP&R Minutes dated 23rd February 2024</p> <p>Appendix 2: Draft Irish Language Policy</p>

Minutes of the Shared City Partnership Meeting

The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approved and adopted the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 5th February 2024 including:

Shared City Partnership Membership (Verbal Update)

- That members note the verbal update and agree the approach provided by the Good Relations Manager.

Good Relations Shared Learning Forum (Verbal Update)

- The Partnership recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it note the verbal update.

The Executive Office Asylum Dispersal Funding Update

- The Partnership recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the contents of this report and the risk to services to asylum seekers, if further Executive Office / Dispersal Funding is not provided and if there is a continued reduction in the Good Relations District Council Fund provided by TEO.

Peace IV - Secretariat Update

- The Partnership recommend to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee that it notes the contents of the report and appendices.

PEACEPLUS – Theme 1.1 - Local Action Plan Update

- The Partnership recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it note the contents of the report and appendices.

Draft Irish Language Policy

The Committee considered a report which provided an update in to developing a corporate Irish Language Policy and seeking Members views on the current draft.

During discussion, a Member submitted a number of additional comments which she requested to be included within the draft policy. A further Member indicated that her Party would require a briefing on the draft before the final Policy was submitted. The Committee acceded to both requests and accordingly it:

- Noted the informal consultation responses which have been received;
- Approved the suggested amendments to the draft Policy;
- Agreed that the further amendments circulated by a Member at the meeting be included in the draft;
- Noted that a final draft would be presented to a subsequent meeting of the Committee for the purposes of public consultation once the Section 75 screening has been undertaken; and
- Agreed that briefings be held on the draft policy for those Parties who so wished.

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Belfast City Council Irish Language Policy

Background

1. Belfast City Council ('the Council') published its first Language Policy in 2006. This outlines its commitment to using Irish and Ulster Scots in correspondence with members of the public should they so choose to do so to support the heritage and traditions of the various language communities living in the city.
2. Further to its original Language Policy, in 2018 the Council adopted a Language Strategy 2018 - 2023. In keeping with the Council's long-term vision for the city, as set out in the Belfast Agenda, the Strategy aspires to create a place where linguistic diversity is celebrated and respected, and where those who live, work and visit Belfast can expect to access what Belfast has to offer, using forms of language with which they are familiar and comfortable. The aims of the Strategy are to:
 - Address language and communication challenges and opportunities within the Belfast Agenda outcomes;
 - Establish a transparent set of principles for promoting, protecting and enhancing the linguistic diversity of the city;
 - Increase the profile of different languages along with awareness and understanding of associated cultures, heritage and traditions;
 - Engage with language communities to address language barriers and promote equality of opportunity through the development and integration of different languages into mainstream civic life;
 - Enhance good relations within the city through the promotion of linguistic diversity and to celebrate the significance of language in the history and culture of the city;
 - Address staff training and capacity building needs in relation to the role linguistic diversity has in the workplace and in the delivery of services.
 - Work in partnership to promote linguistic diversity across the city, to move toward our shared vision of inclusive growth, where no one is left behind.
3. In adopting the Language Strategy, the Council was mindful of international and domestic legal obligations and standards which are set out at Appendix One. It was also informed by demand for the use of minority languages and feedback from wide-ranging consultation.

4. Irish language is part of the shared cultural wealth and heritage of everyone who lives in Belfast and is the first language of a growing community of our citizens in the city.
5. The European Charter on Minority Languages states that the adoption of special measures in favour of regional or minority languages aimed at promoting equality between the users of these languages and the rest of the population or which take due account of their specific conditions is not considered to be an act of discrimination against the users of more widely-used languages.
6. It is against this backdrop that the Council has developed its Irish Language Policy.

Purpose

7. The purpose of this Policy is to give a clear indication of the specific steps the Council will promote the Irish language within its own work and to support the growing community of Irish speakers in Belfast.

Policy aim

8. The aim of this Policy is to set out how the Council will promote the use of Irish language internally and in the wider Council area in accordance with the commitments outlined above and the specific steps it will take to doing this. It will do so in line with the six Guiding Principles for Promoting, Protecting and Enhancing Linguistic Diversity which were agreed by the Council's Strategic Policy & Resources Committee in June 2022. These are:
 - **Changing the perspective on languages in our city** to increase the profile of different languages along with awareness and understanding of associated cultures, heritage and traditions.
 - **Engaging with language communities** to increase equal opportunities and to enhance and protect good relations within the city.
 - **Improving organisational capacity** to address staff training needs and improve our language capabilities.

- **Working in partnerships with others** to promote linguistic diversity across the city to move towards our shared vision of inclusive growth, where no-one is left behind.
- **Identifying and implementing actions** in line with agreed priorities to promote, protect and enhance linguistic diversity.
- **Establishing efficient and effective solutions which** are proportionate to need, affordable and measurable.

Policy Statement

9. A person requesting service through the medium of Irish from the Council is entitled to the same standard of service as they would receive were they to request service in English, and for the availability of Irish language services to be made known to them at the outset of their dealing with the Council through active offer.
10. The Council will remove barriers to the use of Irish in public life.
11. The Council will promote the learning of Irish as a vibrant modern language
12. The Council will support the promotion of Irish language through its facilities, programmes and events.
13. The Council will take resolute action to promote and protect the Irish language across the Council area across its own public facing services.

Communications

14. The Council will develop a list of key strategic Council documents and publications to proactively be made available in Irish. The 10 most common front-facing forms (online and hard copy) will be identified and translated into Irish for immediate use. The Council commits to publishing information leaflets, marketing and promotional materials bilingually in printed form and online. In instances where consultations are being conducted and the subject matter has the potential to impact the use of the Irish language or the Irish language community themselves, consultation questionnaires, engagement sessions and associated documents will be conducted proactively through the medium of Irish/bilingually as part of the active offer.

15. Belfast City Council will adopt a new bilingual (Irish/English) corporate identity and the bilingual logo will become the new, proactive, de-facto council logo to be used comprehensively across all corporate branding. The English-only version of the logo will be available upon request. The same typeface and font-size will be used for both languages and the Irish text will be as visible and legible as the English text. The Council will promote the availability of the Irish language Council logo, use of bilingual English/Irish corporate signatures and Irish language City brand for use in correspondence, documentation, literature etc.
16. The Council will provide and promote interpretation and translation services across the Council.
17. The Council will codify the arrangements for the use of Irish in Council meetings through the Council's Standing Orders. Members and those addressing the Council in Irish will not be placed at a disadvantage for doing so. Members of the public addressing the Council will be given the option of addressing the Council in Irish at their earliest interaction with the Council.
18. The Council commits to publishing regular and often bilingual English / Irish content across all social media platforms. Information posts, marketing initiatives, community / service announcements will take place in Irish and in English. The relevant officer(s) will work in conjunction with the marketing team to develop a comprehensive strategy on how best to promote the Irish language across the Council's platforms. The Strategy will set out clear annual goals, increasing annually, around the % of social media posts produced.
19. The Council will develop and maintain a functioning bilingual (Irish/English) website. A choice of languages, English/Irish, will first appear on the Council home page and users will be asked which language they wish to view the site in. The Council website will also develop, host and regularly update a specific Irish language page, with information about the Irish language services available from Council, information on classes throughout the city and on Irish medium education.
20. The Council will promote Irish language events in the city and provide information in Irish about major upcoming events and the launch of any key strategic Council initiative.

21. The Council will provide staff with a code of courtesy for indigenous languages and provision of cultural awareness training.

Signage

22. The Council will adopt a dual-language approach to signage in all its facilities. These signs will also include pictorial and tactile (Braille) options where possible.
23. The Council will, as part of a rolling programme, prioritise the erection of dual language signage in all of its facilities through a categorisation approach as set out in Appendix One. For the purposes of this policy the boundaries of the Gaeltacht Quarter will be expanded to include the Glen Road and Shaw's Road. For the purposes of this Policy the Gaeltacht Quarter is delineated in the map at Appendix Two.
24. For the purposes of this Policy, signs includes all informational and directional signage within facilities, signage and names outside of buildings and also signs at outdoor facilities such as parks and allotments. It also includes interactive displays, educational aids, information leaflets and other resources.
25. Translation for signage will be produced by an independent accredited Irish language translator and will be consistent across Council facilities, and will have regard to the proper use of standardised forms.
26. The erection of street signs in Irish are dealt with separately under the Council's Dual Language Street Signs Policy which was adopted in October 2022.

Responsibility

27. Overseeing the implementation of this Policy is the responsibility of the City Solicitor and Chief Executive. Progress in relation to delivery of the Policy will be reported to the Council's Language Strategy Working Group and Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. However, each Council Department is expected to play its role in supporting the delivery of the objectives of this Policy.

28. Managers will ensure cognisance is taken of the Irish Language Policy and the need to promote the Irish language at the earliest stages of any policy-development process elsewhere in the Council.

29. The Council's Irish Language Community Stakeholder Forum comprising representatives from Irish language groups and other interested parties from across Belfast will be a key partner in the implementation of this Policy and the wider Language Strategy. This Forum will be provided with an annual progress report and given an opportunity to provide feedback on the implementation of the policy and wider Language Strategy. The Council will also liaise closely with Foras na Gaeilge and any Irish Language Commissioner once appointed.

Review

30. The Policy will be subject to review after 2 years.

31. This policy will be reviewed and updated in light of any direction given by central government in relation to the Irish language, and any best practice standards set by an Irish Language Commissioner once appointed.

Appendix 1

European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages ('ECRML')

The ECRML is a European treaty (CETS 148) adopted in 1992 under the auspices of the Council of Europe to protect and promote regional and minority languages in Europe. The Irish language is included in the Charter, which was ratified by the UK Government in 2001. The UK Government included the Irish language as one of three languages (Scottish Gaelic and Welsh being the other two) registered under Part III of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The UK Government signed up to specific undertakings for measures in areas including education, administrative authorities, media, culture, economic and social life and transfrontier exchanges.

Article 10 of the ECRML refers specifically to Administrative Authorities which includes Local Councils and sets out those provisions within the ECRML to which councils must adhere. The obligations under the ECRML include the following:

To ensure that users of Irish may submit oral or written applications in Irish to the administrative authority;

To allow the administrative authorities to draft documents in Irish;

To use Irish in debates in their assemblies, without excluding, however, the use of the official language(s) of the State;

To use or adopt, if necessary in conjunction with the name in the official language(s) of traditional and correct forms of place-names in Irish. To ensure that users of Irish can submit a request for public services in Irish. To allow the use or adoption of family names in Irish upon request. In order to comply with the above councils are obliged to provide translation or interpretation as required.

Article 12 details the following obligations:-

- With regard to cultural activities and facilities, especially libraries, video libraries, cultural centres, museums, archives, academies, theatres and cinemas as well as literary work and film productions, vernacular forms of cultural expression, festivals and the cultural industries, including inter alia the use of new technologies –the Parties undertake, within the territory in which such languages are used and to the extent that the public authorities are competent, have power or play a role in this field:

- to encourage types of expression and initiative specific to regional or minority languages and foster the different means of access to works produced in these languages;
- to ensure that the bodies responsible for organising or supporting cultural activities of various kinds make appropriate allowance for incorporating the knowledge and use of regional or minority languages and cultures in the undertakings which they initiate or for which they provide backing;
- to promote measures to ensure that the bodies responsible for organising or supporting cultural activities have at their disposal staff who have a full command of the regional or minority language concerned as well as of the language(s) of the rest of the population;
- to encourage direct participation by representatives of the users of a given regional or minority language in providing facilities and planning cultural activities.

The European Charter is based on a concept of non-discrimination, that is, the majority language group is not discriminated against by the implementation of actions designed to promote and protect the minority indigenous languages.

“The Parties undertake to eliminate, if they have not yet done so, any unjustified distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference relating to the use of a regional or minority language and intended to discourage or endanger the maintenance or development of it. The adoption of special measures in favour of regional or minority languages aimed at promoting equality between the users of these languages and the rest of the population or which take due account of their specific conditions is not considered to be an act of discrimination against the users of more widely-used languages”

Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

Unlike the European Charter (which focuses on languages) the Council of Europe's Framework Convention focuses on linguistic minority groups. It does not place any directly enforceable obligation on local councils but includes a number of provisions in relation to minority languages.

Much of the discourse in recent years in relation to the Irish language in Northern Ireland has focused on the issue of minority rights and that Irish speakers are a distinct minority group within Northern Ireland. The Framework Convention, to which the United Kingdom

is a signatory, makes particular reference to the rights of minorities in terms of the use of minority language. The relevant provisions are set out below:

Article 10

“The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to use freely and without interference his or her minority language, in private and in public, orally and in writing. In areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities traditionally or in substantial numbers, if those persons so request and where such a request corresponds to a real need, the Parties shall endeavour to ensure, as far as possible, the conditions which would make it possible to use the minority language in relations between those persons and the administrative authorities.”

Article 11

“The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to use his or her surname (patronym) and first names in the minority language and the right to official recognition of them, according to modalities provided for in their legal system. The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to display in his or her minority language signs, inscriptions and other information of a private nature visible to the public. In areas traditionally inhabited by substantial numbers of persons belonging to a national minority, the Parties shall endeavour, in the framework of their legal system, including, where appropriate, agreements with other States, and taking into account their specific conditions, to display traditional local names, street names and other topographical indications intended for the public also in the minority language when there is a sufficient demand for such indications.”

The Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities monitors the compliance of signatory nations with the Framework. One of the themes commented on throughout their reporting is how the use of the minority language in publicly visible signage can add to a sense of belonging for the minority language community.

“Multilingual cultural and touristic signage offers considerable potential for the use of topographical names in minority languages as it uses these languages and toponyms in a field (heritage preservation) that is appreciated in all parts of

society, raises awareness of the cultural contributions made by national minorities and has a practical function.”

Bulgaria, 4th, 2020, para. 141

“The display of bilingual or trilingual signposts as a demonstration of the diverse character of the region, traditionally and at present.”

Croatia, 4th, 2015, para. 66

-“Such bilingualism carries for persons belonging to national minorities as an affirmation of its presence as an appreciated and welcome part of society.”

Latvia, 3rd, 2018, para. 130

-“The Advisory Committee recalls the important symbolic value of bilingual topographical indications as affirmation that the presence of linguistic diversity is appreciated and that a given territory is shared in harmony by various linguistic groups.”

Netherlands, 3rd, 2019, para. 116

“...significant symbolic value for integration that bilingual or trilingual signposts, or the re-introduction of historical place names, carry for the population as an affirmation of the long-standing presence of national minorities as appreciated and welcome part of society.”

Georgia, 2nd, 2015, para. 85

The commentary above shows the positive impact of the use of minority languages in signage and how this can improve community relations and respect.

Belfast/Good Friday Agreement

Strand three of the Agreement contains a series of commitments in respect of economic, cultural and social issues, including a general provision relating to minority languages:

“All participants recognise the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including in Northern Ireland, the Irish language, Ulster-Scots and the languages of the various ethnic communities, all of which are part of the cultural wealth of the island of Ireland.”

The Agreement commits the British Government to take resolute action to promote the language, to facilitate and encourage the use of the language in speech and writing in public and private life where there is appropriate demand and to seek to remove restrictions which would work against the maintenance and development of the language.

The St. Andrews Agreement 2006

The St. Andrews Agreement included a commitment to an Irish Language Act “based on the experience of Wales”. The introduction of this Act has been significantly delayed, however, the 2020 New Decade, New Approach agreement does include a commitment to legislate for the Irish language.

Foras na Gaeilge Guidance Document - Irish languages services in the new councils

In light of the review of public administration, in 2014 Foras na Gaeilge published a guidance document for the new local councils relating to best-practice in Irish language provision and protection. The document suggest the following areas of action in order for councils to be in line with international best practice:

- Branding
- Documents
- Council staff (audit & training and awareness)
- Correspondence
- Services for Irish language media
- Social media
- Council websites
- Translation and interpretation services
- Signage
- Support for schools
- Support for the public
- Development of an Irish language policy

Council of Europe's 3rd Monitoring Report on the UK's implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

(Paragraph 147) - "The Advisory Committee was disconcerted to hear that some representatives of the authorities consider that promoting the use of the Irish language is discriminating against persons belonging to the majority population. Such statements are not in line with the principles of the Framework Convention... It also reiterates that... implementation of minority rights protected under the Framework Convention [is] not be considered as discriminating against other persons."

(Paragraph 126 & 158) - "The Advisory Committee has been informed that, in some instances, the need for keeping good relations has been used as justification for not implementing provisions in favour of persons belonging to minorities, such as the erection of bilingual signs... Additionally, it finds it problematic that the official policy is to limit the erection of such signs to certain areas where the issue would not raise controversies. The Advisory Committee is concerned that this approach is not in line with the spirit of the Framework Convention... the aim of which is to value the use of minority languages... with a view to promoting more tolerance and intercultural dialogue in society."

Committee of Experts 5th Monitoring Report on UK Compliance with UK undertakings of ECRML

"In July 2020, COMEX published their 5th monitoring report which measures the UK Government's compliance with their undertakings to Irish under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Language. They published 20 recommendations which would constitute the fulfilment of those undertakings in their entirety. Among those recommendations, there were recommendations to;

h. Ensure that users of Irish may submit oral or written applications in Irish to local branches of the national authorities, the authorities of Northern Ireland, local authorities and public service providers.

Introduce simultaneous translation facilitating the full use of Irish in the Northern Ireland Assembly and in local councils.

k. Facilitate the adoption and use, by local and regional authorities as well as public service providers, of place names in Irish.

The vast majority of these recommendations remain unfulfilled or unresolved; through the adoption of a progressive, Irish language policy, the council have a chance to align with recommendations set out by international experts.”

Department for Communities Guidance Document for Local Authorities on the implementation of the European Charter for Regional Minority Languages (2016)

“The adoption of special measures in favour of regional or minority languages aimed at promoting equality between the users of these languages and the rest of the population or which take due account of their specific conditions is not considered to be an act of discrimination against the users of more widely-used languages.”

Human Rights Commission - ‘Minority Language Rights: The Irish language and Ulster Scots, Briefing paper on the implications of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, European Convention on Human Rights and other instruments’

“... the Commission has drawn attention to the fact that there is no “right to be (sic) offended” by another party exercising a right. This is a general principle of freedom of expression (European Convention on Human Rights -ECHR Article 10, which must be read in conjunction with ECHR Article 14 on non-discrimination on grounds that include language). The Commission is aware of arguments that there are ‘sensitivities’ regarding the Irish language. In general restricting use or promotion of Irish to accommodate the ‘sensitivities’ of others would be incompatible with freedom of expression.”

Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure: Report on Consultation for Draft Irish Language Act (2015)

"ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT ON EQUALITY

4.4 The available evidence suggests that those speaking and possessing some knowledge of Irish are more likely to be Catholic, nationalist, young, without a disability, with dependants and single. There were no differences in relation to

gender and racial group. No data is available in relation to sexual orientation.

4.5 It's DCALS view that establishing Irish language legislation will have a positive impact on Irish speakers and therefore indirectly on Catholics, nationalists, single people, younger people, people without a disability and people with dependants. In DCALs view there are no discriminatory or adverse impacts.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT ON GOOD RELATIONS

4.6 DCAL considered that the introduction of an Irish Language Bill has the potential to improve good relations, as it will give the Irish language more equality and accessibility platform for all sections of the community."

New Decade, New Approach Agreement (2020)

The New Decade, New Approach Agreement was reached in 2020 in order to restore power sharing at Stormont. One of the key components of this was an agreement to bring forward legislative protection for the Irish language. This included a provision for the appointment of an Irish Language Commissioner who will develop a set of best practice language standards which will apply to public authorities in relation to the promotion of Irish and the use of Irish in their services.

Recommendations for an Irish Language Strategy – Report of the Expert Advisory Panel

The New Decade, New Approach Agreement also committed to the development of an Irish Language Strategy, as distinct from an Irish Language Act. The aim of the Strategy would be to enhance and protect the development of the Irish language over the next twenty years. To this end, the Department for Communities commissioned an Expert Advisory Panel Report on an Irish Language Strategy as the first stage in a policy development process.

The Expert Advisory Report makes a range of recommendations about the Irish language and public services including:

- That comprehensive Irish language legislation is enacted;
- That local authorities develop Irish language policies and strategies;

- That Irish speakers are available to avail of government services through the medium of Irish and that these should be of the same standard as the service provided in English;
- That all public bodies take resolute action to promote Irish internally in their work and to maximise the amount of services available through Irish;
- That publicly available forms are available in Irish;
- That public bodies have bilingual Irish/English corporate identity;
- That public buildings have bilingual Irish/English signage inside and outside the building;
- That the use of Irish is maximised on the public-facing websites of public bodies;
- That key corporate documents are made available in Irish;
- That Council's provide a simultaneous translation service and anything said in Irish in meetings is accurately reported in Irish in reports and minutes;
- That local authorities should have due regard to the needs of Irish speakers when developing local development plans;
- That local authorities adopt street naming and townland policies in line with international best practice;
- That local authorities undertake tourism and cultural initiatives through Irish.

Appendix One

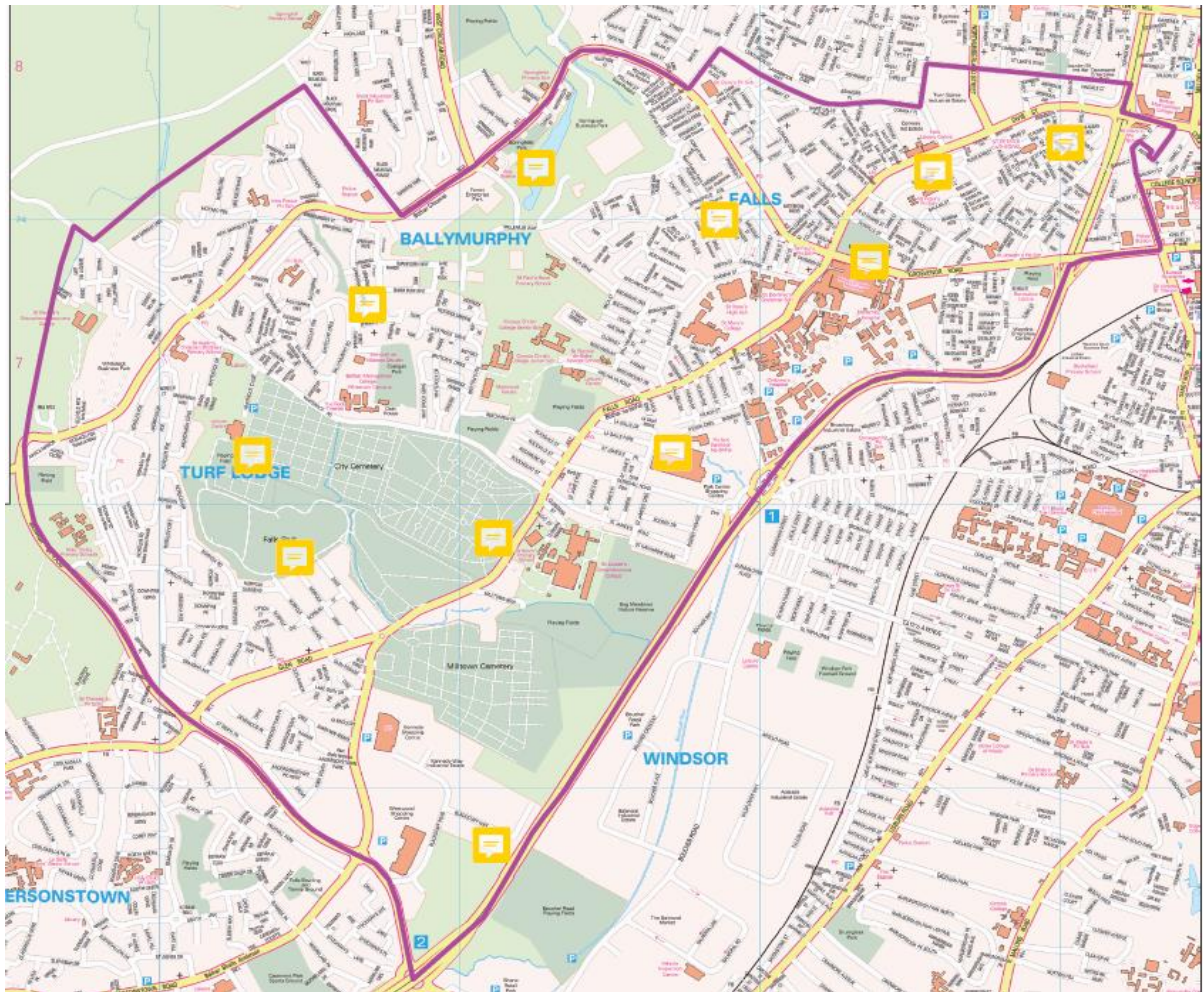
Categorisation of Council Facilities for Signage

Category	Priority Level	Types of Facilities	Factors defining priority
1 (a)	Top Priority, to be completed first	<p>All BCC Facilities in the Gaeltacht Quarter;</p> <p>Parks, Playgrounds, Walks, Pitches & Local Leisure Centres in close proximity to Gaelscoils;</p> <p>City-Centre Facilities (City Hall, 2RA, Belfast Stories etc).</p> <p>City-Wide Family Resources (Belfast Zoo; Belfast Castle etc).</p> <p>City-wide resources being upgraded or New Facilities being built will automatically come into this category</p> <p>City Centre Public Realm Signage (street signposts)</p> <p>*Where a facility ie a park, includes other Council facilities, all BCC facilities on that site will be upgraded at the same time (Example: Waterworks Park, Playground, MUGA Pitch, Community Gardens, Walk, Toilets).</p>	<p>Census Demographics (Some ability in Irish %) more than 15% "have some ability" as per Ward</p> <p>Proximity to Gaelscoil / Irish language group</p>
1 (b)	To be completed after all Category 1(a) facilities have been upgraded	<p>a) Remaining facilities in Wards agreed for Category 1 (Car-parks, Public toilets, Open-Spaces, Greenways / Hills, Graveyards, Community Centres, Recycling Centres / stations etc.)</p>	<p>Census Demographics (Some ability in Irish %) more than 15% "have some ability" as per Ward</p> <p>Proximity to Gaelscoil / Irish language group</p>
2 (a)	Medium-term urgency	<p>a) Parks, Playgrounds, Walks, Pitches & Leisure Centres in Wards with people between 15%-5% with "some ability in Irish" in 2021 Census</p>	Census Demographics (Wards: Some ability in Irish 15%-5%)
2 (b)	Medium-term urgency (2)	<p>Parks, Playgrounds, Walks, Pitches & Leisure Centres in Wards/areas with people between 10%-</p>	Census Demographics (Wards: Some ability in Irish 15%-10%)

		15% with "some ability in Irish" in 2021 Census but which may form part of a larger area where there is little knowledge of Irish	
2 (c)	Long-term priorities	a) Remaining facilities in Wards identified for Category 3 (Car-parks, Public toilets, Open-Spaces, Greenways / Hills, Graveyards, Community Centres, Dumps, Recycling Centres / stations etc.)	Census Demographics (Wards: Some ability in Irish 15%-5%)
3	Non-priority Facilities, to be actively considered when requiring a refurbishment	a) Facilities (excluding city-wide resources) in Wards with less than 5% of people with "some ability in Irish" as per 2021 census. b) Bins	Census Demographics (Wards: Some ability in Irish: Less than 5%)

Appendix Two

Map of Gaeltacht Quarter



Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum Thursday 11th April 2024

Attendance

Members:

Councillor Michael Long
Councillor Ciaran Beattie
Councillor Christina Black
Councillor Brian Smyth
Councillor Sarah Bunting
Councillor Séamas de Faoite

Apologies: Alderman Sonia Copeland

Officers:

John Walsh, Chief Executive
Sharon McNicholl Deputy Chief Executive/Strategic Director of Corporate Services
John Greer, Director of Development (for Item 1)
Michael Denny, Commercial Manager (for Item 1)
Nora Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services (for Items 2,3 & 4)
John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy (for Item 4)
Damien Martin, Strategic Director of Place & Economy
Joanne Delaney, Portfolio and Programme Coordinator (secretariat)

1. Belfast Bikes Future Operating Model and Investment

The Director of Development provided a briefing on the expansion to the Belfast Bikes scheme previously considered by SP&R and CG&R Committees. He presented to Members an outline of the current scheme, the detail of the current contractual arrangements, the learning gathered from elsewhere including the use of hybrid bikes and the proposed next steps in relation to the procurement process for the scheme. A number of queries and issues were raised by Members in relation to the future challenges and risks involved with any new operating model for which the Director and the Commercial Manager provided clarity. The need for strategic engagement with the Department for Infrastructure was highlighted in relation to ongoing development of safe cycle routes and the correlation of any proposed new bike docking stations. It was also recommended by Members that any decisions going forward should be considered by SP&R Committee in order to consider on a city wide basis rather than via the Area Working Groups to allow for a more strategic approach.

The Director also highlighted potential additional capital and revenue costs which may be incurred as part of any new operator model. It was agreed that the Director and Commercial

manager would further consider the points and issues raised in relation to the procurement process and a report will be brought back to the Forum before consideration at SP&R Committee. It was agreed that the presentation would be circulated in confidence to Party Group Leaders following the meeting.

2. Draft Irish Language Policy

The City Solicitor provided an update on the development of the draft corporate Irish Language Policy for the Council. She discussed the changes to the Policy which were proposed at SP&R Committee in February. She advised that the intention was for the Policy to be brought to SP&R Committee in April for approval to be subject to public consultation, staff consultation. The Equality Impact Assessment would be subject to consultation alongside the draft Policy. Members also noted there may be potential resource implications aligned to some of the proposals within the policy, which again will be explored alongside the consultation process in order to inform any future decision making. Some Members sought clarity on specific proposals within the draft policy and the City Solicitor confirmed that these would be picked up in the draft Policy and accompanying Report.

3. Planning Update

The City Solicitor updated the Forum on the live planning applications and informed the Forum of applications that were being presented to the Planning Committee in the coming months. In relation to a specific query raised by a Member on the Tribeca site, it was noted that a report on City Development & Regeneration would be brought to April SP&R Committee which will include an update on the Tribeca site. The Chief Executive subsequently provided an update in relation to the ongoing issues within the site and the work with LPS in relation to valuation of the site.

The Chief Executive provided an update on Giants Park, and it was noted a report will go to a future meeting of the SP&R Committee. The City Solicitor also provided an update on discussions ongoing with the Department for Infrastructure in relation to enforcement complaints about Casement Park.

4. AOB

Illuminate Requests

The City Solicitor outlined for Members an illuminate request received. Members noted the following request would be agreed under the City Solicitors delegated authority.

Show Racism the Red Card campaign - Black History Month - 1st October 2024.

Members also noted an update on the upcoming Illumination for the president of Ireland, Michael Higgins birthday which had previously been agreed by SP&R Committee. The consensus was that the illumination colours would be blue and green.

Pay and Grading Review

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy advised that discussions are continuing with Trade Unions on an agreement for the pay and grading model following the recent ballot and briefing sessions which took place. He outlined for Members the detail of the discussions to date and the key next steps. It was noted that Members will be kept updated as this work progresses.

Issues Raised by Members

Potholes – City Solicitor to follow up on whether correspondence was issued as previously agreed on behalf of the SP&R Committee to the Department for Infrastructure in relation to the maintenance of potholes.

Assembly Rooms – City Solicitor to follow up with Democratic services on a date for a special SP&R on this issue.

Weeding in Alleyways – Chief Executive to consider the recommendation to contact the Department for Infrastructure to explore the potential for an SLA in order to allow the Council to undertake the DfI weed spraying programme in order to speed up the process. Weeding for grass verges to also be considered if possible.

Council Led Events/Launches – The Deputy Chief Executive/Strategic Director of Corporate Services to review the current process in place for issuing invitations to Members

for Council led events/launches and also to consider the potential need for a communications protocol specifically for Members.



Belfast
City Council

Subject:	Requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality
Date:	19 April 2024
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, Interim City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Aisling Milliken, Functions and Exhibition 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	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 12 th April 2024.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the use of the Banqueting Hall by Lord Mayor on 31th May 2024; and • Approve the recommendations as set out in Appendix 1.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Background Information</u></p> <p>The current criteria for use of the function rooms used to review external applications is set out below.</p> <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 <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

<p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p> <p>3.4</p> <p>3.5</p>	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The existing revised criteria and scale of charges have been applied to the various requests received and the recommendations herein are offered to the Committee on this basis for approval.</p> <p>The schedule attached at Appendix 1 covers 5 applications for functions scheduled for 2024 and 2025.</p> <p><u>Lord Mayor's Request for use of the Banqueting Hall</u></p> <p>Committee approval is also sought for the Lord Mayor to use the Banqueting Hall on the evening of Friday, 31 May 2024 to host an event to recognise the work of The Children's Hospice and to thank the community of volunteers, corporate partners and fund-raisers who promote its cause.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None, any recommendations for hospitality will be met from existing budgets.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 - Schedule of function requests received up to 12th April 2024</p>

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APRIL 2024 CITY HALL FUNCTION APPLICATIONS

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
2024 EVENTS						
Institute of Public Health	26 September 2024	Alcohol Awareness engagement to improve the understanding of the health savings of minimum unit pricing of alcohol in Northern Ireland. Numbers attending – 160	D	Charge £115	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No Hospitality
Ulster Supported Employment and Learning	9 October 2024	Graduation Ceremony celebrating a milestone for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who completed their journey through the Skills for Life and Work programme. Numbers attending – 160	C & D	No charge - Complimentary as Charity	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception	Approve No Charge Tea and Coffee Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer</i>
Glór na Móna	19 October 2024	20th Anniversary Celebration- Drinks Reception, Dinner, Speeches and entertainment. Numbers attending – 350	C & D	No charge as charity	Yes, Wine Reception as significant anniversary	Approve No Charge Wine Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on arrival</i>
2025 EVENTS						
The Scout Association, Northern Ireland Scout Council	3 January 2025	Chief Scout's Award and Queen's Scout Award Presentation – 120 young people receiving awards and attending a reception. Numbers attending - 450	B & D	No charge - Complimentary as Charity	Yes tea and coffee reception as charity	Approve No Charge Yes Hospitality £500 given to their chosen caterer for reception
Holocaust Memorial Day Trust	23 January 2025	Northern Ireland regional ceremony to mark Holocaust Memorial Day 2025 -	C	No (charity)	No hospitality <i>(funding provided)</i>	Approve No Charge No hospitality

APRIL 2024 CITY HALL FUNCTION APPLICATIONS

		<p>a time for all to remember the millions of people killed in the Holocaust and subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. The event is the official Northern Ireland commemoration of the Holocaust.</p> <p>Numbers attending – 350</p>				
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