

## People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 6th May, 2025

### MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor R. Brooks (Chairperson);  
Councillors Abernethy, Bell, Black, Bower, Bradley,  
Bunting, Canavan, Cobain, Doherty, M. Donnelly,  
R-M Donnelly, Flynn, Garrett, Magee, Maskey,  
McKeown, I. McLaughlin and Verner.

In attendance: Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and  
Neighbourhood Services;  
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;  
Mr. S. Leonard, Director of Resources, Fleet,  
Open Spaces and Streetscene;  
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of City and Neighbourhood  
Services; and  
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

### Apology

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Maghie, who had recently given birth to a daughter. The Committee agreed to send a letter of congratulations to Councillor Maghie and her family.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 8th April were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st May, subject to the following amendments:

- that the Committee's decision under the heading 'Requests for the Use of Botanic Gardens' was rejected and, accordingly, permission was not granted to the applicants for the hosting of the associated events;
- that the Committee's decision under the heading 'Closed Bin Lid Policy/Removal of Bin Liners' was referred back to the Committee for further consideration; and
- that the Committee's decision under the heading 'Dual Language Street Signs – Potential Adverse Impacts' was amended to reflect the addition of the following wording to the decision: *"That this Council condemns sectarianism in all its forms and is committed to create and develop a shared, peaceful and reconciled City; condemns all threats and acts of violence against political and elected representatives, who should be free to participate in the democratic process without fear of interference; rejects support of proscribed organisations promoting violence or hate; and believes that no one should be prevented from speaking out in defence of human rights, or against human rights abuses occurring during the ongoing genocide in Gaza and all other conflicts across the globe."*

**Declarations of Interest**

Regarding item 4 (g) 'Integrated Advice Partnership Fund', Councillors M. Donnelly and Bradley declared interests in that they worked for organisations which had been referenced within the report. Both Members retired from the meeting whilst the matter was under consideration.

Councillor I. McLaughlin declared an interest in item 4 (d) 'Girdwood Hub Progress Update' in that he worked for an organisation which had been referenced within the report. He retired from the meeting whilst the matter was under consideration.

**Restricted Items**

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

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

The Members were advised that the content of the 'restricted' reports and any associated discussion must be treated as 'confidential information' and that such information should not be disclosed as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

**Dog Warden Service**

(Ms. K. Jackson, Dog Warden Supervisor, attended in connection with this item.)

At its meeting on 8th April, the Committee had agreed that an update be provided to a future meeting which would outline the work of the dog warden service and provide information on its activity and volume of work. Accordingly, the Chairperson welcomed Ms. K. Jackson, Dog Warden Supervisor, who provided an update in this regard.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Verner,  
Seconded by Councillor Canavan and

Resolved – that the Committee agrees that a review of the Council's Dog Warden Service be undertaken as a matter of priority with a view to examining current resourcing levels, shift patterns and identifying any future requirements. It was agreed also that the review would re-examine fines/penalties currently levied and the Council's powers to address dog fouling within byelaws. It was noted that any additional resourcing requirements identified would be considered as part of the overall rate-setting process for 2026/27.

**Belfast City Tribunal Service**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 4th March, it had considered a request for funding from the Belfast Advice Group, in the sum of

£242,000, to enable that organisation to oversee the delivery of the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service in 2025/26. The Committee, at that meeting, had agreed to defer the request to enable further consideration of the request to be undertaken by the Party Group Leaders.

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services outlined the principal aspects of a further report which had been circulated and recommended that the Committee consider a revised approach in the delivery of the service until the end of September, 2025, in which the Council would contribute 50% of the amount requested by the Belfast Advice Group, that being, £121,000.

In addition, the Director sought permission for officers to undertake a procurement exercise with a view to appointing an organisation to deliver, at a cost of up to £270,000 per annum, the service from 1st October, 2025, until 31st March, 2028. Such a contract would include an annual review with an in-built break clause should the delivery of the service not meet agreed targets.

The Committee endorsed the course of action outlined by the Director for the delivery of the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service until the end of September, 2025; and for the undertaking of a procurement exercise for the future delivery of the service.

### **Committee/Strategic Issues**

#### **Committee Plan 2024/25**

The Committee noted the contents of the end-of-year report relating to the Committee Plan for 2024/25.

#### **Committee Plan 2025/26**

The Committee approved the Committee Plan for 2025/26.

#### **Greenwich Leisure Limited - Service Report 2024**

The Committee noted the contents of Greenwich Leisure Limited's Service Report for 2024/25.

#### **Greenwich Leisure Limited Community Engagement re: Underrepresented/Target Groups**

The Committee noted the contents of the above-mentioned report.

Arising from discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Abernethy, seconded by Councillor Bell, and agreed that officers would engage with representatives of Greenwich Leisure Limited regarding the feasibility of providing one free activity within the Council's leisure centres for every Belfast resident and that a report in this regard, to include projected costs, be submitted for consideration.

#### **Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) – Annual Policy Alignment Statement**

The Committee noted the contents of Greenwich Leisure Limited's Statement of Policy Alignment for 2024/25.

**Girdwood Hub - Progress Update**

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

The Committee noted that a proprietary funding agreement regarding the Collaborative Shared Space Programme would be agreed, through delegated authority, for a period of up to two-years (to 31st March, 2027) and endorsed the emerging business case to support the proprietary use of the site by local community organisations to deliver a youth engagement and activity programme.

**Resources and Fleet Waste – Update**

(Mr. J. McConnell, City Services Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered a report which provided details on waste collections, management and performance, which included information on the ongoing pilot schemes relating to the 'Park with us in Mind' and 'Small Vehicles for Difficult to Access Streets'. An extract of the report regarding the above schemes is set out hereunder:

**Restricted Access Streets Pilots Updates**

- 3.1 Members will be aware that this pilot was launched on 6th May 2024, the overall scheme envisaged three 'cycles' in these areas over a period of approximately 18 months. A report was presented to People and Communities Committee in December 2024 after the first cycle.**
- 3.2 Since then, the second cycle was planned as follows and is now complete.**

| <b>Area</b>                              | <b>Start Date</b> |
|--|-------------------|
| <b>Stranmillis Rd Area</b>               | <b>21/10/2024</b> |
| <b>Donegall Road / Village Area</b>      | <b>18/11/2024</b> |
| <b>Cregagh / Loopland Area</b>           | <b>16/12/2024</b> |
| <b>Springfield Road Area</b>             | <b>13/01/2025</b> |
| <b>Lower Ormeau Road/ Park Road Area</b> | <b>10/02/2025</b> |
| <b>Iveagh / Broadway Area</b>            | <b>10/03/2025</b> |

- 3.3 Officers are now in a position to provide some analysis and data to compare both crew reports and customer contact levels covering the 6 weeks prior to intervention, the results from the first cycle and now the results from the second cycle.**

**As before, the data comes from two sources**

- Operational crew reports of not being able to access streets or blocked alleyways, entrances etc.**
- Customer contact data in relation to residents in the relevant streets reporting non collections**

3.4 From this set of data it would seem that the improvements in relation to both crews reporting issues and from customer contacts has been maintained during the second cycle of monitoring and enforcement by DFI.

- In 5 of the 6 areas crew have reported less instances of non-access with an overall reduction of 37% compared to the 6 week period prior to pilot launch. There has been an improvement in the Iveagh/ Broadway area but there has been a slight increase in the Springfield Road area.
- In 4 of the six areas there was a reduction of customer contacts with an equivalent overall reduction of reports by 47% against baseline. There was again an improvement in the Iveagh / Broadway area, exceptions to this are in the Stranmillis and Donegall Road / Village areas.

3.5 An officer review meeting with BCC and DFI will take place at the in May to discuss the data and to see if any improvements can be introduced to improve on the first cycle.

**Introduction of Small Vehicles for Difficult to Access Streets**

3.6 Members will be aware that the pilot for this initiative, consisting of two leased 18 tonnes Dennis Eagle Refuse Collection Vehicles and temporary crews, commenced collection in identified and agreed difficult to access streets on 12th August 2024. The pilot has been full rolled out since December 2024.

3.7 Following the initial success of the first three months of the pilot, reported to the Committee in December 2024, officers submitted a growth proposal for the addition of two additional crews and vehicles to make this scheme permanent, and members approved this proposal as part of the 2025/26 rate setting process. Resources and Fleet are now working through the financial governance process to procure vehicles and recruit staff on a permanent basis.

3.8 In all, the number of streets being serviced by the two smaller vehicles is as follows:

| Bin Type                        | Streets with Bin Type |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Black/Grey Non-recyclable       | 126                   |
| Brown Food/ Garden Compostables | 84                    |
| Blue Dry Mixed Recyclables      | 77                    |

- 3.9** The latest data is outlined below in Table 3. The table shows the performance of the pilot in the last three months against the three months before pilot launch and the equivalent three months of the prior year. Again, two measures are captured in relation to this; crews reporting issues via Report It App and customers raising service requests received via the Customer Hub.
- 3.10** Data has been produced comparing the amount of crew reports and customer contacts in relation to missed collections as follows
- The latest three months of small vehicles in operation against the three months immediately prior to their introduction
  - The latest three months in operation against the same period the previous year (Jan-Mar 24 vs Jan-Mar25)
- 3.11** A Member requested information in relation to the legislative powers the Council has in relation to enforcing the (non) retrieval of bins after waste collection.
- 3.12** In relation to this matter, relevant legislation outlines several powers the council has in relation to the collection of Waste from Households (and Commercial entities). They include
1. the council may require the occupier to place the waste for collection in receptacles of a kind and number specified. Separate receptacles or compartments of receptacles may be required to be used for waste which is to be recycled and waste which is not.
  2. In making requirements as respect to receptacles, the placing of the receptacles for the purpose of facilitating the emptying of them, and access to the receptacles for that purpose including the placing of the receptacles for that purpose on roads.
- 3.13** It can be seen that the Council can ask for receptacles (bins) to be placed on roads for collection purposes. Specifically, however, in relation to the retrieval of receptacles from the street, the legislation does not give the Council any powers of enforcement.
- 3.14** It is our understanding that enforcement powers in relation to the removal of obstructions from the pavement or from roads the public are under the remit of the Department for Infrastructure.
- 3.15** As the Council has no powers to enforce retrieval, the service has for many years tried to engage with residents on a local basis, through the use of tags and stickers on bins, leafleting and lettering households. On occasions where it has finally been determined that a bin has been abandoned, then arrangements may be put in place to remove it permanently.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

Arising from discussion, the City Services Manager undertook to consult with representatives of the Department for Infrastructure and the Police Service of Northern Ireland regarding the levels of awareness raising, monitoring and enforcement conducted in relation to the 'Park with us in Mind' and 'Small Vehicles for Difficult to Access Streets' schemes with a view to providing an update at a future meeting.

### **Port Health – Annual Update**

The Committee noted the contents of a report in the above-mentioned matter.

### **Integrated Advice Partnership Fund**

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 8th April, it had approved the funding of bids received from organisations within an existing advice consortia to provide independent debt advice in 2025/26. In addition, the Committee had agreed, in principle, that any in-year underspend be redistributed equally across the four providers identified within the report, subject to officers ascertaining that capacity existed within the aforesaid organisations to deliver the service in 2025/26. The Director advised the Committee that, on reconsulting with the organisations, it had been established that capacity existed to deliver the anticipated services in 2025/26.

The Committee noted the update provided and affirmed its decision of 8th April in respect of the redistribution of any financial underspend in 2025/26.

### **Play Service Rental Agreement**

The Committee considered a report in respect of the existing play service agreement with the Benview Residents Association at the Benview Community Centre.

### **Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Maskey,  
Seconded by Councillor R-M Donnelly,

That the Committee agrees to defer, for a period of one-month, consideration of the report to enable further engagement to be undertaken between officers and locally Elected Members in respect of the rental agreement.

### **Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Verner,  
Seconded by Councillor I. McLaughlin,

That the Committee agrees to extend the current play service rental agreement with the Benview Residents Association for a further period of five-years.

On a vote, nine Members voted in favour of the amendment and ten against and it was declared lost.

Accordingly, after discussion, the Committee agreed to adopt the proposal.

It was noted that a report on the Council's current play service agreements would be submitted for consideration.

### **Requests to Host Events in Parks and Open Space**

The Committee granted authority to the applicants for the hosting of the undernoted events, subject to the stipulations as set out within the report:

- Bullapalooza – C.S. Lewis Square;
- Live at C.S. Lewis Square – C.S. Lewis Square;
- Finaghy Cultural Festival – Wedderburn Park; and
- North Belfast Lantern Festival – Alexandra Park.

### **Dual Language Street Signs Applications**

The Committee agreed to the erection of a second street nameplate, in Irish, at Friendly Place, Stanfield Place, Stanfield Row, Friendly Row, Veryan Gardens, Thornberry Mews, Bearnagh Glen, Meadowhill Grange, Willowbank Gardens and Rossmore Drive.

### **Playground Improvement Programme 2025/26**

The Committee approved the undertaking of refurbishment works at the following sites as part of the Playground Improvement Programme 2025/26, viz., White Rise, Ohio Street, Roddens Crecent and Finvoy Street.

### **Issue Raised in Advance**

#### **Use of Dundonald Cemetery**

The Chairperson sought the Committee's indulgence to consider a late request she had received from Alderman Lawlor, seeking permission for the Dundonald Browning Club Apprentice Boys of Derry to host its annual Somme commemoration service at Dundonald Cemetery on the evening of Thursday, 26th June.

The Committee agreed to consider the request and granted permission for the hosting of the event, subject to the organisers resolving all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction.

### **Committee Matters**

#### **Future Committee Meetings**

The Committee agreed that special meetings would be held on Monday 23rd June and on Monday 8th December at 5.15pm to receive the Belfast Youth Council; and on Tuesday 18th November to receive representatives of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive regarding its Housing Improvement Plan for Belfast.