

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 19th September, 2025

HYBRID MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Brennan (Chairperson);
Alderman McCoubrey; and
Councillors Beattie, Black, Bunting, Cobain,
de Faoite, R-M Donnelly, Ferguson, Garrett,
Long, Maghie, McDonough-Brown, I. McLaughlin,
R. McLaughlin, Murphy, Nelson, Ó Néill,
Smyth and Whyte.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director
of Corporate Services;
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources;
Mr. K. Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty;
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance
Coordinator.

Interpreter: Mr. D. Mac Giolla Chóill

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 3rd July, 7th July and 22nd August were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st September, 2025, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor de Faoite declared an interest under item 4.e) Planning Information in that he was on the Board of Governors of Forge Integrated Primary School. As the item did not become the subject of debate, he was not required to leave the meeting.

In relation to Item 4.i) Social Supermarket Fund, Councillor Beattie declared an interest associated with a group/organisation which had applied for or received funding and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following eight items is 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 of the following eight items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

The Members were advised that content of ‘restricted’ reports and any discussion which takes place during closed session must be treated as ‘confidential information’ and no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

Draft Irish Language Policy

The Chairperson reminded the Committee that, at its meeting in August, the Committee had agreed to invite relevant stakeholders to the meeting.

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Mr. P. Deeds, Deputy Chief Executive, Foras na Gaeilge; Mr. D. Holder and Ms. D. Keeve, Committee on the Administration of Justice; Ms. C. Nic Liam (Conradh na Gaeilge), Mr. C. Mac Giolla Bhéin (Fís an Phobail), Ms. F. Nic Thom (An Droichead/Fóram na nGael) on behalf of the Irish language stakeholder forum; and Mr. P. Quinn, and Mr. D. Cowieson, Belfast City Council Trade Union representatives.

Each deputation provided an overview of their consultation response and further feedback to the draft policy for consideration.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance and they retired from the meeting.

The City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services advised the Committee that approval was being sought of the draft Irish Language Policy (as amended), along with agreement on the proposed priorities for the associated two-year implementation plan.

She provided examples of potential logo designs and highlighted that the Committee was further requested to indicate its preferred option for the bilingual corporate logo design work which was ongoing and would subsequently be subject to consultation with the Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee (JNCC).

Proposal

During discussion, a Member made a proposal in relation to a number of amendments to be incorporated into the policy. However, following discussion and a number of comments from other Members, he revised his proposal and, accordingly, it was:

Moved by Councillor Ó Néill,
Seconded by Councillor R-M Donnelly,

That the Committee agrees:

- (i) to note the contents of the report, including the documentation presented to the Committee at its previous meeting;
- (ii)
 - to approve the draft Irish Language Policy as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, and agrees that the proposed amendments which had been tabled be considered at a Special Meeting of the Committee on Friday, 26th September;
 - approve the draft high level 2-year implementation plan as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, with the inclusion of Dunville Park;
 - agrees that the Committee receive quarterly updates in relation to the implementation of the policy;
 - notes that a recurring budget would be considered as part of the rate setting process to deliver the commitments set out within the Policy; and
- (iii) notes that detailed design work on a bilingual logo remained ongoing and would be presented to the Committee, subject to further engagement with Party Group Leaders, JNCC and the Stakeholders Forum.

On a vote, fifteen Members voted for the proposal and five against and it was declared carried.

The City Solicitor advised the Committee that, due to the additional engagement which would have to be undertaken on the proposed amendments to the policy, the report for the special meeting would be issued late.

**Update on Temporary Contracts
and Agency Workers**

The Committee considered an update on the number of employees on temporary contracts, secondments and the number of agency assignees.

During discussion, one Member requested further information on the duration of vacant posts and plans for recruitment.

After discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed that a report regarding a breakdown of the duration of vacant posts be submitted to a future meeting.

AI Update

The Committee was provided with an update on the corporate governance approach to the adoption of AI and the AI challenge Fund currently being developed by the City Innovation Office.

In response to Members concerns, the Deputy Chief Executive advised that an Ethics Framework in the adoption of AI would be a consideration in the work being undertaken.

After discussion, the Committee noted:

1. The development of governance processes as part of the controlled implementation of AI use cases in the Council and progress to date on the development of the AI policy;
2. The forthcoming AI Awareness Course;
3. The development of the Belfast Region City Deal Local Council AI Adoption Programme; and
4. The roll out of the “Inclusive Futures” seminar series.

Women’s World Cup

The Committee considered the information pertaining to a UK bid to host FIFA Women’s World Cup in 2035.

The Committee:

- Noted the update regarding the UK bid to host the FIFA Women’s World Cup in 2035, including: the official bid timelines, interim communications activity and co-ordination, potential resource required by the Host City; and
- Approved the Council continuing with partners as part of the BID application.

Assets Management

It was reported that the Committee’s approval was being sought on asset related disposal, acquisition, and estates matters.

In relation to a Member’s suggestion for the allocation of any capital receipts under the Former Grove Baths Site, the Chief Executive noted that this could be considered when further detail was brought back to Committee.

The Committee:

- i. Former Grove Baths Site – Proposed Community and Commercial Use**
- approved entering into negotiations regarding the redevelopment of the former Grove Baths for community and commercial use.
- ii. 22-38 Gloucester Street – Proposed Vesting of Seymour Row**
- approved a vesting application in respect of Seymour Row to perfect and regularise the title.
- iii. Corporation Street – Release of Restrictive Covenant**
- approved entering into negotiations with the Crown to acquire their interest in the Corporation Street Site.
- iv. North Foreshore – Update on Proposed Anaerobic Digestion Site**
- approved the withdrawal of the offer of land for a proposed Anaerobic Digestion (AD) facility and the preparation for remarketing of the site.
- v. The Gasworks Estate – Proposed amendment to user clause.**
- approved a variation to the existing user clause in the Lease between the Council and Lloyds Banking Group (formerly Halifax plc).
- vi. The Waterfront Hall – Relocation of the knotted gun sculpture.**
- noted the proposed relocation of the Knotted Gun sculpture from Girdwood Community Hub to the Waterfront Hall and that officers consider a potential replacement at the site.

Financial Statements Update

The Director of Finance provided a verbal update on the Financial Statements for 2024/2025.

Proposal

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Nelson and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to the one-off funding request of £16,000 for Benview Community Centre, subject to due diligence.

The Committee

- noted the verbal update provided in relation to the ongoing audit work and delay in the publication of Financial Statements;

- agreed to the request of funding of £16,000 for Benview Community Centre, subject to due diligence; and
- noted that the next Transformation and Efficiency Workshop would take place on 14th November.

Gasworks Engagement Forum

The Committee considered a report which sought approval for the establishment of a Gasworks Engagement Forum to act as a platform for engagement on the future of the Gasworks and the development of a co-designed plan for the future of the site.

The Committee:

- approved the establishment of a Gasworks Engagement Forum and the Terms of Reference for the Forum as attached at Appendix 1 to the report; and
- agreed to the scheduling of meetings of the Forum from October 2025.

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann

The Committee was provided with a planning update to support the hosting of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Belfast in August 2026.

During discussion, Members requested further communication on the event, together with information on the events programme, board members and mapping of venues across the city. It was noted that questions on the event had also been submitted to the Director by Councillor Beattie in advance of the meeting.

The Committee:

- Noted the update on the Fleadh Cheoil including in relation to engagement with Comhaltas on governance;
- Agreed that officers formally engage and submit a bid document as part of the bidding process for the Fleadh in 2027; and
- Agreed that a report be submitted to the Special meeting on 26th September to provide details on the issues raised by the Committee, including the programme, board members, mapping of venues, and the questions which had been submitted by Councillor Beattie in advance of the meeting.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Notices of Motion Quarterly Update

The Committee was provided with an update on the progress of all Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance for which it was responsible for.

During discussion, Members requested that two of the motions which had been recommended for closure, should remain open, namely:

- Pedestrian Animation (35) – so that Officers could investigate different options for the pedestrian crossing(s), and that data from the Department for Infrastructure could be requested in relation to any safety issues of the rainbow pedestrian crossing located at the Foyle embankment, together with an update on the pedestrianisation of Union Street; and
- Market Gardens and Urban Farming (49) - so that further information could be provided.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- Noted the updates to all Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance that the Committee was responsible for;
- Agreed to the closure of Notice of Motion 40;
- Agreed that Motions Pedestrian Animation (35), and Market Gardens and Urban Farming (49) remained open so that further updates could be provided; and
- Noted that a review of the Notice of Motion process would be incorporated into phase 1 of the governance review.

Notice of Motion – Nitrates Action Plan

The Committee was reminded that, at the meeting of the Standards and Business Committee on 24th June, the following motion has been adopted, which was moved by Councillor McCormick and seconded by Alderman Lawlor:

Nitrates Action Plan

“Belfast City Council notes the recent launch of a public consultation by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) on a new Nutrients Action Plan. The Council expresses deep concern that the consultation has been issued without adequate prior engagement with stakeholders, including local councils, environmental organisations, the farming community, and the public, particularly in light of the significant environmental, economic and social implications of such a plan.

The measures currently proposed could devastate agriculture, reduce livestock numbers, and undermine food security. We call on the Minister to immediately withdraw the current public consultation on the Nutrients Action Programme and to bring forward a policy based on genuine partnership rather than punitive policies which risk the viability of our agricultural industry.”

A response had since been received from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs which provided an update on the issues raised (copy available [here](#)).

The Committee noted the receipt of the correspondence and the information provided by the Minister.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Shaping Sustainable Places Consultation Draft Response

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 To provide an update on the decision of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in respect of the Council response to the DfC consultation on the proposed ‘Shaping Sustainable Places’ programme and to seek agreement on the elements of Council response relating to Council contribution and resource allocation.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- (i) Note the response to the DfC Shaping Sustainable Places consultation as agreed by the City Growth & Committee on 10 September 2025, on the basis that this would be subject to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee’s consideration to the elements of the response relating to Council financial contribution and resource allocation.
- (ii) Agree the elements of the Council response relating to Council financial contribution and resource allocation.
- (iii) Note that the response will be submitted to DfC on the 21 September, subject to Council ratification on the 1 October 2025.

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 Members are asked to refer to the report presented to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 10th September 2025 which can be found at Appendix A. The City Growth & Regeneration Committee approved a response to the DfC Shaping Sustainable Places consultation and noted that the response would be submitted to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee given the potential financial and

resource implications of the programme. This sets out that DfC launched a public consultation on the 23 June on their proposed 'Shaping Sustainable Places' programme (attached at Appendix C), with consultation responses required by the 21 September 2025. This programme is proposed to take a similar approach to the DfC led Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme, with DfC, DfI & DEARA working together to provide a long-term regeneration strategy for the region's villages, towns and city centres. The initiative aims to address issues like dereliction, vacancy, and declining footfall by investing in placemaking, adaptive reuse of buildings, and climate-resilient infrastructure.

- 3.2 Each government department (DfC, DAERA and DfI) are proposing to jointly fund a multi-year approach to enable councils across NI to deliver on departmental/council priorities. Pending approval through DoF, the partners intend to provide £5m each per annum of capital funding to a region wide funding pot for 10 years, totalling £150m with each Department contributing £50million over a ten-year period. At this stage it is not clear how the funding would be allocated per Council area, although some concepts for this are tested within the consultation.
- 3.3 The funding model proposed assumes a further minimum contribution of 10% (approximately £15 million) from Local Councils, which is important to clarify that such contributions cannot be presumed. It has been highlighted within the attached draft response (Appendix B) that Councils operate within defined governance frameworks and statutory processes regarding capital expenditure, and any financial commitment must be subject to formal approval. It is assumed that this will be assessed on a project-by-project basis.
- 3.4 The draft Council response, attached at Appendix B, as agreed by the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 10 September 2025, broadly supports the proposed vision and principles of Shaping Sustainable Places, particularly its emphasis on:
 - Place-based regeneration
 - Early and meaningful community engagement
 - Collaborative delivery models
 - Long-term, secured funding

These principles strongly align with the Belfast Agenda 2024–2028, which articulates a shared vision for Belfast as an inclusive, resilient, and thriving city.

3.5 Key Considerations Contained within the Draft Response

As set out in the report to the City Growth & Regeneration Committee on 10 September 2025; the following key considerations including potential finance and resource implications for Council are highlighted:

3.6

1) Clarification on Departmental aims and additionality

It remains unclear how this proposed programme will operate within existing constrained budgets and existing Executive level commitments. The draft response seeks clarification on whether this funding is additional to existing Executive level commitments/budgets/programmes, or whether Councils would be expected to deliver government priorities using this programme, i.e. will Councils be expected to consider, prioritise and deliver projects such as elements of the Eastern Transport Plan, Belfast Streets Ahead etc or will these remain within the Executive departments, and if so what are impacts of allocating budget to the Shaping Sustainable Places on the delivery timeframes of Executive strategic projects.

3.7 The scale of under investment in Belfast is significant, especially when considering that Belfast City Centre is the economic driver for the Region. Belfast currently has multiple major schemes pending funding, primarily via DfC and DfI, for example:

- Belfast Streets Ahead Phases 3 and 5 (DfC).
- Gateway projects at Shankill, Clifton and Fredrick Streets
- Belfast Cycle Network, BRT Phase 2 and other active infrastructure (DfI)
- Under the Bridges, Sailortown Bridge and emerging schemes linked to the Eastern Transport Plan

3.8 This is exacerbated by the lack of specific regeneration funding streams that are available to Belfast (and wider NI region) as compared to elsewhere in the UK. As set out in the report brought to City Growth & Regeneration Committee on the Place Based Growth Proposition for Belfast, the city has experienced a regeneration deficit as it historically has not attracted as much funding, investment or spend on regeneration and local growth as other cities in the UK.

3.9 A combination of funds not being applicable to the devolved administrations and Northern Ireland receiving relatively lower allocations from funds operating on a competitive

basis means that Northern Ireland has amongst the lowest spend on regeneration and local growth per head of population, compared to Scotland, Wales and English regions – nearly half the regional average spend per capita. This outcome is not reflective of need for regeneration in Belfast relative to other cities in England, Scotland or Wales or Northern Ireland more broadly. Arguably the need is greater in a Northern Ireland context. A number of specific regeneration funds available in the rest of the UK have not been available in Northern Ireland which has led to a clear deficit and a missed opportunity for growth and positive economic, regeneration, social and environmental outcomes.

- 3.10** The English Devolution White Paper, published in December 2024, 3.10 envisions a fundamental change of the relationship between Whitehall and local government in England – with the intent of tackling regional inequality by transferring authority and funding over key policy areas and funding, such as economic development, housing, planning, transport and skills. There is now a presumption in favour of devolution on foot of this White Paper and with the creation of new Strategic Authorities this means funding and legislative powers will be further devolved in other UK cities. The transfer of additional funding and power to these Strategic Authorities across the whole of England will allow Councils to set and deliver on priorities that better respond to local needs and drive growth.
- 3.11** Increased funding pots and flexibilities are to be afforded to those Strategic Authorities that progress within the devolution framework, with single-pot integrated settlements over 30 years and access to consolidated funding pots covering local growth, place, housing, and regeneration, non-apprenticeship adult skills and transport. These funding agreements provide a 30-year investment promise – by way of example, Cambridge and Peterborough will receive £30m per annum, North of Tyne £48m per annum and West Midlands £36m per annum.
- 3.12** Belfast is already facing a regeneration deficit in both powers and funding and could be left even further behind if there are not commensurate levels of funding as with other core cities. This could make it even harder for the city to attract the resources needed to unlock demand and growth.
- 3.13** It is therefore essential that Departments clarify whether this new funding stream will replace historic investment programmes or run alongside them and that recognition. Without this clarity, there is significant risk that the ambition of the programme will far exceed its funding capacity. In addition, the Council would ask that DfC, DfI and DAERA support them in their ask for additional place based

regeneration funding via Westminster commensurate with the approach and level of funding pots being afforded to other UK cities as a result of the Devolution White Paper proposals

3.14

iii) Council contribution and governance considerations

Whilst a minimum 10% contribution is assumed, the draft response makes it clear that financial contributions cannot be assumed and would be subject to Councils own governance and approvals processes.

3.15

iv) Delivery capacity and resources

Effective delivery of complex regeneration projects requires not only robust governance but also sufficient resourcing to navigate statutory approvals and technical processes. Where Councils are expected to take a leadership role, resources must extend beyond capital allocation and include dedicated funding for inhouse delivery teams, provision for a management fee to support project management functions, and specialist feasibility development support to prepare capital ready pipelines. To enable this, it is recommended that a portion of funding is ringfenced for early-stage activities including feasibility assessment, design development and meaningful community engagement, ensuring that projects are both viable and deliverable before significant capital spend is committed. It is also proposed that the requested 10% contribution could be assessed in terms of in-kind contribution in terms of staff and resource to deliver, although as above this will also be subject to Councils own governance and approvals process.

3.16

v) Support for competitive funding streams

The draft response supports the use of thematic competitive funding (e.g. heritage assets, climate resilience, and economic centres) as a means to catalyse targeted investment and unlock place-based economic potential. These thematic streams can stimulate local enterprise, attract co-investment, and accelerate regeneration outcomes when aligned with strategic priorities. However, it is important to highlight that competitive mechanisms must complement and not compromise the foundational

funding required to plan and deliver coherent programmes at scale. The assessment criteria needs to clearly set out how projects would be evaluated, with a particular focus on the economic impact of the investment to ensure the greatest delivery of benefit.

- 3.17 Members are asked to note the agreed response from the City Growth and Regeneration Committee as included within Appendix B of this report, and to approve elements of the response relating to Council contributions and resource allocation as identified above. The response will be submitted to DfC as draft and will be submitted subject to final Council ratification on the 1 October 2025.**

3.18 Financial and Resource Implications

The Committee are asked to consider and agree the response to the Financial & Resource implications included within this response.

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

Equality, Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment have not been undertaken in the drafting of this response, although they have been considered. Detailed assessments will be required should the programme come forward.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**30 Under 30 Climate Change-Makers
Initiative 2025-26**

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty provided the Committee with an update in relation to the approach to Belfast City Council for support for the 30U30 (30 under 30) Northern Ireland Climate Change-Maker's programme. He advised that the programme was coordinated by the leading charity, Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful and its partner Podiem. The collaborative, cross sectoral initiative, featuring world-class speakers and experts, would be supported by organisations such as the Garfield Weston Foundation, Pinsent Masons, Coca Cola and Danske Bank with a request for local authority involvement being addressed through this approach to Belfast City Council.

He explained that, now entering its 4th cohort, the 30 under 30 initiative was a climate focused initiative where young leaders from Northern Ireland had the opportunity to take part in an international learning programme. Following the culmination of an exceptionally successful programme in 2024-25 (supported by Belfast City Council) a new cohort of young leaders would be competitively selected for 2025-26 and there was a request to Belfast City Council to support the programme of activity they would undertake.

He highlighted that most of the 30U30 modules were being delivered in Belfast City Centre and the vast majority of the participants would either reside or work within the Belfast City Council footprint. The cohort would be diverse with a broad range of backgrounds, sectors and interest/expertise areas represented. Within the pilot programme, over 55% of the group were female with a mix of those in education, employment and currently economically inactive.

Within the modular programme, participants would learn from globally renowned thought leaders and exemplars across a range of relevant topics. These topics had been carefully crafted to create a cohort of leaders who would return to their fields of expertise with the tools to become planet positive change-makers in the short/long term. Speakers and facilitators from the previous cohorts included globally renowned individuals such as: Sir Jonathon Porritt CBE; Richard Shotton; Professor Ian Robertson, Alice Thompson, Gerry Hussey; Philip Hesketh, René Carayol MBE.

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty provided information on the international element of the programme and the potential benefits to the Council.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor R. McLaughlin,
Seconded by Councillor Murphy and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to increase the contribution from £8,750 to £10,000 plus VAT to the overall programme costs.

Accordingly, the Committee noted the contents of the report and approved the contribution of £10,000 plus VAT to the overall programme costs.

Planning Information

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an update on major planning applications and applications which had been determined by the Planning Committee.

Rolling Apprenticeship Programme

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the Council’s rolling apprenticeship programme.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 The Committee is aware that funding for an annual apprenticeship programme was secured via the annual estimating process and ratified at the March 2025 meeting of the Council. A recurring budget of £256,000 per annum was approved. This includes the 3 existing apprentices in Resources and Fleet and Digital Services.

3.2 from 2025/26 onwards. For new apprenticeships in the rolling programme, it has been confirmed that the majority of training costs at level 2, 3 and 5 can be funded via the Labour Market Partnership funding, allowing the majority of the full recurring budget to be used for apprentice salaries. In addition, Place and Economy's contractual arrangements can provide appropriate training providers without the need for additional procurement.

2025/2026 apprenticeship programme

3.3 At its meeting of 9 April 2025, CMT agreed that for 2025/26, given the tight timelines to recruit apprentices within the current financial year, that 5 Business Administration Level 3 apprentices would be recruited for year one of the rolling apprenticeship programme. Accordingly, Departments were asked to submit applications for a Business Administration apprentice from the corporate apprenticeship fund by 30 April 2025. In May 2025, CMT approved the employment of 5 Business Administration Apprentices in the following departments.

- Health & Safety Unit
- Communications, Marketing & External Affairs Department
- CNS (2)
- COS

3.5 The session provided an opportunity for participants to learn about the benefits of working for the Council and to understand the recruitment process which included guidance on completing an application form. Departmental representatives attended to provide an overview of the apprentice role within their respective department. People 1st the training provider also attended to provide in depth information on the NVQ qualification, what to expect and the assessment methods used to pass modules.

3.6 Attendees had an opportunity to speak with any speaker during and after the formal presentation. Forty-eight people attended the information session.

- 3.7 In total 124 applications were received and following virtual and in person skills testing, 58 people were invited to interview. Forty-nine people were interviewed, and 5 people have now been appointed to start their apprenticeship on 1 October 2025.
- 3.8 A full induction plan and programme of support is being developed to ensure that the new apprentices are properly inducted into their new roles. It is anticipated that by providing the necessary information at the outset, combined with ongoing peer support, that it will make the most of their apprenticeship experience with the Council. Apprentices will be supported to attain accredited qualifications as well as developing their skills and experience to prepare for their future careers and furthermore, have the potential to make the transition to full employment within the council should appropriate opportunities become available.

2026/27 apprenticeship programme

- 3.9 Departments will be asked to submit their bids for the 2026/27 apprenticeship programme in Quarter 3. Departments must ensure that a relevant course is identified, and a commitment from line managers to provide the extra supervision and support required to make the apprenticeship a success. Directors, or their nominees will be required to engage with CHR, Development Team to identify suitable courses before a bid can be submitted.
- 3.10 One of the criteria that will be used to assess bids from departments will be posts that have been identified as hard to fill from the previous year's recruitment data and where possible these roles will be approved for an apprenticeship where the business need is clearly demonstrated.
- 3.11 Areas of the business already supported through the programme are unlikely to succeed in future bids whilst the current apprenticeship is ongoing. CMT will be required to make the final decision on which apprenticeship bids are successful for 2026/27.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.12 Funding of £256,000 has been agreed for this programme in the 2025/26 rate setting process.

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

- 3.13 Recruitment for apprenticeship programmes is carried out in accordance with the Local Government Staff Commission's Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection."

During discussion, one Member suggested the need for a pathway for City and Neighbourhood Services specialist skills such as tree preservation and biodiversity.

After discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report.

**Review of Code of Procedures on recruitment
and selection consultation response**

It was reported that the Commission had revised the Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection (the Code) to ensure compliance with current legislation and to demonstrate best practice.

The Director of Human Resources advised that the Commission had launched an 11-week consultation exercise with Councils, the NIHE and other key stakeholders to gather feedback on the proposed revisions. The consultation was open for responses from 10th July to 26th September, 2025.

She pointed out that, broadly, the structure of the Code remained the same. The significant changes were as follows:

- the removal of references to Procedures for the Recruitment and Selection of the Group Chief Building Control Officer;
- the removal of references to Procedures for the Recruitment and Selection of the Group Chief Environmental Health Officer; and
- the removal of duplication.

She highlighted that the Corporate HR department managed the recruitment and selection process, therefore, in formulating the Council's response to the consultation document, the views were that of the department (a copy of the draft consultation is available [here](#).)

The Committee agreed the Council's response to the Local Government Staff Commission Review of the Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection. The response would be submitted, subject to ratification at the October Council meeting

Night Mover Service

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The report sets out proposals from the Minister for Infrastructure and Minister for the Economy for collaborative funding of the Nightmover Service.**

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1** Members are asked to agree to provide funding of up to £92.3k, subject to confirmation of funding support from the Executive and further engagement with BIDS in relation to how they can support the proposal

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

In 2022 Council passed a motion relating to Nighttime transport calling on Translink to expand the provision of night-time services. This was subsequently integrated into the Belfast Agenda Action Plans.

As Members will be aware a Christmas Pilot Nighttime Service was operated in 2024, but in addition to support from Council there has been widespread support for business organisations, including in particular from the BIDS and Belfast's Night Czar, for the extension of this service across the year.

Translink have provided the following information in relation to the 2024 nighttime pilot.

- **NI Railways:** Over the December 2024 weekends the later last departures on Friday and Saturday nights carried over 12,000 passengers.
- **Metro:** In December Translink piloted 11 key routes as part of Late Night services on Friday and Saturday nights. Whilst providing good geographic penetration of the city some services were significantly more popular than others. Over the 8 nights of operation Metro carried around 1700 passengers on the special services and saw a swell in numbers using the last standard timetabled departures around 11.00pm.
- **Ulsterbus :** Translink operated a number of late-night services as part of the existing timetable. The services proved very popular averaging 30 passengers per departure. These additional services mirrored the popularity of existing late timetabled services to Derry-Londonderry and Newry with total Ulsterbus late services serving over 3300 passengers over the 4 weekends.

Research from Consumer Council for Northern Ireland found

‘Travelling at night is important to people, and the top three reasons for doing so are socialising, shopping and work. Travel at night therefore promotes social inclusion, particularly for vulnerable persons, and is vital to driving the night time economy.

However, the number of licensed taxi drivers has fallen by a quarter since 2013 and only a small number of Translink services run late at night. Regional media has reported on consumers fearing for their personal safety due to the lack of transport options ¹ and businesses saying they are losing trade because people are leaving early due to worries about getting home. ²

A strong theme that emerged from both consumers and stakeholders is that limited late night public transport services and the current shortage of taxi drivers is reducing people’s night time travel options. This is in turn causing people to choose to travel less at night.

In their letter to Ministerial Colleagues and the Council, Ministers identified that providing *‘this extended late-night weekend public transport service will provide a range of both economic and societal benefits, including:*

- Improved connectivity to communities outside of the City Centre, facilitating people to get home safely.
- Improved access to cultural activities in the City Centre.
- Reduced potential for public order issues in the City Centre on Friday and Saturday evenings, leading to reduced policing costs and reduced pressure on health services.
- Reduced potential for violence against women and girls.’

3.2 Proposal from the Ministers for Infrastructure and the Economy

Before the summer Council officials had positive discussions with relevant Ministers in relation to the increased calls for the extension of night-time public transport services. On 8 August the above Minister wrote to Council and Ministerial colleagues advising that *‘the extension of late night public transport services has the potential to deliver benefits for a number of Executive Departments, we are seeking your support for a joint cross-departmental/Council funding approach on the basis set out below’*

- DfI 14.6% (c.£94.9k) – as the Executive Department with responsibility for public transport.
- DfE 14.6% (c.£94.9k) – as the Executive Department with responsibility for developing the night-time economy.
- DfC 14.2% (c.£92.3k) – as the Executive Department with responsibility for developing local communities and our culture & arts sector.
- DoJ 14.2% (c.£92.3k) – as the Executive Department with responsibility for public order and policing.
- DoH 14.2% (c.£92.3k) – as the Executive Department with responsibility for health services.
- TEO 14.2% (c.£92.3k) – as the Executive Department with responsibility for our Strategy on preventing violence against women and girls.
- Belfast City Council 14.2% (c.£92.3k).

The resource funding would be required on a pro rata basis as the pilot scheme would span both the 2025-26 and 2026-27 financial years, with an anticipated start date of November 2025.

It is understood from Translink that the proposed nighttime service would operate on select Metro key routes, as well as 4 key Ulsterbus corridors that have no rail alternative on the basis of operating standard fares with the aim of '*leading to greater market stimulation and repeat business from customers*'.

Any decision of the Council at this stage would of course be subject to confirmation of funding from the Executive and consideration of the final details of the scheme.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

The costs of the proposal, which would be spread across 2 financial years, would be met from future underspends and existing reserves.

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

None associated with this report.”

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Smyth,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

That the Committee agrees to write to the Executive to devolve transport powers and the associated funding to the Council.

On a vote, three Members voted for the proposal and twelve against and it was declared lost.

The Committee agreed to provide funding of up to £92.3k, subject to confirmation of funding support from the Executive and further engagement with BIDS in relation to how they could support the proposal.

**Attendance at Horizon 2020 UPSURGE
in person meeting in Breda, October 25**

The Committee considered a report which outlined the Council's intention to send two officers to the Horizon 2020 UPSURGE Project Group Meeting taking place on 1st – 2nd October in Breda, Netherlands which the Council was required to attend as a project partner.

The Committee:

- Noted that, Debbie Caldwell and Mura Quigley, Climate Team, would be attending the Project Group meeting 1st – 2nd October in Breda, Netherlands; and
- Noted that all costs associated with the attendance at the event were covered within the EU Horizon 2020 UPSURGE grant funding.

**Common Purpose NI Legacy
Sponsorship Proposal**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To bring forward for Members consideration, a recent request received seeking sponsorship support for the delivery of the Common Purpose's NI Legacy Programme which will take place in late January / early February 2026 (dates TBC).**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- Consider and agree the request received to sponsor the delivery of the Common Purpose NI Legacy Programme (2026) to a total value of £10,000.

3.0 Key Issues

Background and Context

- 3.1 As Members will be aware, Common Purpose is a non-for-profit leadership development organisation which supports**

people and communities from all backgrounds, beliefs and experiences. In recent years (October 2021, January 2024 and January 2025) Council has worked with Common Purpose and provided funding to support the delivery of their NI Legacy Programme in Belfast, alongside a range of other organisations including Translink, Queens University and Power NI.

- 3.2 The most recent NI Legacy Programme delivered in January 2025 attracted 76 participants aged 18-25 from across Belfast and areas. The diverse group were made up of participants some of whom were in employment, some were NEET; some were studying, a few were volunteering; many were activists, whilst others finding their own causes. However, they found commonality in that they were living through the same generation and had a vested interest in Belfast and how it should look in the future.
- 3.3 The two-day programme provided multiple opportunities to engage, develop leadership skills and get new perspectives to help shape the future of Belfast. This included:
- Immersion visits to a range of businesses and organisations across the city including East Belfast Enterprise, Danske Bank, MSC Group, NOW Group, Tourism NI, Turnaround Project and Translink.
 - ‘Café Conversations’ with a range of strategic leaders including Maebh Reynolds (CEO and Founder, GoPlugable), Sara McCracken (Founder, The PR Club), Kayley Curtis (Production Coordinator, Makematic), Conor Forker (Youth Worker in Charge, Clonmore Youth Club), Diane Davis (Director, Minority Recognition Awards NI), Maeve Brennan (Programme Officer, Belfast Healthy Cities) to gain fresh perspectives and understanding.
 - Keynote Speeches and engagement sessions with Paul Murnaghan (Chair, BT (NI) Board) and Micky Murray, (The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor of Belfast)
 - Group planning and presentations to a panel of leaders including Jacqui Kennedy (Chief People Officer and Corporate Services Officer, Translink) and Caroline Young (Vice-President (Students and Corporate Services), Queen’s University Belfast) which enabled young people to reflect on their key priorities for change.
- 3.4 In addition to the above, the young people also engaged with Council’s Strategic Performance Team as part of the consultation process for our Performance Improvement Plan 2025/26. This enabled Council to capture views and feedback from young people which can often be overlooked.

3.5 with the majority of participants reflecting positive change as summarised below:

- 83% have greater confidence in their role as a leader
- 92% feel more willing and able to impact Northern Ireland
- 85% feel that they will be more open to diverse perspectives
- 87% have identified shifts they want to make and have set goals to help them reach them

3.6 Appendix 1 'Impact Report' provides more information relating to the programme that was delivered in January 2025 and its impact on participants involved.

NI Legacy Programme 2026 (BCC Sponsorship Request)

3.7 Following the success of the previous three programmes, Common Purpose plans to bring forward a further programme to deliver in Belfast in late January / early February 2026. The new programme will engage new participants aged 18-25 with a renewed focus on engaging young people within inclusive growth cohorts across the city.

3.8 Common Purpose has approached Council and other partners across the city to seek sponsorship of £10,000 to support the delivery of the programme. Funding will help to support the organisation to offer the programme free of charge to young people across the city and engage up to 100 participants. This will help to remove barriers to participation and ensure that all those who wish to participate can do so.

3.9 Whilst the full agenda is still under development, the programme will aim to:

- Deliver individual learning outcomes for participants as they grow and develop their cultural intelligence.
- Create valuable connections between peers and generations across the city.
- Identify the tangible actions and outcomes to support young people to make a difference in their local areas.

3.10 As a potential sponsor Council will have the opportunity to:

- Secure 20 places for our younger members of staff and/or young people from inclusive growth cohorts across the city to enable them to benefit from the learning, impact, inclusion, and networks that the programme provides.

- Engage and speak on the programme and to listen to and gain new perspectives from, the diverse eyes of the young leaders (including engagement with Lord Mayor).
- Include our branding on all marketing materials and related social media posts to further raise the profile of Council with young people.

3.11 To encourage and secure participation from inclusive growth cohorts, Council officers and Common Purpose will:

- Share the programme information via Council and Common Purpose social media.
- Provide programme details to members to share via own networks and within their local communities.
- Engage with established networks and stakeholders including Neighbourhood Officers, VCSE Panel representatives and Community Planning Partnership members to raise awareness of the opportunities available.

3.12 A further update will be provided to members upon Common Purpose securing the required funding to deliver the programme.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.13 The proposed £10,000 total funding will be sourced from the existing City and Organisational Strategy budget.

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

3.14 There are no equality or rural needs implications arising directly from this report as the initiative seeks to offer opportunities for young people of all communities and backgrounds”

The Committee:

- agreed the request received to sponsor the delivery of the Common Purpose NI Legacy Programme (2026) to a total value of £10,000; and
- agreed that a report regarding a conference sponsorship framework be submitted to a future Committee for consideration and, in the interim, no further requests for conference sponsorship be submitted to the Committee.

Social Supermarket Fund

The Director of Neighbourhood Services submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek members approval on the operation of the 26/27 scheme and provide an update on the operation of projects supported through the 24/25 Social Supermarket Fund (SSF).

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Consider the recommended approach and assessment criteria for open call funding for the Social Supermarket Fund in 26/27 and grant approval to operate an open call for grant applications to the SSF in 26/27 as outlined in the report. Members are also asked to note the update on delivery of the Social Supermarket Fund in 24/25.

3.0 Main Report

Background

- 3.1 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. Funding was made available through the Community Support Programme (CSP) in 20/21 to expand the concept to all council areas. This fund is 100% funded by DfC and is based on a MOU with the department and council.
- 3.2 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. 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.
- 3.3 In the years 21-24, Council worked with identified partners to develop models for delivery. For 24/25 and 25/26 schemes council granted approval for officers to seek applications through an open call process.

- 3.4 Following consideration at April and May meetings of SP&R, members agreed to roll over awards to organisations funded in 24/25 into 25/26 and asked officers to complete the following;
- to review the criteria beforehand and ensure that there was weighting added for organisations within areas of multiple deprivation;
 - to add into the criteria that those organisations applying must be able to demonstrate that they have experience of managing a scheme of this nature providing support to those struggling financially as a result of the cost-of-living crisis;
 - as best we can, will seek to ensure there is not proliferation of services close together; and that the scoring criteria be presented to party group leaders in advance of the applications opening or a special meeting of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee if needed.
- 3.5 Officers have amended the criteria for assessment based on this direction from members. Members may wish to consider the following points when reviewing the proposed scoring approach;
- 3.6 Each social supermarket project operates in a slightly different way. There are three main models of operation which are listed below;
- Large, well-established community organisations operating a social supermarket as well as wraparound services within their own facility as well as signposting people to other services.
 - Food banks that have evolved into social supermarkets and offer wraparound services as well as signposting to other services.
 - Community organisations providing food vouchers and wraparound services as well as signposting to other services.
- 3.7 Officers have sought to ensure that the proposed criteria provide an opportunity for projects that operate any of these models to access funding. Officers have also sought to ensure that the proposed criteria will provide an opportunity for new projects to apply by demonstrating experience in delivering community based interventions and support for individuals.
- 3.8 Members may also wish to consider that the location of an organisation does not always reflect the geographical area that it covers and that while a weighting for organisations

which are based in areas of deprivation is included, as directed by members, there is also an additional question where applicants have to demonstrate what need their project will meet.

- 3.9 Members asked that officers seek to ensure that there is not a proliferation of services in particular areas, there is no mechanism to prevent projects from the same geographic area applying for support through an open call process. Decisions on whether to award funding to particular services in certain areas have to be taken once the assessment process has completed and an outcome is available. However, in an effort to support collaboration and reduce duplication, the need section of the criteria includes a question in relation to other services providing support for individuals and how gaps/duplication have been identified.

3.10 Key elements for 26/27 application

It is recommended that the 25/26 Social Supermarket fund would operate on the following parameters, which are in line with previous schemes. These are;

- Applications would be open to any constituted group delivering eligible projects.
- Maximum level of award will be £50,000
- Only one application per organisation
- Allocation of funding to projects will be based on a quality score
- Applicants can apply for costs of up to 10% for management and delivery of the project – these must be fully costed and explained

3.11 Multi annual funding

Members will be aware that this fund is 100% funded by DfC through an annual Letter of Offer which is normally issued in the summer months. In an effort to provide additional stability for services and reduce the need to make applications on an annual basis. Members are asked to approve that the 26/27 application process would cover a 2 year period. Letters of offer would be issued on an annual basis and would include a caveat that they are subject to receipt of DfC funding.

3.12 Criteria for 26/27 programme

Members will be aware that Council recently agreed the terms for a new large Community Support grant. The new Community Support Plan large grant uses a 2 stage process, it is recommended that this is also applied to the Social

Supermarket Fund. Further detail on the proposed criteria is contained in Appendix 1.

Members are asked to consider the criteria and if content approve that this assessment model is used for open call applications in 26/27. Following council approval it is expected that calls for applications will open in mid October and close in December. Updates on the outcome of assessments will be brought to elected members in February 2026.

3.13 Update on 24/25 Social Supermarket Fund Projects

Members may wish to note that Belfast City Council supported 21 social supermarkets during the financial year 24/25. Most projects which received support were existing projects supported in 23/24 but a portion of funds was directed to support new projects and these included; Compass Counselling, Donegall Pass Community Forum, Footprints Women's Centre, Glencolin Community Association, Grace Women's Development, Street Soccer NI, West Belfast Partnership Board.

- 3.14 Further detail on the operation of the projects is provided in the attached appendices which also includes some feedback from those who benefited directly from support in 24/25. A total of 14,294 individuals were supported through projects in 24/25. Officers also facilitate quarterly networking meetings between social supermarkets to share best practice, provide information on areas of common interest and provide an opportunity to discuss and address emerging issues.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.15 All activity outlined in this report can be delivered through existing staff resources. Funding for 26/27 is conditional on receipt of DfC funding. If the DfC Letter of Offer is not received by April 26, officers will advise members that no budget is available to support successful projects.

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

- 3.16 None identified at present, delivery of previous schemes has been screened. Equality Screening of the 2026/27 grant application process will be completed when the assessment criteria have been agreed."

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Cobain,
Seconded by Councillor I. McLaughlin and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees that an additional £100,000 be considered for the Social Supermarket Fund and a report be submitted to the Committee in October to detail how it could be resourced and allocated.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- agreed that an additional £100,000 be considered for the Social Supermarket Fund and a report be submitted to the Committee in October to detail how it could be resourced and allocated;
- agreed the recommended approach and assessment criteria for open call funding for the Social Supermarket Fund in 26/27 and granted approval to operate an open call for grant applications to the SSF in 26/27 as outlined in the report; and
- noted the update on delivery of the Social Supermarket Fund in 24/25.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Physical Programme

The Director of Property and Projects submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The Council's Physical Programme currently includes over 200 capital projects with investment of £150m+ via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Council's Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. This report presents requests for stage movement approvals under the Capital Programme.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to –

- **Capital Programme Movements -**
 - **Cremated Remains Burial Plots – Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* and held**

at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated with a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.

- Belfast Zoo Improvement Works Phase 2 – Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £950,000 to address serious H&S and welfare issues to be taken from the £1.4m agreed by Committee for capital works at the Zoo as part of the rates setting process in January 2025.
- Open Spaces and Streetscene (OSS) Machinery Replacement Programme – Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.
- Greening and Growing Project – Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.
- Workshop Plant Replacement Programme - Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.
- Fernhill House and Courtyard - Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.
- Lenadoon Greenway - Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

Physical Programme

- 3.1 Members will be aware that the Council runs a substantial Physical Programme. This includes the rolling Capital Programme – a multimillion regeneration programme of investment across the city which improves existing Council assets or provides new council facilities. The Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange a site visit to any projects that have been completed or are underway.

Capital Programme - Proposed Movements

- 3.2 As outlined above Members have agreed that all capital projects must go through a three-stage process where decisions on which capital projects progress are taken by the Committee. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project. Members are asked to note the following activity on the Capital Programme:

Project	Overview	Stage movement
Cremated Remains Burial Plots	Development of cremated remains plots at Roselawn.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed
Belfast Zoo Improvement Works Phase 2	To carry out essential Health & Safety works and enclosure upgrades in the Belfast Zoo	Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £950,000 out of the £1.4m previously agreed by Committee in January 2025 as part of the rates setting process.
Open Spaces and Streetscene (OSS) Machinery Replacement Programme	Rolling programme to replace grounds maintenance machinery which is beyond its lifespan.	Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted
Greening and Growing Project	Biodiversity improvement and sustainable food growing development project at GROW community garden, Waterworks.	Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted
Workshop Plant Replacement Programme	Programme to replace workshop plant which exceeded 10 plus years and no longer fit for purpose.	Add as Stage 1 – Emerging
Fernhill House and Courtyard	Explore options for bringing the Courtyard at Fernhill back into active use space as an outdoor education/ activity space linked to the Access to the Hills project.	Add as Stage 1 – Emerging
Lenadoon Greenway	Proposed greenway to connect local residents with nearby green spaces and outdoor facilities, including Lenadoon Millennium Park, Half Moon Lake, Colin Glen Forest Park, Padraig Sairseil CLG Walkway and the wider Belfast Hills.	Add as Stage 1 – Emerging

3.3 Cremated Remains Burial Plots

In September 2023, this project was moved to Stage 2 – Uncommitted on the Capital Programme with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course. The project is for the development of 622 cremated remains burial plots utilising shallow land within Roselawn cemetery which is unsuitable for full earth burials. Following survey and assessment work which was undertaken in Section P it has been agreed that the development of the plots for the repose of cremated remains is feasible from both a planning and technical perspective. Work is also underway on looking at the operational arrangements and pricing model. Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk, pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated. A contract will be awarded based on the most economically advantageous tender received and full commitment to deliver.

3.4 Belfast Zoo Improvement Works Phase 2

This project was moved to the Capital Programme at Stage 2 – Uncommitted in April 2025. The project is to carry out essential health and safety works and enclosures upgrades in the Belfast Zoo which are necessary for the Zoo to retain its licence. This will address the H&S and welfare issues for animals, keepers and the public as well as improvements to enclosures. The essential capital works identified include boundary fencing repairs in a number of critical areas, upgrades to existing animal enclosures to prevent incursions, replacement of the windows in a number of animal enclosures and replacement of the climbing within the ape house. Members will recall that £1.419,000 was agreed for capital works at the Zoo as part of the rate setting process in January 2025. Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £950,000 to address the serious H&S and welfare issues be taken out of the £1.4m previously agreed by Committee in January 2025.

3.5 Open Spaces and Streetscene (OSS) Machinery Replacement Programme

This project was added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging in June 2025, to replace grounds maintenance machinery to maintain service provision across the Council’s estate. These machineries are beyond its economically viable life span and no longer financially viable to maintain in use for

the respective services. As per the three-stage approval process, a strategic outline case has been submitted. Members are asked to agree that the 'OSS Machinery Replacement Programme' project is moved to Stage 2 – Uncommitted to allow the options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.

3.6 Greening & Growing Project

This project was added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging in August 2025. This project focuses on biodiversity improvement and sustainable food growing development funded through Shared Island Fund programme. It will be delivered at the GROW NI community garden at Waterworks, in partnership with Belfast City Council and Belfast Healthy Cities. As per the three-stage approval process, a strategic outline case has been submitted. Members are asked to agree that the Greening & Growing Project is moved to Stage 2 – Uncommitted to allow the options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.

3.7 Workshop Plant Replacement Programme

The proposed 'Workshop Plant Replacement Programme' project aims to replace workshop plant which exceeded 10 plus years of working wear and tear and no longer fit for purpose. Members are asked to agree that the project is added to Stage 1 – Emerging to allow the business case to be developed.

3.8 Fernhill House and Courtyard

In November 2024, Members have received an overall Heritage Assets update including Fernhill House and Courtyard and agreed that the Council explores options for bringing the Courtyard at Fernhill back into active use as an outdoor education/ activity space linked to the Access to the Hills project and building on the success of the Forth Meadow Community Greenway and authorised officers to discuss this opportunity with potential partners. On 1 September 2025, the Council agreed to allocate approximately £900k to Fernhill House redevelopment. Members are asked to agree that the project is added to Stage 1 – Emerging to allow the business case to be developed.

3.9 Lenadoon Greenway

The proposed greenway aims to connect local residents with nearby green spaces and outdoor facilities, including Lenadoon Millennium Park, Half Moon Lake, Colin Glen Forest Park, Pádraig Sairseil CLG Walkway and the wider

Belfast Hills. Members are asked to agree that the project is added to Stage 1 – Emerging to allow the business case to be developed.

3.10 Financial and Resource Implications

Financial Implications –

Belfast Zoo Improvement Works Phase 2 – capital allocation of up to £950,000 from the £1,4m previously agreed by Committee in January 2025 as part of the rates setting process for capital works at the Zoo.

Resource Implications – Officer time to deliver.

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

All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Assets Management

The Committee:

- i) Clement Wilson Park – Lease Renewal**
 - Approved the lease renewal for a new 10-year lease at Lock 3, Lagan Navigation from the Department for Infrastructure.
- ii) Bullring, Lower Shankill – Update on Leasehold Interests**
 - Noted the update on the leasehold interests transferring from the Department for Communities, Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Department of Infrastructure at The Bullring, Lower Shankill; and
 - Approved a new licence agreement with the Department for Infrastructure at the Bullring, Lower Shankill.

Update on Area Working Groups

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the South Area Working Group of 18th August, the North Area Working Group of 26th August, the West Area Working Group of 28th August and the East Area Working Group of 4th September, 2025.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Contracts Update

The Committee:

- Approved the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1) subject to the omission of the tenders in relation to *Provision of temporary agency workers (neutral vendor model)* and *Provision of temporary agency workers using call-off framework (where neutral vendor cannot provide a suitable candidate in a timely manner)*. The Committee agreed that the aforementioned two tenders be deferred so that further information could be provided at its meeting in October;
- Approved the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2);
- Approved the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 3) subject to the omission of the tender *Hire of Skips - CNS Q24.15*. The Committee agreed that the aforementioned tender be deferred so that further information could be provided at its Special meeting on Friday, 26th September;
- Approved an amendment to the current funding agreement with Visit Belfast as detailed in section 6.0; and
- Agreed that a report be submitted in relation to the governance and scrutiny of Contracts, to include detail on the effectiveness and social value of contracts.

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Replacement boilers & associated works at Tropical Ravine Botanic Gardens	Up to 3 months	£150,000	S Grimes	Supply and installation of replacement boilers due to failure of 3No existing boilers – currently inadequate heating media to sustain the specialist flora located.
Supply and installation of Solar PV on roof for Donegal Pass Community Centre Fully Funded	Up to 2 months	£45,000	S Grimes	The solar panels will generate electricity to be used by the Community Centre reducing its energy consumption, electricity costs and CO2e emissions

Provision of portage and storage services	Up to 2 years	£90,000	N Largey	Service for the moving of various furniture and other items between BCC buildings. Service is not currently available within BCC. Dept considering in-house options but require a contract up to 2 years to ensure continuity of service whilst this review is conducted.
Accommodation/ hotel services (Bed and breakfast basis) to support the delivery of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026.	Up to 2 weeks	£220,000	D Martin	The contractual agreement between Council and Comhaltas includes the provision of hotel accommodation and business suite facilities to support the delivery of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026.

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason
Corporate HR & Payroll system for Belfast City Council	Up to 3 years	£1,230,000	S McNicholl	Zellis were awarded the Corporate HR & Payroll system contract in 2016 following a competitive tender exercise using the Crown Commercial framework contract for Corporate Software Solutions. Implementation of this new HR & payroll system has proven to be complex with	Zellis UK Ltd	3

				<p>some elements of the implementation still ongoing.</p> <p>A 3 year STA is therefore required to support the completion of the implementation, including potentially moving to a Cloud based solution with Zellis, and for the council to consider its longer term procurement options for software licensing & maintenance of the system.</p> <p>There are no other current procurement options available to appoint Zellis. This may change once the system is moved to a Cloud based solution.</p> <p>Zellis are the owners of the software. Software licensing & maintenance cannot be provided by any other supplier.</p>		
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Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Original Contract Duration & Value	Modification	SRO	Description	Supplier
Supply and delivery of paint and sundries – T2015	Up to 4 years 6 months & £132k	Additional 2 months and £6,000	S Grimes	<p>The new tender (T2517) is at evaluation stage. The product testing stage of the evaluation is ongoing and award has been delayed as 1st placed supplier failed this testing process as their products did not meet specification following testing. Testing process now started with 2nd place supplier. The testing process is critical to ensure we buy quality paint products to support operational maintenance teams and reduce associated costs. Con Mod approved Feb 2025 for additional 4 months and £6,000 and Jun 2025 for additional 3 months and £6,000</p>	PPG Architectural

Equality and Good Relations

**Minutes of Shared City Partnership
Meeting on 4th August 2025**

The Committee approved the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on the 8th September, including:

Presentation from The Executive Office - Asylum Dispersal Programme

- The Shared City Partnership noted the presentation and recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it noted the presentation.

Presentation from the Community Relations Council

- The Shared City Partnership noted the presentation and recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it noted the presentation.

Good Relations Verbal Update

- The Shared City Partnership agreed and noted the update and recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that they also agreed and noted the verbal update.

Asylum Dispersal Programme – Update

- The Shared City Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it also noted the contents of the report.

Peace Plus Local Community Action Plan (LCAP) Mobilisation Update

- The Shared City Partnership agreed the administration extension to 30th September 2028; and noted the contents of the report; and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approved the recommendation and noted the contents of the report.

Peace Plus Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee noted the contents of the report.

Peace Plus Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee noted the contents of the report.

Peace Plus Processes Update

- The Shared City Partnership agreed the updated Terms of Reference for the Performance and Finance Steering Group; and noted the contents of the report and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed the above recommendations.

Update from Partnership Members

- Due to time there were no updates from members.

Any Other Business

- The Good Relations Manager informed Shared City Partnership, that during the meeting he had received an email from TEO regarding up to a further £27,000 subject to an application being submitted by 22nd September 2025. It was agreed that The Chair and Vice Chair would agree the submission due to the highlighted Time Constraints and a report be brought to SCP in October.

Operational Issues

**Minutes of Party Group
Leaders Consultative Forum**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum of 11th September, 2025.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Cost of Living
Working Group on 4th September 2025**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Cost of Living Working Group of 4th September, 2025.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Castle,
Cavehill, Zoo and North Foreshore
Steering Group on 8th September 2025**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Castle, Cavehill, Zoo and North Foreshore Steering Group of 8th September, 2025.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit and
Risk Panel on 9th September, 2025**

The Committee notes the key issues arising at the meeting and approved and adopted the minutes of the Audit and Risk Panel of 9th September, 2025 at appendix A of the report.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Disability
Working Group on 10th September 2025**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Disability Working Group of 10th September, 2025.

**Requests for use of the City Hall
and the provision of Hospitality**

The Committee approved the recommendations as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust	26 January 2026	Recognition & celebration event for Mental Health International Staff Nurses planned celebration event to mark the completion of a 2-year project overseeing the recruitment of international nurses from outside the UK & ROI. Numbers attending – 100	B	Room Hire £450
Family Comfort NI	30 January 2026	A formal celebration event to mark the 10th Anniversary of Family Comfort NI charity which began in 2016 as a support group for those who had experienced racial discrimination and inequality in the community Numbers attending - 60	C & D	Current rate free as charity
CTM Meetings and Events on behalf of Sandoz Group AG	10 February 2026	Awards evening with dinner and entertainment to support conference event in Belfast. Sandoz Group AG is a Swiss company that focuses on generic pharmaceuticals and biosimilar. Numbers attending – 140	A	Room Hire £1250
Confucius Institute, Ulster University	17 February 2026	Year of the Horse Chinese New Year celebration will welcome school children learning Mandarin, and stakeholders, to hear speeches and receive awards for art and Mandarin speaking competitions, as well as performances and lunch. Numbers attending – 250	A	Room Hire £450

ASG Comms	19 March 2026	NI Hummingbird Awards 2026 celebrating and showcasing excellence in equality, diversity, and inclusivity. Numbers attending – 150	B	Room Hire £450
Royal British Legion	16 May 2026	Centenary celebrations for RBL, Cregagh, Wandsworth & Ormeau Branch in the form of formal dinner with speeches. Numbers attending – 60	C	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
SPAR International	24 May 2026	SPAR International 69th International Congress Welcome Reception is an informal welcome evening for conference delegates. SPAR is the largest independent supermarket retail network in the world. Numbers attending - 350	A & B	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Delorean Owners Association	12 June 2026	Delorean Eurofest 2026 Opening Reception event with welcome drinks and buffet followed by presentations and speakers to mark 45th anniversary of iconic cars launch. Numbers attending – 250	A & B	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
European Political Science Society	19 June 2026	Social Conference Reception to support 16th Annual Conference of the European Political Science Association/Society being held at ICC Belfast. Numbers attending – 500	A & B	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Ulster University	10 September 2026	Eurocall Conference Dinner 2026 guests will be international researchers and teachers who will be attending an academic conference Eurocall 2026 which focuses on the use of technology in language learning. Numbers attending - 250	A & B	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>

Raidió Fáilte	11 September 2026	Fiche Bliain Ag Fás - In 2026, Raidió Fáilte will be celebrating 20 years as an Ofcom community-licensed radio station. This celebration event with meal and performances is to mark this achievement. Number attending - 300	C & D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB)	21 November 2026	Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) Northern Ireland Graduation 2026 is an event to mark the achievement of local Graduates receiving their Charterships. Numbers attending – 200	B & C	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust	4 December 2026	Regional Social Work Awards – biannual awards ceremony and meal regionally coordinated across multiple Social Work employers to recognise and celebrate the unique contribution that Social Work makes to improving the lives of service users, their families and carers. Numbers attending – 200	C & D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
2027				
Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Past Members' Association	4 June 2027	50th Year Celebration of Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Past Members' Association with dinner, dancing, music and speeches. Numbers attending 150	C & D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>

**Use of City Hall Grounds –
Love Lamb Week September 2026**

The Committee approved the request to use City Hall grounds on Friday, 2nd September, 2026 by Ulster Farmer's Union for a promotional activity to highlight Love Lamb Week 2026.

Chairperson