

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



**Belfast
City Council**

28th February 2025

MONTHLY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The Monthly Meeting of Belfast City Council will take place in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Belfast on **Monday, 3rd March, 2025 at 6.00 pm**, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. **Summons**
2. **Apologies**
3. **Minutes of the Council** (Pages 1 - 8)
4. **Declarations of Interest**
5. **Official Announcements**
 - 5 (a) Requests to Address the Council
 - (i) – Deputation regarding motion ‘Action to Address Empty Homes’ – minutes of the Standards and Business Committee of 20th February refers.
 - (ii) – Deputation regarding the motion on the agenda ‘Dogs in Kennels Transfer of Ownership’.
6. **Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee** (Pages 9 - 46)
7. **Minutes of People and Communities Committee** (Pages 47 - 60)

8. **Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee** (Pages 61 - 88)
9. **Minutes of Planning Committee** (Pages 89 - 98)
10. **Minutes of Standards and Business Committee** (Pages 99 - 100)
11. **Notice of Motion**
 - (a) Dogs in Kennels Transfer of Ownership (Pages 101 - 102)

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall,
on Monday 3rd February, 2025 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Lord Mayor, Councillor Murray (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCormick);
and Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCoubrey,
McCullough and Rodgers; and Councillors
Abernethy, Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower,
Bradley, Brennan, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Bunting,
Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Collins, de Faoite, Doherty,
M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R. M. Donnelly,
Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson,
Flynn, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey,
Kelly, Long, Lyons, Maghie, Maskey,
McAteer, McCabe, McCallin, McCann, McCusker,
McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKay, McKeown,
I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Murphy, Nelson,
O'Neill, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported for Councillor Smyth.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Groogan, declared an interest in the items "Community Recovery Fund", "Physical Programme", "Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 13th January 2025" and "Vacant to Vibrant Programme", within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that she worked for an organisation which had been involved with the programmes, as the items did not become the subject of debate, she was not required to leave the meeting.

Councillors R-M Donnelly and Duffy declared an interest in the item "Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 13th January 2025" within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that they worked for organisations which had applied for funding. As the item did not become the subject of debate, they were not required to leave the meeting.

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Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murray),
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly meeting of the Council of 9th January, 2025, be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

Condolences

The Lord Mayor, together with representatives of several political parties, extended sympathy to Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects, on the recent passing of her mother, Councillor Lyons on the recent passing of his father and Councillor de Faoite on the passing of his grandmother.

The Lord Mayor and Councillor Lyons expressed condolences to the family and friends of Mr. M. Longley, an influential poet who had received the freedom of the city, who had recently passed.

Councillor R. Brooks offered her condolences to Councillor Verner on the recent passing of her grandfather.

Birthday Wishes

The Lord Mayor and several Members of the Council wished Mrs. N. Largey and Councillor Beattie a happy birthday.

Congratulations and Thanks

A number of Members expressed thanks to Council staff who had assisted the community in its response to Storm Eowyn.

Councillor McCann praised the actions of the players and staff of Linfield Football Club for their swift actions in response to a recent pitch-side emergency and asked the Lord Mayor to write to the football club to express gratitude from the Council. The Lord Mayor acceded to the request.

Councillor R. Brooks expressed thanks to the Glentoran Goalkeeper, Daniel Gyollai, who had assisted a member of the public who had been experiencing a medical emergency and the Lord Mayor acceded to her request to send a letter of thanks to Mr. Gyollai.

Councillor P. Donnelly congratulated all those who had been nominated and won awards at the Eastside Awards, in particular Ms. Bernie McConnell who had been presented with the award for Outstanding Contribution.

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Councillor P. Donnelly congratulated the Short Strand Community Forum's Mental Health and Wellbeing project on its recent launch.

Councillor de Faoite congratulated Patricia Stevenson on her election to the Seanad Eireann and the Lord Mayor agreed to write to Ms. Stevenson in recognition of her achievement.

Request to address the Council

The Council agreed to receive a deputation from The Workers Party in relation to the granting of planning permission for a private hospital on Boucher Road.

Ms. L. Kerr explained that she was addressing the Council's decision to grant planning permission to another private hospital and stated that there were plans to close and redesignate current health service facilities and another private facility would drain resources,

She stated that the proposed private hospital was located in an area of close proximity to a number of other private hospitals and facilities in south Belfast and within half a mile radius of three National Health Service hospitals which had been starved of funds that were needed to deliver quality community outcomes.

She highlighted the areas of Belfast that experienced poverty, deprivation and health inequalities and stated that it was the reason her party had raised funds to provide defibrillators in north Belfast.

She praised the National Health Service and its history and explained how private hospitals were detrimental to the service and only had the intention of generating profit.

She concluded by stating that, if the privatisation of health services continued, it would be detrimental to the National Health Service both financially and through the loss of human resources, that working class people deserved the highest standards of healthcare through the National Health Service, and she called for Members to reject the race towards privatisation of healthcare.

Change of Position of Responsibility

The Chief Executive reported that notification had been received from the Alliance Party that it wished to replace Councillor Bell with Councillor Hanvey on the Climate and City Resilience Committee.

The Council noted the change.

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Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

In response to a Member's query in relation to the minute under the heading "Newington Football Club", which had been 'called-in', the Chief Executive explained that he had received correspondence which outlined that Newington Football Club was unable to act as the applicant in its pursuit of funding from the Football Fund and he therefore advised the Council that a proposal in respect of the item could proceed.

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 27th and 31st January, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Maskey,

That the minute under the heading "Newington Football Club" be amended to provide that the Council would be the applicant to the Football Fund, subject to due diligence.

On a vote, forty-two Members voted for the amendment and seventeen against and it was declared carried.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Whyte,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

That the minute under the heading 'Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2025/26' be amended to provide that, the Council reject the decision and write to the Ministers for Finance and Communities to request an update on the funding position, and that a Special meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and Council be convened before 14th February, 2025.

On a vote, ten Members voted for the amendment and forty-nine against and it was declared lost.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Long,
Seconded by Councillor Nelson,

That the minute under the heading 'Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2025/26' be amended to include that the Council write to the Ministers for Finance and Communities to request an update on the funding position,

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and that, should funds become available before 14th February, 2025, a Special meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and Council be convened.

On a vote, fifty-one Members voted for the amendment and eight Members voted against it and it was declared carried.

Amendment

Moved by Alderman Lawlor,
Seconded by Alderman Copeland,

That the minute of the meeting under the heading 'Notice of Motion – Armed Forces Covenant' be rejected and, accordingly, that the Council adopts the following motion:

“That this Council recognises the unique skills that are held by Armed Forces service leavers; recognises that many veterans can face disadvantages compared to the general population, arising from military life, when accessing services and as such, this Council commits to signing up to the Armed Forces Covenant immediately.”

On a vote, twenty-eight Members voted for the amendment, twenty-nine Members against and, with two no votes, it was declared lost.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 27th and 31st January, 2025, were thereupon approved and adopted.

Minutes of People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor R. Brooks,
Seconded by Councillor Bunting,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 14th and 29th January, 2025, be approved and adopted.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor McKay,
Seconded by Councillor Groogan, and

Resolved - That the minute under the heading 'Forth Meadow Community Greenway and Park Opening Hours Consultations' be amended to provide that Botanic Gardens be included in the consultations.

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Community Recovery Fund

At the request of a Member, the Chief Executive agreed that a report would be brought to the People and Communities Committee, which would identify areas of need based on key statistics on hate crime figures.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendment and request, the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 14th and 29th January, 2025, were thereupon approved and adopted.

Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee

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

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 15th and 29th January, 2025, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Licensing Committee

Moved by Alderman Rodgers,
Seconded by Councillor Doran and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 22nd January, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Carson,
Seconded by Councillor Cobain, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 21st and 29th January, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.
Shareholders' Committee**

Moved by Councillor Ferguson,
Seconded by Councillor Verner and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee of 20th January, 2025, be approved and adopted.

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Climate and City Resilience

Moved by Councillor R.M. Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor Brennan and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 16th January, 2025, be approved and adopted.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

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Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 21st February, 2025

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson); and
Alderman McCoubrey;
Councillors Beattie, Black, Brennan, Bunting, Cobain,
de Faoite, R-M Donnelly, Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett,
Groogan, Long, Maghie, McDonough-Brown, I. McLaughlin,
R. McLaughlin, Nelson 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;
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood
Services;
Ms. S. Murtagh, Portfolio Manager, Property and Projects;
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 27th and 31st January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 3rd February, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Groogan, R-M Donnelly and Duffy declared an interest in item 7(a) Minutes of the Shared City Partnership in so far as it related to PEACEPLUS in that they worked for organisations which had applied for funding. As the item did not become the subject of debate, they were not required to leave the meeting.

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Councillor Long declared an interest in items 2(d) Wider University and Lower Ormeau Intervention; and 2(e) Support for businesses affected by the August riots, in that his wife was Justice Minister, and he left the meeting while these items were under discussion

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following twelve 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 item 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 also reminded that the content of ‘restricted’ reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as ‘confidential information’ and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

2024-25 Quarter 3 Finance Report

The Director of Finance submitted for the Committee’s consideration a report providing information on the financial position of for Quarter 3 2024/25.

He reported that, at the end of Quarter 3, the financial position for the Council had shown an underspend of £2.8m, representing 2.1% of the net expenditure budget. The Quarter 3 Departmental forecast was an underspend of £2.4, representing 1.3% of the net expenditure budget.

The Director then provided updates on the 2024/25 reserves position, the rates finalisation 2024/25 and the capital projects.

The Committee noted:

- the Quarter 3 financial position;
- the forecast underspend of £2.4m and the Committee decision of 27th January to set aside 2024/25 and 2025/26 underspends to fund £2.8m medium term proposals as part of the 2025/26 rate setting process; and
- noted the Quarter 3 Treasury Management report.

Housing Led Regeneration Update

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the Strategic Sites Assessment Phase 2 – Citywide and which sought approval for appointment of Preferred Housing Association Developer in respect of the Inner North West Development Brief.

The Committee:

1. Noted that the evaluation process had been completed for the Development Brief for lands in the Inner North West (Little Donegal Street, Kent Street and Library Street) and agreed the award of the Development Brief Preferred Developer to the Housing Association with the highest score, as set out in the report. This would be subject to terms to be agreed with the Director of City Regeneration and Development and the City Solicitor and subject also to the approval of the Department for Communities (as joint landowner) through their own governance processes. Noted also that continued working would be required with the appointed Housing Association towards the successful delivery of a viable scheme recognising that issues and barriers continue to impact in the delivery of city centre housing schemes.
2. Noted the progress on the Strategic Site Assessments Phase 2 Citywide and agreed that the initial tranche of 11 sites as set out in the report are brought forward for housing led regeneration, with updates to be brought back to the Committee as this work progresses. Noted also that the detail on the delivery route for individual sites would be subject to further consideration and Committee approvals.
3. Noted the update on the potential placemaking pilots across the city.
4. Noted the update on the Private Sector Partner, including the Strategic Partnership Agreement; the emerging governance and engagement proposals and Business Plans process which would all be brought back to Committee at the various stages.

The Committee agreed also that a report be submitted to a future meeting on the use of capital receipts in connection with housing.

NICS Collaboration Test and Learn Initiative

The Committee considered a report which provided the Members with an update on the work underway by NICS to bring forward a Collaboration Test and Learn pilot in North Belfast and which sought Council representation on the associated Steering Group overseeing this work.

The Committee:

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- i. noted the contents of the report, including the evaluation report as set out at Appendix 1;
- ii. noted the proposed draft Terms of Reference for the Steering Group as attached at Appendix 2; and
- iii. agreed to put forward a nomination from the Community Planning team for the Steering Group.

Wider University and Lower Ormeau Intervention

The Committee considered a report which provided the Members with an overview of the feedback received from Inter-Agency Group (IAG) partners towards the proposed extension of an Area Intervention Manager position up to 2028 aligned with the delivery of the agreed 4-year WULO Action Plan; and the proposed next steps in relation to this work.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor McDonough-Brown,
Seconded by Councillor Nelson,

That the Committee agrees to the potential financial contribution from the Council towards the match-funding of the post as set out at paragraphs 4.6-4.7 of the report.

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

The Committee also noted the feedback received from Inter-Agency Group partners as set out in the report.

**Support for businesses affected
by August riots – update**

The Committee deferred consideration of the report to enable a further report to be submitted which outlined what direct financial support could be provided by the Council to the businesses which had been affected.

It was agreed also that further discussions be undertaken with the traders and relevant stakeholders to ascertain what support was required.

Smart Belfast: City Innovation programme update

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report which updated the Committee on Smart Belfast, including the proposed extension of the Belfast 5G Innovation Regions programme; a proposed twelve-month commission for the City Hall immersive experience; and the outputs of the recent inclusive innovation workshop.

The Committee:

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1. Noted the successful completion of the Belfast 5G innovation regions programme and the invitation to attend the showcase event at City Hall at 9.30 am on 5th March.
2. Approved acceptance of the £1.3 million letter of offer to deliver a twelve-month extension of the Belfast 5G IR programme.
3. Noted the success of the City Hall immersive experience and approved the commissioning of the experience for a further twelve months commencing April 2025.
4. Noted the outputs of the recent inclusive innovation workshop and emerging strands of work to take forward this agenda.
5. Approved the provision of additional in-kind staff support of no more than 10 days to support the audit of the Horizon 2020 HUB-IN programme.

Newington Football Club

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 3rd February, agreed to act as the applicant to the Football Fund in respect of Newington Football Club in order to bid for the associated costs of establishing a home pitch for the club at Ballysillan Playing Fields. This decision was subject to due diligence and further work by officers.

Accordingly, the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services submitted a further report which provided two options for the Committee to consider.

After discussion, it was

Moved By Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Nelson,

That the Committee agrees to proceed with option 2 as set out in the report.

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

It was agreed also that Urban Villages be invited to attend a meeting of the Committee to provide an overview of the scheme.

Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum of 13th February.

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Fleadh Cheoil update

The Committee noted the update on the plans for the event at which the host for the 2026 Fleadh would be announced and approved the expenditure for hospitality as set out in the report.

Requests for Funding

(The Committee agreed that the discussion on this item would not subject to restrictions and that that part of the meeting be reopened to the press and public).

The Director of Finance reported that the following requests for funding had been received:

1. Belfast Youth Orchestra for funding towards their tour of Italy. No specific amount was requested.
2. Antrim Ladies Gaelic Football and Camogie Club for funding of £20,000 to jointly promote the two associations as well as provision of kit, physical and nutritional advice.
3. Whiterock Child and Family Centre for funding of £500,000 towards the cost of establishing a modern, purpose-built facility.
4. the original request under a Motion of Motion from West Well Being for funding of £50,000.
5. £1,100 for the over 70s NI Men's Walking Football Club to assist with participation in a tournament.

Proposal

After a lengthy discussion, it was

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

That the Committee agrees to accede to the request from Whiterock Child and Family Centre for funding of £500,000 towards the cost of establishing a modern, purpose-built facility, subject to due diligence being undertaken.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Long,
Seconded by Councillor Nelson,

That the request be referred for consideration, in the first instance, to the West Area Working Group.

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On a vote eight Members voted for the amendment and eleven against and it was declared lost.

The original proposal standing in the name of Councillor R-M Donnelly was put to the meeting, with eleven Members voting for and eight against and was declared carried.

The Committee agreed further to defer consideration of the requests from City of Belfast Youth Orchestra, the Antrim Ladies Gaelic Football and Camogie Club, the West Well Being Centre and the NI over 70s walking football club to allow officers to look at the development of a fund which could support these and similar requests for funding.

Following further discussion in relation to possible similar Neighbourhood Regeneration Funding (NRF) for the other Area Working Groups, the City Solicitor indicated that that a report on the Annual review of the NRF was due to be submitted to the Committee in March and this would include those issues which had been raised by the Members.

The Committee agreed to this course of action.

Request from UTV to film at St George's Market

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from UTV to film at St George's Market for a new series of Hidden NI.

The Committee:

- noted the proposed filming at St George's Market as part of a new UTV series; and
- granted approval for the filming proposal, subject to the Markets Management Team ensuring that all relevant assurances are in place.

**Events to mark the 80th anniversary
of Victory in Europe Day**

The City Solicitor/Director of Legal Services presented a report in relation to proposals to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

The Committee:

- approved the proposed programme of events to be organised by the Council 8th May 2025, together with the associated costs of up to £30,000; and
- agreed to establish a small grant scheme up to the value of £70,000 for local communities to organise street parties to mark VE day on 8th May 2025 and delegated authority to the Director to award the grants.

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Matters referred back from Council/Motions

**Report - Response received from Belfast
Health Trust re NOM - Removal of Knockbreda
Out of Hours Doctors Services**

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting held on 2nd December, 2024, it was agreed to write to the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust regarding the Notice of Motion in relation to the Removal of Knockbreda Out of Hours Doctors Services.

The Committee was advised that a response has been received from Ms Maureen Edwards, Interim Chief Executive, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

In her response she had advised that this motion was in opposition to the Trust's proposal regarding its reconfiguration of General Practice Out Of Hours from two sites to one, with the introduction of a multi-disciplinary team.

The proposal was issued for consultation on 3rd October 2024 and had closed on 2nd January 2025. The Trust would now take time to review the Council's response, along with all the other responses and feedback received to inform its decision making on the way forward in accordance with its statutory responsibilities.

The Trust would produce an outcome report detailing the feedback received and its decision on the proposal in due course. The Trust would ensure that this was shared with the Council on endorsement by the Trust Board.

The Committee noted the correspondence and agreed to the closure of the motion.

**Response received from Minister for Infrastructure
re Hill Street, Belfast - Pedestrianisation**

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting held on 1st October, 2024, it was agreed to write to the Minister for Infrastructure to ask that he revisits the decision to put work on the pedestrianisation of Hill Street on hold.

The Committee was advised that a response has been received from Ms Liz Kimmins, Minister for Infrastructure.

In her response she apologised for the delay in responding to the Council and, that, unfortunately significant staffing constraints within Eastern Division was having an impact on response times.

An informal consultation on the proposal to pedestrianise Hill Street had been carried out for which the Department got nine replies. While most were in favour of the pedestrianisation scheme, the majority wanted to retain full vehicle access. However, this would not be in keeping with the objective of a pedestrianised area which was to remove traffic during certain periods for the general benefit of pedestrians.

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Therefore, this required further engagement with individual businesses to explain this position and to attempt to negotiate a scheme which worked for everyone.

Unfortunately, due to the extensive time that this type of engagement required, and the current significant pressures on staff as well as their involvement with high priority work such as the Belfast Grand Central Station, the Sydenham Bypass resurfacing scheme and the McKinstry Road/ Derriaghy Road/ The Cutts improvement scheme, it was necessary to put work on the Hill Street proposal on hold at present.

Officials were keeping the position under review and would hope to follow up the informal consultation feedback in the coming months as staffing resource permitted.

The Committee noted the correspondence as set out in the report and agreed that a further letter be forwarded to ascertain whether Hill Street is included in the Eastern Transport Plan and seeking further clarification in relation to the consultation.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

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.

**LGSC Network of Diversity Ambassadors
and The Rainbow Project, HereNI and
Cara-Friend Centenary event**

The Director of Human Resources submitted the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) Diversity Ambassador network and sponsorship of/attendance at the Rainbow Project, HereNI and Cara-Friend Centenary event.**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the content of this report.**

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

- 3.1 Our Equality and Diversity Action Plan outlines how we will promote equality and diversity in our ambitions to create a city in which people love to live, learn, invest, work and visit. It also contributes to our compliance with Section 75 of the Northern**

Ireland Act 1998. Actions are categorised under the following corporate plan priorities:

- Growing an inclusive economy
- Living here
- Cross cutting
- Organisational priorities

- 3.2 The Local Government Equality and Diversity Group prioritises and influences equality, good relations, diversity and inclusion initiatives across local government in Northern Ireland. Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services is the current chair of the Group which attempts to bring together best practice across the sector and in so doing, seeks to integrate the priorities of the Group with the ongoing work of individual Councils. The Group identified a key implementation initiative: establishing a network of Diversity Ambassadors to actively advance the equality and diversity agenda within Councils.
- 3.3 The Diversity Ambassadors will work within their Council and community to support delivery of the regional Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan and help to drive behavioural and cultural change across the local government sector. The role of the Diversity Ambassador is important because they will work at all levels helping to create a fair, accepting, inclusive culture which in turn will help to reduce the occurrence of discrimination allowing everyone to feel welcome, cared for, safe and valued. Please see Diversity Ambassador Role Specification attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.4 In May 2023 all councils were asked to confirm the names of elected members or senior officers in diversity and inclusion champion or ambassador roles so that they could be invited to a programme of events for Diversity Ambassadors. The current list of BCC Diversity Ambassadors is as follows:

Elected member ambassadors.

Cllr Aine McCabe - Gender
Cllr Micky Murray - LGBTQIA+
Cllr Anthony Flynn - LGBTQIA+
Cllr Seamus De Faoite - LGBTQIA+
Cllr Ruth Brooks - Disability

In addition, a number of elected members in the Disability Working Group also asked that they be invited to the programme of events.

Officer ambassadors.

Kate Bentley - LGBTQIA+
John Tully - Race
Christine Sheridan -all areas
Nora Largey - all areas
Catherine Christy - all areas
Michael Johnston - Disability

- 3.5 From October 2023 to November 2024, a series of best practice events and information sessions took place, consisting of five sessions, offering Diversity Ambassadors opportunities to exchange insights and engage with subject experts. These sessions were facilitated by the Commission and supported by Equality and Diversity Group members Bronagh Hinds (DemocraShe) and Bernie Kelly (Vice Chair of the Local Government Staff Commission). A number of Belfast City Council diversity projects and initiatives were showcased across the events.
- 3.6 Looking ahead, the initiative aims to formalise a Diversity Ambassador Network to sustain collaboration, learning, and the sharing of best practices across Councils. In December 2024 the LGSC sought expressions of interest from elected member ambassadors and officer ambassadors across all 11 councils to co-chair the network going forward. Catherine Christy, Corporate HR Manager – Development, in Belfast City Council and Cllr Noeleen Hays, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, have been invited to co-chair the network in 2025/26. See Network Terms of Reference attached for further information.
- 3.7 **The Rainbow Project, HereNI and CaraFriend Centenary event**
- An event is being held in Titanic Belfast on 8 March 2025, to celebrate a combined century of support and advocacy from three of Northern Ireland's LGBTQIA+ organisations: The Rainbow Project, HereNI, and CaraFriend. Adding to the significance of this occasion, the prestigious Tolerantia Awards will also form part of this celebration. This renowned event honours individuals and organisations that have made substantial contributions to the promotion of tolerance and human rights across Europe. The Rainbow Project is a member of the Tolerantia Alliance and last hosted these awards in Belfast which were sponsored by the Council, back in in 2016.
- 3.8 As part of its agreed LGBTQIA+ diversity action plan commitment, the Council will be one of the named sponsors of

the event, which includes a table for 10. Our LGBTQIA+, elected member and senior officer ambassadors have been invited to attend as well as members of the staff LGBTQIA+ network 'Proud', who commit a considerable amount of personal time and effort on top of their day jobs to support and manage the network.

3.9 Financial and Resource Implications

Financial

There are no financial implications to this report as associated costs are included the agreed LGBTQIA+ diversity action plan.

3.10 Human Resources

There are no human resources implications to this report.

3.11 Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Implications

The delivery of the Councils equality, diversity and inclusion projects and initiatives will have a positive impact on our workforce and internal operations as well as communities across our city."

The Committee noted the content of this report and agreed that Councillor P. Donnelly be included as an elected Member ambassador.

Summer Schemes – Additional Needs

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 22nd March 2024, it had agreed to provide the City and Neighbourhood Services Department with an additional amount of £80,000 to deliver a pilot project to support summer schemes for children with additional needs. Following successful delivery of the pilot in 2024, an amount of £80,000 was allocated within the Departmental estimates to deliver the programme in 2025.

At the People and Communities Committee meeting on 4th February 2025, the Members had agreed an allocation model of £20,000 per area, north, south, east and west, and the eligibility criteria. The Members had further agreed that a report be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee seeking an additional amount of £40,000, to a total of £120,000, to extend the impact of the scheme.

The Committee approved the request from the People and Communities Committee and agreed to provide an additional amount of £40,000 funding for summer schemes for children with additional needs, with an amount of £10,000 to be allocated to north, south, east and west Belfast.

**Draft response to Department for
Communities Fuel Poverty Strategy**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to submit for the consideration of Committee a draft corporate response to the Department for Communities (DfC) draft Fuel Poverty Strategy consultation.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee are asked to:

- i. note the draft Fuel Poverty Strategy being consulted upon – [CLICK LINK](#)
- ii. consider the draft Council response attached at Appendix 1;
- iii. agree that the draft Council response is submitted to the Department for Communities

3.0 Main report

- 3.1 The Department for Communities recently launched a consultation on a draft Fuel Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland which sets out a proposed framework for addressing fuel poverty and its impacts.

- 3.2 DfC defines fuel poverty as the inability of a household to heat and power their home adequately. It is affected by the cost of energy, the energy efficiency of the home and energy needs of those living in it, and household income. When people cannot heat their homes adequately it can lead to poor mental and physical health.

- 3.3 This strategy proposes a vision of a Warm, Healthy Home for Everyone, supported by 4 principles. It contains a number of proposed actions that will help us achieve the following objectives to:

1. Make homes more energy efficient
2. Collaborate and build capacity
3. Protect consumers

- 3.4 The draft Strategy also proposes a new approach to measuring and reporting on fuel poverty and proposals for the Department’s new Fuel Poverty Energy Efficiency scheme.

- 3.5 As part of the recent refresh of the Belfast Agenda (City's Community Plan), a key and immediate area of concern emerging from key stakeholder groups, community and voluntary sector representatives, citizens, communities of interest and elected Members, was the growing fuel poverty crisis facing the city and communities. There was a strong call to action for community planning partners to work with NICS Departments to move quickly to bring forward immediate and integrated measures to support vulnerable people alongside helping inform the development on long-term and sustainable approach and underpinning strategies, policies and programmes.
- 3.6 There is little doubt that the scale and complexity of challenges with a dangerous combination of higher energy prices, reduced incomes, and leaky, energy inefficient housing could create the perfect storm and push many households further into fuel poverty. These increases come at a time when many household budgets are already stretched thin.
- 3.7 Living in fuel poverty can severely affect a person's life in a wide range of ways, on physical and mental health, household finances, the economy and ultimately on people's quality of life.
- 3.8 Members will be aware of the significant investment made by the Council over recent years in helping to alleviate the impact of fuel poverty and the cost-of-living crisis. The Council would highlight the collaboration which has taken place with DfC, and the role of Council working closely with community partners to get significant funding and support to those impacted by fuel poverty across the city. There is no doubt of the effectiveness and impact of central and local government working together with communities in responding together in times of emergency.
- 3.9 While we understand and embrace the fact that its causes are complex and its consequences are multiple, there is an opportunity through community planning to create the environment and bring the key stakeholders together to develop achievable actions. Whilst immediate and practical interventions and support can be brought forward to help mitigate the effects of fuel poverty; we would commend that a broader and integrated programme and longer-term strategy and associated resources are required to seek to eradicate fuel poverty within Belfast and wider region.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.10 There are no financial or human resource implications arising directly from this report.

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

- 3.11 There are no equality/ good relations or rural needs implications arising directly from this report.”

The Committee:

- i. noted the draft Fuel Poverty Strategy being consulted upon;
- ii. approved the draft Council response attached at Appendix 1 to the report; and
- iii. agreed that the draft Council response be submitted to the Department for Communities

Public Health Agency Draft Corporate Plan 2025-2030

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy presented the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to bring to the attention of Members the draft PHA Corporate Plan (2025-2030) recently published for consultation and to outline a proposed approach to responding.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee are asked to:

- i. note the draft Public Health Authority Corporate Plan (2025-2030) [CLICK HERE](#).
- ii. consider and agree the proposed short draft response, as set out at para 3.5 below
- iii. agree that the draft Council response be submitted to the PHA by the 28th February 2025 deadline albeit remaining subject to Full Council ratification.

3.0 Main report

- 3.1 The Public Health Agency recently launched a consultation on its draft Corporate Plan for the period 2025-2030. The draft Plan sets out the strategic direction for the PHA for the next

five years in terms of what they will do and how they will work as an organisation. A copy of the draft Plan is available via [CLICK HERE](#).

- 3.2 The PHA endeavours to translate the Health and Social Care values into its culture by ‘putting individuals and communities at the heart of everything we do, acting with openness and honesty and treating people with dignity, respect and compassion; working together in partnership to improve the quality of life of those we serve, listening to and involving individuals and communities; valuing, developing and empowering our staff and striving for excellence and innovation; being evidence led and outcomes focused’.
- 3.3 The Plan sets out a framework for delivery which is based on the following thematic areas of focus:



- 3.4 There is a strong emphasis on addressing health inequalities and developing targeted and place-based approaches where needed for those more vulnerable in our society.

Belfast City Council Response

- 3.5 It is recommended that the Council respond to confirm its support for the draft Plan and particularly welcoming the focus on supporting those most vulnerable in our city and recognising the need for and benefit of place-based approaches. In responding we would also highlight the joint work already underway between the Council, the PHA and other city and community partners through the Belfast Agenda and shared priorities such as complex lives. We would suggest that Belfast welcomes the opportunity to continue to work closely with colleagues within PHA to continue to bring forward the prototype delivery models and test and learn

demonstrator programmes which can be scaled up across the region.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.6 There are no financial or human resource implications arising directly from this report.

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

- 3.7 There are no equality/ good relations or rural needs implications arising directly from this report.”

The Committee:

- i. noted the draft Public Health Authority Corporate Plan (2025-2030);
- ii. agreed the proposed short draft response, as set out at para 3.5; and
- iii. agreed that the draft Council response be submitted to the PHA by the 28th February 2025 deadline albeit remaining subject to Full Council ratification.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Physical Programme Update

The Portfolio Manager presented 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 a request for an approval under the Capital Programme.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Capital Programme:**
 - **IT Programme – Palo Alto Firewall** – Note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of up to £67,000 be allocated.
 - **Fleet Replacement Programme 2025/26 – Lord Mayor’s official car** – Note the further information provided on the replacement of the Lord Mayor’s official car as part of the Fleet Programme for 2025/26.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

3.1 Physical Programme

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 Council also delivers externally focused funding streams such as Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Local Investment Fund (LIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF), as well as numerous physical programmes and standalone projects that we deliver for central government. Our funding partners include National Lottery Heritage Fund, SEUPB PeacePLUS, the Executive Office, DfC, DfI including the Living with Water Programme, DAERA, Ulster Garden Villages, Levelling Up Fund (LUF), UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and others. When appropriate, the Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange site visits to any projects that have been completed.

Capital Programme - Proposed Movements

- 3.2 Members are aware of the scale of the Council’s Physical Programme via a range of internal and external funding streams. 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
IT Programme – Palo Alto Firewall	Procurement of replacement firewall hardware	Stage 3 – Committed: With a maximum budget allocation of up to £67,000

3.3 IT Programme – Palo Alto Firewall

This project is part of the overall IT Programme and will replace and licence new firewall hardware. In October 2024 this project was moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* and held at *Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk* pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return. An update was to be brought back to Committee along with the final budget allocation and confirmation that this is within the affordability limits of the Council. Members are asked to note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of up to £67,000 be allocated.

3.4 Capital Programme - Fleet Programme 2025/26 - replacement of the Lord Mayor's car

Members will recall that in January an update was presented on the Fleet Programme for 2025/26 including the replacement of the Lord Mayor's official car. Members noted the agreed Fleet Programme for 2025/26, but agreed to defer consideration of the replacement of the Lord Mayor's official car until further information had been provided to the Committee on the specification and the cost. As reported, the current lease of the Lord Mayor's official car is due to end in October. Due to delivery lead times it is anticipated to take a minimum of six months to acquire the new replacement lease/hire vehicle once ordered.

- 3.5** The Fleet Unit have engaged with the Lord Mayor's Unit on the model of the replacement vehicle to ensure that the requirements, duties and obligations of the Office of the Lord Mayor are considered along with mileage requirements and capability. In keeping with the Council's previous decision the replacement car will be fully electric. The models which meet the operational loading space and resilience requirements are

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summarised in the table below. Further detail including other options is also attached at Appendix 1.

3.6 Summary of specifications and costs:

Current vehicle:	Occupant seats	Electric range (miles)	Annual cost	Total cost
<i>Current vehicle - Audi ETron (procured in 2020)</i>	5	204	£8,439	£33,756

Replacement models:	Occupant seats	Electric range (miles)	Annual cost estimate of lease	Total cost estimate of lease (4 years)
BMW i5 Saloon 442kW M60 xDrive 84kWh	5	383	£11,063	£44,252
BMW i7 Saloon 485kW M70 xDrive 105.7kWh	5	365	£16,257	£65,028
Mercedes Benz EQS Saloon 450 + 265kW Business Class 118kWh	5	430	£13,815	£55,260
Audi ETron GT Saloon 435kWh S Launch Edition	5	423	£16,795	£67,180

The current annual lease cost of the Lord Mayor's official vehicle is £8,439 (from 2020) and a total of £33,756 over the four year contract period. To replace the current vehicle with the same model, the total cost is estimated at £67,180 over four years which would constitute a significant increase compared to the previous procurement exercise. Taking account of the required seating and load space needs, long journey timely returns and lease/hire cost it is recommended that the BMW i5 4 door saloon best meets all round operational requirements and overall value for money over a four year contract period. The cost estimate for this preferred option over four years is approximately £44,250. Members are asked to note the further

information provided on the replacement of the Lord Mayor's official car as part of the Fleet Programme for 2025/26.

3.7 Financial and Resource Implications

Financial Implications –

IT Programme – Palo Alto Firewall - a maximum of £67,000 is now allocated to this project. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

Fleet Replacement Programme 2025/26 – this is an existing rolling allocation of £2.2m on the Capital Programme relating to the Council's fleet including the replacement of the Lord Mayor's official car, estimated at £44,250.

Resource Implications – Officer time to deliver.

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

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

The Committee:

- **IT Programme – Palo Alto Firewall** – Noted that a satisfactory tender return had been received and that the Director of Finance had confirmed that this project was within the affordability limits of the Council and agreed that a maximum of up to £67,000 be allocated.
- **Fleet Replacement Programme 2025/26 – Lord Mayor's official car** – Noted the further information provided on the replacement of the Lord Mayor's official car as part of the Fleet Programme for 2025/26 and agreed to the lease of the KIA EV6 Electric Estate for a period of 4 years.

Assets Management

The Committee:

- i) **Off-Street Car Parks – Title Regularisation**
Noted the position and the legal steps now required by the Council in order to perfect and regularise title to portions of the off-street car park lands acquired from DRD on 1st April 2015 by virtue of the Scheme for the Transfer of Designated Off-Street Car Park Assets and Liabilities (the Transfer Scheme).

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ii) Ballygomartin Road Site – proposed lease of land to Black Mountain Shared Space

Approved the lease of land to Black Mountain Shared Space for the development of BMSS Phase 2.

iii) Exchange Street - Acquisition of lands at Exchange Street

Approved the acquisition of lands at Exchange Street by way of vesting.

iv) Lands at Springhill Park

Delegated authority to the Director to engage with the NIHE regarding a temporary licence to allow the Executive access for construction works at Ballymurphy.

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), with the exception of the tender regarding the appointment of public analyst to enable further information to be provided.
- Approve the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2).
- Approve the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 3).
- Noted the award of retrospective STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 4).
- Noted the process changes detailed in Section 6.0 Procurement Governance – STAs:

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
To provide automatic patching of non-Windows software	Up to 3 years	£43,533	P Gribben	Software to help reduce the risk of a serious cyber security attack or a significant data breach.
Renewal of Server and Cloud Enrolment (SCE) agreement with Microsoft for the use of SQL Database products	Up to 3 years	£90,000	P Gribben	Licensing agreement to allow the use of Microsoft SQL Database products (and any future releases) as well as entitling the Council

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				to raise support calls if needed
Hire of 2 x RCV 18ton vehicles	Up to 1 year	£105,560	D Sales	Continue hire of 2x 18t RCV's to pilot trail to gain access to narrow streets in Belfast.
Supply of procurement cards	Up to 5 years	£1,123,500	T Wallace	Used for expenditure that cannot be procured through finance system ordering processes i.e. online or low value purchases. Use of cards generates 1% cashback (approx. £3k p.a.)
Appointment of a public analyst	Up to 4 years	£294,000	S Toland	The Food Safety (NI) Order 1991 (Article 27 (1)) requires the Council to appoint suitably qualified persons as Public Analysts within the district of the Council, for the purpose of examining and analysing food samples to determine compliance with food safety, compositional and labelling requirements. Joint procurement exercise being overseen by Antrim and Newtownabbey Council on behalf of all 11 local councils

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason
Housing Benefit system (iWorld) for NIHE	Up to 2 years	£759,329	S McNicholl	The EDRM and Housing Benefits systems are used by NI Housing Executive and are proprietary as the system has been developed to	NEC Software Solutions UK Ltd	3. Technical reasons

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				meet NI legislative requirements. (DM & iWorld). This STA is to cover the continued use of this system. This is fully funded by NIHE.		
Broadcast system for Committee rooms	Up to 5 years	£120,000	S McNicholl	Provision of end-to-end services and support (hardware, software and connectivity) to allow both committee and council meetings to be broadcast over the internet to members of the public. This solution integrates directly with the the Modern.gov committee management software. The upgraded broadcasting setup will integrate with the current meeting room audio-visual equipment and any future room setup. Public-I Group is only supplier available who are fully integrated with	Public-I Group	7. Technical characteristics

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				modern.gov for public broadcasting		
Support and maintenance of PTX software and associated transform package	Up to 4 years	£142,000	S McNicholl	PTX has recently been configured for compatibility with the new E5 Finance system. This STA is to cover the continued use of this system. Changes in supplier would result in new system configuration, significant additional costs and lead to a break in payments services	Bottomline Technologies	7. Technical characteristics
MTU air conditioning repair, maintenance & minor works	Up to 3 months	£15,000	S Grimes	STA required to ensure continuity of services whilst a re-tender exercise is complete. Resourcing issues within the Property Maintenance Unit which has led to the delay in the tender being renewed within the normal timeframe. Note - Contract expired 14/06/2024; retrospective spend for 9 months at	BL Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Ltd	11. Other

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				£45,000; remaining contract duration up to 3 months at £15,000 – see Table 4.		
MTC for fire & intruder repair, maintenance & minor works	Up to 3 months	£18,000	S Grimes	STA required to ensure continuity of services whilst a re-tender exercise is complete. Resourcing issues within the Property Maintenance Unit which has led to the delay in the tender being renewed within the normal timeframe. Note - Contract expired 31/01/2024; retrospective spend for 13 months at £77k; remaining contract duration up 3 months at £18k – see Table 4	Radiocontact Ltd	11. Other
MTC High level lighting repair, maintenance & minor works	Up to 3 months	£32,000	S Grimes	STA required to ensure continuity of services whilst a re-tender exercise is complete. Resourcing issues within the Property Maintenance	Braham Electrical Ltd	11. Other

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				Unit which has led to the delay in the tender being renewed within the normal timeframe. Note - Contract expired 12/09/2024; retrospective spend for 6 months at £63k; remaining contract duration up 3 months at £32k – see Table 4.		
MTC Roller Shutter 24/7 callout services and repairs	Up to 2 months	£8,000	S Grimes	STA required to ensure continuity of services whilst a re-tender exercise is complete. Resourcing issues within the Property Maintenance Unit which has led to the delay in the tender being renewed within the normal timeframe. Note - Contract expired 31/12/2023; retrospective spend for 13 months at £52k; remaining contract	DW Industrial Doors	11. Other

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				duration up 2 month at £8k – see Table 4.		
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Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Current Contract Duration	Modification (Period & Est. Value)	SRO	Description	Supplier
MTC installation of new soft floor covering for repairs, maintenance & minor works	Up to 3 years	Additional 3 months and £15,000	S Grimes	Extension required to ensure continuity of service until the new tender is in place.	JJ Hennebry & Sons Ltd
MTC for swimming pools filtration systems repair, maintenance & minor works	Up to 3 years	Additional 5 months and £80,000	S Grimes	Extension required to ensure continuity of service and meet legislative maintenance requirements until the new tender is in place.	WJM Building Services Ltd
T1856 provision of a facilities management service at the Mary Peters Track	Up to 6.5 years	Additional 1 year and £160,049	S Leonard	Contract extension of 1 year is required to allow sufficient time for Council to complete stakeholder engagement, as requested by PGL. And allow time to explore alternative management options for the site following the stakeholder engagement. The original contract expiry date was 30/09/2023. 6 months extension and £65,000 approved by SP&R in Aug 23. 6 months extension and £110,073.50 approved by SP&R in Mar 24. 6 months extension and £80,024.50	Athletics NI

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				approved by SP&R in Aug 24.	
Supply and delivery of paint and sundries	Up to 4 years	Additional 4 months and £6,000	S Grimes	Extension required to ensure continuity of supplies until the new tender is in place.	PPG Architectural Coatings UK Ltd

Table 4: Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Title of Contract	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason
MTU air conditioning repair, maintenance & minor works	Up to 9 months	£45,000	S Grimes	STA required to ensure continuity of services whilst a re-tender exercise is complete. Resourcing issues within the Property Maintenance Unit which has led to the delay in the tender being renewed within the normal timeframe. Note - Contract expired 14/06/2024; retrospective spend for 9 months at £45,000; remaining contract duration up to 3 months at £15,000 – see Table 2.	BL Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Ltd	11. Other
MTC for fire & intruder repair, maintenance & minor works	Up to 13 months	£77,000	S Grimes	STA required to ensure continuity of services whilst a re-tender	Radiocontact	11. Other

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				<p>exercise is complete. Resourcing issues within the Property Maintenance Unit which has led to the delay in the tender being renewed within the normal timeframe.</p> <p>Note - Contract expired 31/01/2024; retrospective spend for 13 months at £77k; remaining contract duration up 3 months at £18k – see Table 4</p>		
MTC high level lighting repair, maintenance & minor works	Up to 6 months	£63,000	S Grimes	<p>STA required to ensure continuity of services whilst a re-tender exercise is complete. Resourcing issues within the Property Maintenance Unit which has led to the delay in the tender being renewed within the normal timeframe.</p> <p>Note - Contract expired 12/09/2024;</p>	Braham Ltd	11. Other

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				retrospective spend for 6 months at £63k; remaining contract duration up 3 months at £32k – see Table 4.		
MTC roller shutter 24/7 callout services and repairs	Up to 13 months	£52,000	S Grimes	STA required to ensure continuity of services whilst a re-tender exercise is complete. Resourcing issues within the Property Maintenance Unit which has led to the delay in the tender being renewed within the normal timeframe. Note - Contract expired 31/12/2023; retrospective spend for 13 months at £52k; remaining contract duration up 2 months at £8k – see Table 4.	DW Industrial Doors	11. Other

Commercial and Procurement Services
Social Value Working Group update

The Committee noted the Social Value Procurement Policy ‘SVPP’ Delivery Report.

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Equality and Good Relations

**Minutes of Shared City Partnership
Meeting on 10th February 2025**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 10th February 2025 including:

**Presentation from the Red Cross - PeacePlus
Right Support: Right Time Project**

- Presentation deferred until a further SCP Meeting.

Update on Community Recovery Fund

- The Partnership noted an update regarding the amendments to the Community Recovery Action Plan as agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee S & R on 27th January 2025.

PEACE IV – Secretariat Update

- The Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the contents of the report.

**PEACEPLUS Belfast City Council
Local Community Action Plan – Update**

- The Partnership noted the contents of the report and agreed to delegate authority to the PEACE Programme Manager and Lead Officer to approve administrative changes to projects, as part of the change control process the PEACEPLUS Programme risk register as detailed in Appendix III and recommends that the Strategic Policy and Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report and agree recommendations above.

Update from Partnership Members

- There was no update from SCP Members.

AOB

- The Good Relations Manager welcomed Melanie Holmes-Watson as the new recently appointed Good Relations Officer
- Members agreed to undertake a walking tour of the Forth Meadow Greenway on Thursday, 27th March.

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Operational Issues

**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	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
Choice Housing Ireland	8 April 2025	Celebration of Achievement for courses and volunteering completed as part of investment in the community and leadership programme. Numbers attending: 50	C & D	None	
Belfast Buildings Trust	2 May 2025	Grand Final of the Northern Ireland Schools Debating Competition that encourages debate and civic engagement in young people attracting 80 teams during the competition. Numbers attending: 140	D	None	
Relatives for Justice	19 May 2025	Launch of a new "Remembering Quilt" - a series of quilts handcrafted by families affected by the conflict to remember those who lost their lives, representing their stories,	C	None	

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
		memories, and the legacy they leave behind. Numbers attending – 150			
Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)	20 May 2025	25-year anniversary of PEACE programmes – lunch and speeches to reflect and sharing insights of the past 25 years and lessons learned. Numbers attending – 50 - 100.	C	None	Tea and Coffee Reception as significant anniversary
Now Group	4 June 2025	Now Graduation Ceremony - annual celebration of the work of trainees supported by the Now Group and completion of the training programme. Numbers attending – 300 - 400	D	None	
Belfast Trust Carer Support Service	9 June 2025	Launch of Belfast Trust Carers Strategy and Celebration of Carers Week 2025 – celebrate and raise	C	Room hire £450	

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
		awareness of the contribution unpaid carers give to the Trust and how trust will support them. Numbers attending: 100			
Queen's University Belfast Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences	7 August 2025	International Summer School Gala Dinner to mark the end of a three-week International Summer School hosted QUB- drinks reception and dinner and certificate presentation. Numbers attending: 60 - 120	A, B and C	Under review to be determined by City Solicitor under delegated authority	
Contact Centre Network NI	6 November 2025	CCNNI Awards 2025 Drinks Reception, Awards, Dinner and entertainment for customer service industry. Numbers attending: 250 – 300	B & D	Under review to be determined by City Solicitor under delegated authority	
Samaritans	18 November 2025	10th Anniversary of Free Call service and achievements of volunteers – reception and speeches from	C	None	Tea and Coffee Reception as significant anniversary

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
		volunteers and those people helped by Samaritans. Numbers attending: 150			
Queen's University Belfast Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences	13 December 2025	Northeastern University Farewell Dinner 150 US students who have participated in the N.U.in Programme linked Sister City partnership with Boston. Numbers attending: 150	A & B	Under review to be determined by City Solicitor under delegated authority	
The Scout Association, Northern Ireland Scout Council	9 January 2026	Chief Scout's Award and Queen's Scout Award Presentation – 120 young people receiving awards and attending a reception. Numbers attending – 500	B & D	Under review to be determined by City Solicitor under delegated authority	
Belfast University of the Third Age	26 February 2026	Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of Belfast u3a Drinks Reception, Dinner, Presentations, and entertainment.	C	Under review to be determined by City Solicitor under delegated authority	Drinks Reception as significant anniversary

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
		Numbers attending – 240 - 260			
International Cancer Imaging Society	24 September 2026	Conference Dinner for the: 25th International Cancer Imaging Society Annual Conference for guests attending 3-day conference at Europa Hotel. Numbers attending: 150 - 200	A & B	Under review to be determined by City Solicitor under delegated authority	
Belmont Bowling Club	20 August 2027	150th Anniversary Celebration Drinks Reception, Dinner, Presentations, and entertainment. Numbers attending: 330 - 360	C & D	None	Drinks Reception as significant anniversary

**Request for the Use of City Hall Grounds -
OrangeFest – 12th July 2025**

The Committee was reminded that requests for the use of City Hall and its grounds are normally dealt with under the authority delegated by the Committee to the Director of Legal and Civic Services using criteria agreed for this purpose. Occasionally, however, it was necessary to place such requests directly before the Committee, and the request set out below falls into this category.

The proposed event 'OrangeFest' would take place on the front west lawn only and areas such as the East Lawn, the Titanic Garden and Cenotaph would remain open to the public. Access to the City Hall building would not be affected. It would involve a number of

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stalls in City Hall grounds. The organisers' estimate of attendance was 3,000 to 5,000 people.

The event would be free to enter. The organiser would provide stewarding/marshalling staff and first aiders and would comply with the Council's standard conditions for hire etc.

The Committee was also advised that, for many years, the Orange Order had used the Cenotaph for a short commemorative ceremony on the morning of the main parade, following which participants re-join the main parade, and this would be the case again on 12th July 2025.

The Committee:

1. Authorised the use of City Hall grounds on 12th July 2025 for Orange Fest (*subject to securing funding*); and
2. Authorised the event to take place on the basis of submission of an event management plan and risk assessment and appointment of an event controller to ensure delivery of a safe public event.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the City Hall/
City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group of 12th February.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Social
Policy Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Social Policy Working Group of 11th February.

**Attendance at the Northern Ireland
Local Government Association Awards**

The Committee granted approval for the booking of up to two tables at the NILGA Awards and authorised the attendance of 1 representative of each of the Parties, together with the appropriate Council officers.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the City
Regeneration Members Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the City Regeneration Members Working Group of 29th January.

Chairperson

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 4th February, 2025

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor R. Brooks (Chairperson);
Councillors Abernethy, Bell, Black, Bower,
Bradley, Bunting, Canavan, Cobain, M. Donnelly,
R-M Donnelly, Flynn, Garrett, Magee, Maghie,
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 Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Doherty.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 14th and 29th January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd February, subject to an amendment to the minute under the heading 'Parks Opening Hours – Consultations' in that the Council agreed that officers would investigate the feasibility of adding the Botanic Gardens those the parks within the scope of the consultation exercise.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Black declared an interest in item 5 (d), 'Independently Managed Community Centres', in that she was the manager of Grosvenor Recreation Centre. Councillor I. McLaughlin declared an interest in the same item in that he was a member of the committee of Denmark Street Community Centre. Both Members left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Matter referred back by the Council/Notices of Motion

Notice of Motion - Vital Role of Trees

The Committee considered the above-mentioned notice of motion which, in accordance with Standing Order 13 (f), had been referred for consideration by the Standards and Business Committee at its meeting on 7th January.

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The Committee agreed to adopt the undernoted motion, which was moved at the meeting by Councillor Abernethy and seconded by Councillor Maghie. The wording below the original motion (in bold), which was proposed in addition by Councillor Abernethy, was, with the permission of the Committee, added to the original motion:

"This Council recognises the vital role of trees in enhancing the health and well-being of people and communities, addressing climate change, and supporting biodiversity; commits to raising awareness among residents about these benefits and to actively support efforts to plant and protect the right trees in the right places and for the right reasons, ensuring that everyone can share in the benefits trees provide; and, will commit to exploring how we can educate and raise awareness of trees, the role they play in all our lives across Belfast.

In addition, the Committee agrees that officers would submit a report which would provide the following:

- ***an update on the Tree Strategy, including the 'One Million Trees' initiative;***
- ***seek to identify sites within the Council's estate where additional trees and plant could be maintained; and***
- ***an outline as to how communities and electoral areas could become involved further in the life of trees in our city."***

Notices of Motion – Update

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the notices of motion/issues raised in advance which had been referred to it for consideration. It was reported that there were 42 active matters which fell under the Committee's remit, an overview in respect of which was appended to the report. The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services spoke to the report and gave an overview of 14 specific items and outlined the actions which had been taken to date to address the proposals contained therein.

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor Maghie and

Resolved – that the Committee agrees to the closure of 14 notices of motion/issues raised in advance, as outlined in the associated report, with the exception of item 363, viz., 'Biodiversity in the Council's Parks and Open Spaces', to enable further work to be undertaken, particularly regarding the habitat and species selection of the trees to be used in the implementation of the Council's biodiversity programme.

Restricted Matter

The information contained in the reports associated with the following three 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 of the following item as, due to the nature

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of the item, 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.

**Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium
Working Group – Update**

The Committee considered a report in the above-mentioned matter and agreed to approve the minutes of the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group of 15th January, and to the following course of action:

- that the pilot events at Friar's Bush would continue as outlined; and
- that historic cemeteries would be added to the capital programme as an emerging project and that further considerations would be explored by the relevant departments.

Committee/Strategic Issues

Best Kept Awards - Request for Funding

The Director of Resources, Fleet, Open Spaces and Streetscene reminded the Committee that the Best Kept Awards were administered annually by the Northern Ireland Amenity Council. At present, he added, the Council provided funding to the awards in the sum of £2,300, a figure which had remained unchanged since 2015. He reported that correspondence had been received from the organisers requesting that Committee consider, given prevailing budgetary and inflationary pressures, increasing its contribution to £3,000 for the financial year 2025/26.

The Committee acceded to the request.

Arising from discussion, in response to a Member's suggestion, it was agreed, given the positive community benefits associated with the awards' scheme, that officers would endeavour to highlight the scheme amongst local communities to encourage further participation and involvement.

**Proposed Workshop - Waste Access
and Acceptance Policy**

The Committee agreed to host a workshop in this matter in the Lavery Room, City Hall, on Wednesday 5th March at 5.15 pm. It was noted that all Members of the Council would be invited to attend.

Operational Issues

Alleygates Phase 5 – Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Alleygate Phase V Programme.**

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report and approve the enacting of the legislation.**

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 Progress has been made with the commencement of the installation of Phase 5a. There had been logistical issues for the contractor in December as they attempted to get vehicles and plant to the locations due to parked cars and traffic.**
- 3.2 The Notice of Intention for those streets meeting the threshold in Phase 5b was advertised on Friday 29th of November for the period of 30 days, for representations and objections.**
- 3.3 There were three representations made, two regarding the locations of the gates one asking for assistance in securing an additional entrance into the alleyway. These representations have been acknowledged and resolved.**
- 3.4 There were two objections received to the Phase 5b Notice of intention. One citing: Rights of way, consideration of alternatives for gates and the impact of alleygates on cyclists and the lack of cycling lane provision on street. This included a petition for cycling lanes to be implemented within the area. The second cited the location of gate to the side of the property and a perceived problem with the retrieval of bins following the installation of gates.**
- 3.5 An Officer has emailed the objector in Walmer Street to inform them that cycling lanes are not the remit of Belfast City Council, however we will write to the Department for Infrastructure and consult with colleagues in the active travel unit, to highlight residents' concerns, regarding cycling within the Ormeau area. However, it is our belief that the gates will benefit the whole community at this location and assist in reducing ASB. It should be noted that the majority of those signing the petition lived outside the Walmer Street area. We have had no further correspondence from the objector.**
- 3.6 A letter to the objector in Northwood Street was sent to update them that the location of the gate would be set back to a point within the alleyway beyond the low wall and out of the sight of the objector. It was also noted that we would work with our colleagues in Waste Management to overcome any issues regarding the retrieval of bins following their collections. Further correspondence was received from the objector and discussions are ongoing with them in an attempt to allay their concerns.**

- 3.7** Legal Services have confirmed that the guidance for promoters of Alleygate schemes (Part 6A of the Roads (NI) Order 1993) has been followed correctly. The guidelines note “Genuine concerns of crime and ASB should generally outweigh opposition from those non-residents”; the “right of way will only be suspended rather than revoked under this legislation” and the road “facilitates crime or antisocial behaviour.” No objections have been received from service providers or any owners of cables, wires, mains, pipes, or any other apparatus and therefore do not need to hold a local inquiry, under the DfI guidance. Members should note that these objectors still could Judicially Review the process should they remain unhappy.
- 3.8** Belfast City Council are not legally required to conduct a local inquiry as no objections have been received from service providers or any owners of cables, wires, mains, pipes, or any other apparatus in accordance with the legislation and associated guidance. Furthermore, as indicated in the guidance, as most of the objections received are from persons outside the affected streets, the prevalence of crime and ASB outweighs opposition from non-residents. To this extent Officers are proposing that the gating order be enacted.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.9** All associated costs are covered within existing budget estimates.

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

- 3.10** No Good Relations or Equality issues.”

In response to Members’ queries in relation to an estimated timescale for the installation of the gates, officers indicated that, subsequent to the enacting of the legislation, there would be an indicative timeframe of four to six months.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed to the enacting of the legislation as recommended.

Summer Schemes - Additional Needs Requirements

The Committee deferred consideration of the above-mentioned report and agreed, given the limited timescales associated with delivering financial support, that a request be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 21st February, to examine existing Council underspends with a view to increasing, from £80,000 to £120,000, the sum provided to support children with additional needs attending the Council’s summer schemes in 2025.

It was noted that officers would examine existing data to identify the types of additional needs supported through the summer schemes and where the greatest need existed across

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the city. Officers noted also several comments which were made in relation to the feasibility of providing funding towards personal care services within the overall funding criteria.

Community Summer Schemes

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of a report in the above-mentioned matter to enable officers to draft a further report that would examine a range of charging options/schemes for consideration, which would reflect those outlined/suggested by Members at the meeting.

It was noted that that the reconsidered report would be submitted, if deemed necessary, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration, given the associated timescales.

Independently-Managed Community Centres Funding

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To seek authority to pay:

- Independently Managed Community Centres (IMCCs) awards for the 2024/25 funding period
- An annual Consumer Price Index increase (CPI) award to IMCCs.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 That authority is given to:

- pay annual revenue awards for the 2025/26 funding period to seven IMCC's including the annual CPI increase. Award amounts will increase each year requiring Committee authorisation.
- Make separate payments of the CPI increase where applicable following its confirmation April/May 2025.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

- 3.1 Members will recall Council has long standing arrangements in place to provide financial support to 7 Council community centres that are managed independently by the community sector.
- 3.2 As part of the rate setting process for 2020/21, Committee agreed the allocation to IMCC's would be subject annually to any CPI increase to be applied on issue of Letter of Offer.

However, as CPI details may not be available until April/May 2025 some CPI payments will be paid separately from the award. A clause will be included in all funding agreements to allow for the processing of the CPI increase payment when the details are available.

- 3.3 The 2024/25 individual allocations to IMCC's are below. CPI increase to be added when available April/May 2025.

<u>Independently Managed Centres</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Shaftesbury Recreation Centre	£71,552.46
Grosvenor Recreation Centre	£71,552.46
Ballymacarrett Recreation Centre	£71,552.46
Denmark Street Community Centre	£24,811.86
Carrick Hill Community Centre	£39,485.03
Sally Gardens	£71,552.46
Hanwood Trust	£71,552.46
Total	£422,059.19

Compliance with reporting requirements

- 3.4 The offer of award listed for Ballymacarrett Recreation Centre will be subject to the Agreement Holder complying with the reporting requirements from the 2024 – 2025 Letter of Offer. Officers continue to offer support to the organisation; however, Council has not received the appropriate reporting returns to enable payment of any of the 2024 – 2025 funding. Officers have written to the Agreement holders reminding them of their responsibilities and the risk to their funding and future implications.

Financial Implications

- 3.5 Annual awards to IMCC's including CPI are contained within approved budgets and factored into future budgeting/forecasting processes.

Equality or Good Relations Implications
and Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.6 This will be considered throughout and any appropriate issues highlighted to Members. Any amendments to existing scheme or new scheme will be considered in the context of any equality/Good Relations and rural needs considerations."

The Committee agreed to award the revenue funding to the centres as outlined within the recommendation and also to make separate consumer price increases (CPI), when and where applicable, following confirmation of CPI IN 2025. It was agreed also that a review be undertaken of the Council-used funding model in this regard.

**Expansion of Glass Collections / Introduction of
Smaller Vehicles for Difficult to Access Streets**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the roll out of the first phase of the expansion of glass collections which commenced on 27th January 2025.**

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are requested to note the contents of the report.**

3.0 Main Report

Expansion of Kerbside glass collections

- 3.1 Members will be aware of the ongoing work to deliver phase 1 of the expansion of the kerbside glass collection scheme. As previously reported, this phase will cover approximately 23,000 households in the east, south and west of the city, including the circa 3000 LGR transfer households who were switched to a blue bin scheme during the Local Government Reform transfer and therefore their kerbside glass service was discontinued at that time.**
- 3.2 The project, which is part funded by DAERA, intends to expand the service to all remaining Council Households in phases 2 and 3 in 2025/26 and 2026/27, subject to further funding being agreed by Council.**
- 3.3 The project will improve access to kerbside services and increase the amount of household waste that can be recycled and drive improved circularity of materials, which will be processed locally in Northern Ireland.**
- 3.4 The current kerbside glass service will be expanded to include two additional vehicles and two additional crews. They will collect 44 litre boxes from households and shared 240 litre communal glass bins from apartments every two weeks. Each crew and vehicle will service 10 routes across a fortnightly cycle, meaning**

20 additional routes in total. A total of 22,597 households will receive glass collections as part of this expansion phase.

Individual Households

- 3.5 The Resource and Fleet Service began the operational rollout of the expanded service on 27th January 2025. For all of the service expansion for individual households there will be a rollout plan with three elements
- Firstly, The Resource Advisor Team will begin hand delivering communications to every address, in route onboarding sequence to residents, outlining how the scheme works when to expect their new container and when to expect their first collection.
 - Next the BCC contractor will deliver 44 litre boxes to households within 3-6 working days after letters are delivered. The boxes delivered will also contain a leaflet giving more information and QR code if needed, which will allow the resident to check their collection day. Corporate Comms will also provide communications support through social media and web updates.
 - Finally, collections will begin. For those residents receiving letters week commencing 27th of January, glass collections will commence on 10th February. It is envisaged that all individual households will be fully onboarded and receiving fortnightly collections by week commencing 7th March.

Apartments

- 3.6 In relation to apartments, those apartments within phase 1 which have already been assessed in advance to have communal bins, will be onboarded separately.
- 3.7 The BCC contractor will deliver bins to these 72 sites week commencing Monday 3rd March with communications rolled out to sites by the Resource Advisor team. The apartments collections will commence between 10th March and 21st March. After this point, the service will be fully onboarded and become “business as usual”.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.8 In relation to the expansion of glass collections, DAERA will 50/50 match fund the agreed capital requirements as agreed in their Letter of Offer, subject to the Memorandum of Understanding having been agreed by the Council.

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

3.9 None.”

Regarding the locations to be chosen for years two and three of the scheme, the Committee was advised that a report would be submitted for its consideration in due course.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and welcomed the extension of the schemes as outlined therein.

**Temporary Closure of Park Road
and Palmerstown Recycling Centres**

The Committee considered a report which outlined the arrangements that would be put place during the temporary closures to facilitate repairs to the concrete bays at the above-mentioned sites. It was noted that it was anticipated that work in respect of the Park Road site would take place between 16th February and 9th March, with work at the Palmerstown site to be conducted between 9th and 31st March inclusive.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and the alternative arrangements that would put in place for residents to avail of during the closure of the affected sites.

Arising from discussion, officers undertook to ensure that information regarding missed bin collections would continue to be circulated to Members on a daily basis.

Requests to Host Events in Parks

The Committee considered a report which outlined details of a number of applications which had been submitted seeking permission to host events in the Council's parks and open spaces. After discussion, permission was granted for the hosting of the following events within the Council's parks and open spaces in 2025, further details in respect of which were contained within the associated report:

- Belfast Children's Festival Family Day Out - Cathedral Gardens
- CardioSoc Colour Run – Ormeau Park
- Bloomfield Gospel Hall Gospel Outreach - Dixon Playing Fields
- Darkness into Light – Ormeau Park
- 24-Hour Run – Victoria Park
- Belfast Memory Walk – Ormeau Park
- Autism NI Colour Run – Ormeau Park

The Committee granted approval for the events as outlined. It was agreed also that delegated authority be granted to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to oversee and manage the legal and contractual stipulations as set out within the report regarding the hosting of the events.

Public Rights of Way - Clarification re: Council's Legal Powers

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 10th September, 2024, it had agreed, in principle, to assert three Public Rights of Way, those being from Upper Malone Road to Old Coach Road; from Old Coach Road to Malone Heights; and from Old Coach Road to Malone Playing Fields. That decision had been subject to legal clarification being sought regarding the Council's ability to maintain the surfaces and keep the aforementioned right of ways clear and accessible.

The Committee considered a report in this regard which confirmed that the Council was statutorily required to assert the aforementioned rights of way as set out. In addition, under Article 3 of the Access to the Countryside (Northern Ireland) Order 1983, councils were statutorily bound to ensure that a public right of way was clear and accessible. However, councils were not statutorily bound to maintain such public rights of way, other than being obliged to ensure that they were clear and accessible, and, for such purposes, consultation must be undertaken with the relevant landowner and adjoining properties.

Noted.

Applications for the Naming of New Streets

The Committee agreed to grant applications to name new streets as Ben Madigan Mews and Ben Madigan Way.

Applications for Dual Language Street Signs

The Committee agreed to the erection of second street nameplates, in Irish, at Lismoyne Park, Slievecoole Park, Mooreland Park, Riverdale Gardens, Riverdale Park South, Riverdale Park Avenue, Orchardville Crescent, Brooke Park, Ladybrook Parade, Broom Drive, Cliftonville Road and Old Throne Park.

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of an application regarding Malone Valley Park, to enable it to be reconsidered once the applications already received had been processed. It was noted that a report, as previously requested, outlining best practice in considering such deferred applications would be submitted to the Committee for its consideration in March.

**Transfer of Landlord Registration
Scheme to Local Councils**

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an update on the arrangements to be put in place to oversee the transfer of the landlord registration scheme from the Department for Communities to local councils, a function which would be overseen by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council.

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Issues Raised in Advance

Dilapidated/Dangerous Buildings in Belfast

The Committee noted the contents of a report, which had been requested by the Chairperson, in relation to the above-mentioned matter, together with an overview of an initial assessment which had been undertaken by Council officers regarding the damage caused to properties in the city as a result of Storm Éowyn on 24th January.

It was noted that a further report in this regard would be submitted for consideration in due course.

**Request to Erect a Memorial Tree -
Ruby Murray Village Green**

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor Kelly addressed the Committee, and referred to the recent passing of Mr. Trevor Greer, a long-standing community worker within the Greater Village area. She explained that representatives from within the local community had approached her to request that authority be granted to erect a memorial tree within the Ruby Murray Village Green as a tribute to the work undertaken by Mr. Greer.

It was proposed by Councillor Bunting, seconded by Councillor McLaughlin, and agreed that officers would submit a report to the Committee's meeting in March in respect of the request.

Family Parking at GLL Leisure Centres

At the request of Councillor Maghie, officers undertook provide a report in this regard for consideration at a future meeting.

Animal Welfare Services

(Prior to considering this item, the Committee resolved, given that the information related to an individual, that this matter be treated as exempt information, as specified within Section 42 (4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.)

The Committee noted information which had been provided by Councillor Verner and the Director of City Services' comments thereon.

Presentations

The Committee noted that both the Irish Football Foundation and Greenwich Leisure Limited would be in attendance to make presentations at the meeting scheduled for Tuesday 4th March.

Chairperson

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 18th February, 2025

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

In attendance: Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Mr. D. Bone, City Services Manager;
Ms. V. Donnelly, City Protection Manager;
Ms. P. Conway, Development Manager; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

Apology

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Abernethy.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Housing Investment Plan 2024/25 Update

The Committee was informed that Mr. L. Gunn (Regional Manager), Ms. F. McGrath (Head of Belfast Place Shaping) and Mr. B. O'Kane (Assistant Director of Housing Services) were in attendance to provide an update on behalf of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on its Housing Investment Plan for Belfast 2024/25.

The Head of Belfast Place Shaping informed the Committee that, as of the date of the meeting, there had been 297 social housing units completed as part of the 2024/25 plan, details in respect of which were set out within the associated report. In addition, 1,503 social housing units were currently under construction, whilst 1,738 social housing units were programmed to commence by the end of the 2026/27 period. The programme for 2025/26 to 2027/28 was progressing and it was envisaged that further schemes would be added within the Council area in due course, subject to departmental/ministerial approval.

The Committee was presented with the latest figures, as of September 2024, regarding the current waiting lists for social housing within the Belfast area. These were recorded within the Westminster parliamentary constituencies and were as follows: Belfast North (4721), Belfast South (3878), Belfast East (2533) and Belfast West (4398). In respect of the aforementioned figures, the applicants therein who were deemed to be in 'housing stress', in that they had in excess of 30 waiting list points, were as follows: Belfast North (3819), Belfast South (3156), Belfast East (1904) and Belfast West (3738).

Mr. Gunn and Ms. McGrath then outlined a range of answers that had been provided to questions which had been forwarded in advance by Members, copies of which had been

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circulated prior to the meeting. In response to several further issues raised during discussion, the NIHE representatives confirmed:

- that further details would be provided in relation to the proposals contained within the Tullycarnet Place Shaping Plan, specifically in respect of the projected timescales for the demolition of the flats in Tullycarnet. In addition, further information would be provided regarding street signage issues raised regarding the Ardgreenan and Wandsworth areas;
- that the NIHE Chief Executive had recently authorised the implementation of an interim staffing structure within the Housing Solutions Team, which would see resources increase from 100 to 130 persons to address current administrative pressures within the service and that recruitment was ongoing in this regard;
- that further information would be provided on delays encountered in the provision of replacement kitchens, due to unauthorised internal structural changes having been undertaken within properties. Mr. Gunn undertook to liaise with the Director of Assets Management in this matter;
- that NIHE was investigating the provision of additional 'Category 1' housing developments across Belfast, viz., self-contained accommodation for older people, and that clarity would be provided for such plans within specific areas should Members submit enquiries to NIHE representatives;
- that, further to a previous expression of interest exercise undertaken to gauge interest in the number of applicants wishing to be considered for housing within city-centre living developments, as envisaged within the Belfast Agenda, the collation of a further waiting list would commence in the late spring. All current applicants would be contacted at that time. It was noted that such developments were subject a range of factors, including land acquisition;
- that the number of social housing units sold by NIHE in 2024/25 stood at approximately 60, and that further information regarding those sold within the inner east Belfast area would be provided in due course; and
- that the site of the former Sirocco Works remained within the current programme as a location for affordable housing development. Whilst the site had received outline planning permission for social housing, there was currently no housing association progressing that aspect of the development due to wider ongoing issues with the site as a whole.

The Chairperson thanked the NIHE representatives for attending and the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Chairperson

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 5th February, 2025

HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Nelson (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor McCormick;
Alderman Lawlor; and
Councillors Black, de Faoite, D. Douglas, Duffy,
Harvey, Kelly, Lyons, Maskey, F. McAteer, McCabe,
McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKay,
I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, O'Neill and Smyth.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager;
Ms. L. O'Donnell, Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism;
Ms. L. Toland, Senior Manager, Economy;
Mr. F. Grant, Assets Development Manager; and
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 15th and 29th January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd February.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor R. McLaughlin declared an interest in item 3(a) Request to Present – Belfast Harbour Commissioners – Corporate Strategy 2025-2029, in that he was on the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following seven 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 of the following items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt

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information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Members were also reminded that the content of 'restricted' reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as 'confidential information' and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

Housing Led Regeneration Update

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided the Committee with an update on a number of strands within the Housing Led Regeneration programme of work, including phase 2 of the Strategic Site Assessments, potential delivery routes, cluster sites and placemaking plans, the Inner North West Development Brief and the appointment of a Private Sector Delivery Partner to work with the Council on the programme.

The Committee:

- i. noted the update in respect of the Strategic Site Assessments Phase 2 – Citywide;
- ii. agreed that an initial tranche of 11 sites would be brought forward for consideration for housing led regeneration purposes;
- iii. noted that a report would be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 21st February, which would seek approval to progress further the programme of work, and that further updates would be brought back to the Committee as the work progressed;
- iv. noted that the detail in respect of the delivery route for individual sites would be subject to further consideration and Committee approval;
- v. noted the update in relation to the placemaking opportunities/plans through the work of the Housing Led Regeneration Group, and that further updates would be brought back to the Committee;
- vi. noted that the evaluation process had been completed for the Inner North West Development Brief and that a report, that included a recommendation to award a Preferred Housing Association Developer, would be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 21st February; and
- vii. noted the update in respect of the appointment of a Private Sector Partner to work in partnership with the Council and the next steps in respect of the finalisation of the Strategic Partnership Agreement and that further reports would be brought back to Committee in relation to governance and engagement.

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Vacant to Vibrant Scheme

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided the Committee with an update on the Vacant to Vibrant Programme which sought approval for a recommendation from the Vacant to Vibrant assessment panel following the recent receipt and assessment of applications.

The Committee:

- i. agreed the recommended grant award, as outlined within section 3.21 of the report; and
- ii. noted the update in relation to the Vacant to Vibrant Programme and that it would be supporting up to 41 businesses to locate or expand into long term vacant units.

Belfast Bikes Performance Update - Quarter 3

The Senior Manager, Economy, provided the Committee with an update on the performance of Belfast Bikes for Year 10, Quarter 3 (October to December 2024) of the financial year.

During discussion, the Senior Manager, Economy, and the Assets Development Manager answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to usage, docking stations and vandalism of the Belfast Bikes.

After discussion, the Committee noted the update on the Belfast Bikes performance for Quarter 3.

Belfast Zoo Performance Update - Quarter 3

The Senior Manager, Economy, provided the Committee with an update on the performance of Belfast Zoo for Quarter 3 (October to December 2024) of the financial year.

During discussion, the Senior Manager, Economy, and the Assets Development Manager answered a range of questions in relation to the financial performance, staffing and Avian Influenza.

After discussion, the Committee noted the update on Belfast Zoo's performance for Quarter 3.

Belfast Zoo Scale of Charges 2025/26

The Committee considered a report that provided an update on a proposed scale of charges for Belfast Zoo for 2025/26, and a proposed date of implementation.

The Committee considered a recommendation to include a new facilitation charge within the annual scale of charges.

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The Committee:

- i. noted the price increases for existing categories of ticket types and products/services;
- ii. approved a new facilitation charge as outlined within section 3.5 of the report; and
- iii. agreed that all price increases would take effect from 1st April, 2025.

Neighbourhood Tourism Update

The Committee considered a report that provided an update on the development of the Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme which included recommendations for awards, findings and learnings.

The Committee was presented with several options to develop the programme further and Members highlighted the need to address North and South Belfast.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the updated findings of the Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme approach as contained within the report;
- ii. approved the recommended awards, as outlined within section 7.1 of the report and the associated next steps; and
- iii. agreed to proceed with further development of the Neighbourhood Tourism Programme as set out in Option 2, outlined within section 9.1 of the report.

Sandy Row Revitalisation Update

The Committee considered a report that provided an update on the ongoing work in respect of the Revitalisation Scheme for Sandy Row,

During discussion, a Member highlighted the need for engagement with all local representatives across the Botanic District Electoral Area. The Member also raised concerns in respect of consultation with local businesses, including ethnic minority owned businesses, and proposed that the issues raised be addressed through further engagement between the Council and local businesses.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted that the Department for Communities (DfC) was establishing a cross-departmental working group to bring forward collective actions to support businesses within the Sandy Row area;

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- ii. noted and agreed the proposal for DfC to fund the Council to deliver a revitalisation scheme for the Sandy Row area;
- iii. agreed that the Council design and deliver a Small Business Grant Scheme Programme in line with the report, and in conjunction with additional business support delivered through the Go Succeed Programme and that, given the urgency in bringing the support package to the area, officers continued to design the Small Business Grant Scheme Programme in conjunction with local representatives and to open the scheme to businesses as soon as possible, with further details on the scheme to be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee; and
- iv. agreed to defer consideration in respect of a Member's proposal for further engagement with businesses, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, so that legal advice could be provided on the matters raised.

Requests to Present

**Request to Present - Belfast Harbour
Commissioners – Corporate Strategy 2025-2029**

The Committee considered a request from the Belfast Harbour Commissioners (BHC) to present its Corporate Strategy 2025-2029 at a future meeting of the Committee.

The Committee also considered an invitation from BHC to visit a cruise vessel while it was in port.

The Committee:

- i. agreed to receive a presentation from the BHC on its Corporate Strategy 2025-2029, at a future special meeting of the Committee; and
- ii. accepted an invitation from BHC to visit a cruise vessel while it was in port.

**Request to Present - Department for Infrastructure -
York Street Interchange: Placemaking and Active
Travel Development**

The Committee agreed to receive a presentation from the Department for Infrastructure in relation to the York Street Interchange at a future special meeting of the Committee.

**Request to Present - Visit Belfast –
Annual Business Plan 2025/26**

The Committee agreed to receive a presentation from Visit Belfast on its Annual Business Plan for 2025-26 at the Committee meeting on 12th March, 2025.

Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

Active Travel Delivery Plan

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to highlight that the Active Travel Delivery Plan for NI is open for consultation until 28th February and to seek approval for the attached Council response to be submitted to the Department for Infrastructure. This paper also provides an update on the designs of the Island Street Active Travel and Traffic Calming Scheme that is being delivered as part of the Belfast Cycling Network and to seek approval for Council's response.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1** The Committee is asked to:

- i.** Note that the Department for Infrastructure is undertaking a public consultation on the NI Active Travel Delivery Plan and approve the draft consultation response provided in Appendix A of this report. The draft response will be submitted subject to Council ratification on the 3rd March 2025.
- ii.** Note the correspondence received from DfI as included within Appendix B1 of this report in relation to Island Street and the proposed designs for the scheme in Appendix B2.
- iii.** Agree the draft Council response to the designs for the Island Street Active Travel and Traffic Calming Scheme in Appendix B3 that is being delivered as part of the Belfast Cycling Network.

3.0 Background

The Department for Infrastructure has prepared a draft Active Travel Delivery Plan for Northern Ireland that will guide the delivery of active travel infrastructure for the next 10 years. A Consultation Event was held on the 13th November 2024 with provision for five BCC Members and Officers to attend, with

the feedback incorporated within the draft response as attached in Appendix A of this report.

- 3.1 Since the Belfast Cycling Network (BCN) was already published in 2021, [Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan 2022 – 31 | Department for Infrastructure](#), and is currently being rolled out as per the phasing within the BCN Delivery Plan, the draft Active Travel Delivery Plan that is out for consultation does not include the Belfast area, but rather the surrounding council areas. Officers feel that a response is warranted given the cross-council boundary area connectivity needs, along with the potential implications for the Belfast Cycle Network.
- 3.2 As the Consultation closing date is the 28th February, a draft response has been prepared by officers for feedback and approval by this Committee. The draft response will be submitted subject to Council Ratification on the 3rd March. Members can also submit an individual or Party responses via Citizen Space on the DfI website until 28th February: [ACTIVE TRAVEL DELIVERY PLAN CONSULTATION - NI Direct - Citizen Space](#).
- 3.3 In line with delivery of the Belfast Cycling Network, DfI has shared the designs of the Island Street Active Travel and Traffic Calming Scheme for comment as has been done previously with other schemes. This notice has been shared on the Members' portal on receipt. This paper sets out the proposed Council response for agreement by this Committee and is found in Appendix B3.
- 4.0 **Main Report**
- 4.1 The draft Active Travel Delivery Plan for Northern Ireland sets out the health, environmental, economic and social benefits of active travel and reinforces the potential for modal change since over one third of journeys in NI are less than two miles long and two thirds are less than five miles long. This reinforces the possibility for increased active travel as an option for many people and the opportunity to embrace healthier alternatives and create the conditions for more vibrant places where streets feel safer and there is improved air quality and reduced congestion.
- 4.2 The Belfast Cycling Network (BCN) and the Strategic Plan for Greenways are already in place and the Active Travel Delivery Plan aims to add to these existing strategies by providing a plan for active travel infrastructure for the rest of NI. Specifically, it sets out how DfI will prioritise and deliver high-quality active travel infrastructure in the urban and rural

settlements over the next ten years. Similar to the BCN, it aims to ensure that infrastructure is designed to be safe, accessible and interconnected, thus encouraging people to build active travel into their travel choices. The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is a key mechanism to support the delivery of the Active Travel Delivery Plan as well as the BCN and mandates the development of sectoral plans for transport which set a minimum spend of 10% on active travel from the overall transport budgets.

- 4.3 Given the importance of the provision of an Active Travel Network for Belfast, and for the wider region, along with the potential implications for the BCN contained within the Active Travel Delivery Plan it is important that Belfast City Council inputs into this consultation process. The draft consultation response is focused on a number of key points under the following headings that are summarised below, and the full response is in Appendix A.

- General comments
- Prioritisation: Connections to local schools, public transport and town centres
- Designing the Network
- Road space allocation and traffic management

4.4 General comments

In line with Belfast City Council's submission the Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan, we continue to advocate for connected active travel infrastructure which encourages active travel as a means for commuting and leisure opportunities. We have an ongoing collaboration with DfI regarding the delivery of both the BCN and Strategic Plan for Greenways (Council response submitted to then Department for Regional Development in June 2016) and, as appropriate, we would like to see further engagement as the regional plan is rolled out. We would also like to stress that the delivery of the Active Travel Delivery Plan, in terms of budget and timing, cannot be to the detriment of the implementation of the Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan (2022). Belfast City Council welcomes the progress to date on the short-term interventions of the BCN, however continue to stress the need to deliver high quality schemes quickly to address the level of underspend to date.

- 4.5 The Belfast Agenda (2024-2028) is the city's community plan and as part of the *Our Place* and *Our Planet* themes there is a priority focus on connectivity, active and sustainable travel and a strategic intent to support the production of sustainable forms of transport and low carbon innovation in transport

solutions with collaborative action plans in place to help drive delivery. Central to this is the delivery of the Eastern Transport Plan, the Local Development Plan and projects that support people to use sustainable travel and behavioural change projects that replace car journeys with active travel.

- 4.6 We note that this plan is NI-wide but want to reinforce the importance of connections across council areas, particularly concerning design, materials, routes and maintenance. The maintenance of the network is vital to ensure its continual usage and safety and the removal of debris, blockages and treatment during winter to support the free flow of use, especially on cycle routes.

4.7 Prioritisation: Connections to local schools, public transport and town centres

Council supports active travel connections to local schools, public transport and town centres and would highlight that the routes may need to vary in terms of potential users and the mix of travel modes. A mixed network of routes that offers choices for walking, wheeling, and cycling would cater to various abilities and provide options for commuting as well as leisure and recreation. We encourage consideration of interventions designed to prioritise the most vulnerable road users.

- 4.8 Regarding proposals for routes in our neighbouring councils (Antrim and Newtownabbey; Ards and North Down; and Lisburn and Castlereagh) the majority of routes connecting into Belfast are identified as *Future routes (10+ Years)*. Whilst we appreciate the need for prioritisation, connectivity across Council boundaries is vital to ensure seamless journeys and we would like to see the Department give more weight to those routes which would connect into the established Belfast active travel network, especially considering the significant potential user base that already exists in the populous Belfast Metropolitan Area.

4.9 Designing the Network

We support a people-centred design approach that is welcoming, accessible, inclusive and safe. Active travel routes have a role in place making; they are not only transport corridors but also focal points for communities that can stimulate social interaction and encourage investment. We welcome the commitment to high quality infrastructure that is appropriate to the situation and encourage the Department to ensure that the design includes climate resilience, incorporating green and blue infrastructure as possible that

can absorb carbon emissions and offer biodiversity and habitat creation.

- 4.10 We acknowledge that there is no one size fits all approach, but it would be helpful if the Department could issue guidance in terms of the design of cycle infrastructure and clarify the use of LTN 1/20 as best practice. We also request that design proposals be site-specific, carefully considering the unique needs of urban routes and proposing thoughtful interventions for recreational paths that protect and enhance the existing landscape character.

Road space allocation and traffic management

- 4.11 We agree that the key principles, welcoming and accessible, people centred design and high-quality infrastructure are critical elements in delivering rebalanced road space and traffic management and this position is reflected in the Local Development Plan, the Belfast Agenda and A Bolder Vision for Belfast. These principles should enable flexibility while fundamentally placing people at the centre, supporting improved confidence in engaging in active travel through safe, connected, inclusive and well-designed infrastructure. We feel it would be helpful for the Department to produce a menu of potential options or guidance to rebalance the street, supporting future placemaking and mobility projects.

Belfast Cycling Network: Island Street Active Travel and Traffic Calming Scheme

- 4.12 On 3 June 2021, the Minister for Infrastructure published '*Planning for the Future of Transport – Time for Change*'. This document articulates the Minister's vision that active travel becomes a pillar of change within towns and cities to cut emissions, to improve health and wellbeing, and to better connect families and communities. It commits to the adoption of the sustainable transport hierarchy where prioritisation is given to sustainable travel by providing for walking and wheeling, then cycling, then public transport ahead of private vehicle use.
- 4.13 In March 2017 Committee agreed the Council response to the draft Belfast Cycling Network consultation for submission of DfI. In June 2021 the DfI Minister published *Making Belfast an Active City – Belfast Cycling Network 2021* that set out her ambition to make Belfast a more cycle-friendly city and provides a blueprint for the development and operation of the cycling infrastructure in the city for the next ten years and is supported by the BCN Delivery Plan 2022-31. The CG&R Committee received an update from DfI on the delivery of the

BCN as a part of their Autumn Statement at the November 2024 Special Meeting of this Committee, with a follow up DfI responses to Members queries presented to the January 2025 meeting of the CG&R Committee.

- 4.14 The Department is undertaking the legislative process for the installation of new cycling and traffic calming measures on Island Street, Belfast. This also includes sections of Ballymacarrett Road, Belfast and Dee Street, Belfast. The scheme is identified as Scheme No10 within the short-term Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan. This scheme will include the installation of the following measures as listed below and proposed layout is found in Appendix B2.**

- New Two-Way Cycle Lane on Ballymacarrett Road & Island Street.**
- New Shared Footway on Dee Street & Island Street.**
- New Disabled Parking Places on Ballymacarrett Road.**
- Relocation of Toucan Crossing on Dee Street.**
- Prohibition of Waiting - At Any Time – ‘Loading / Unloading Not Permitted’ on Ballymacarrett Road & Island Street. (Northern Sides).**
- Prohibition of Waiting - At Any Time – ‘Loading / Unloading Permitted’ on**
- Ballymacarrett Road & Island Street. (Southern Sides).**
- 1 x flat top road hump, 12.5m long, kerb to kerb width, 80mm high.**
- 1 x flat top road hump, 31m long, kerb to kerb width, 80mm high.**
- 6 x flat top road humps tapered, 4.1m long, kerb to kerb width, 80mm high.**

- 4.15 Officers have prepared a draft response to the scheme that is in Appendix B3 and highlighted a number of aspects:**

We note that the proposed cycling infrastructure and traffic calming improvements on Island Street, includes the segregation from vehicular traffic, which enhances safety and inclusivity and could encourage more people to cycle with confidence. This provides better connectivity along the National Cycle Route 99, linking the Connswater Greenway, Titanic Quarter and Belfast City Centre, while also strengthening connections to the Comber Greenway, aligning with the Belfast Agenda and its commitment to delivering enhanced cycle infrastructure across the city.

- 4.16 To ensure local support and future usage we would encourage the Department to ensure that there is communication and engagement about the scheme with local**

residents and users starting from this design stage. We also suggest that engagement should include information on the delivery timeframe and nature of the proposed works and outline how these are being delivered in line with best practice guidance.

4.17 The Council's Tree Officer in Planning's Trees & Landscape team has provided detailed feedback including:

- The proposal should be designed in a manner will seeks to avoid creating future stress and strain upon existing trees which could impact on future health, condition, and structural integrity of existing trees.
- Proposed landscaping should be included within the proposal to achieve a net gain in future tree cover within the context of the surrounding area.
- It may be an option to redesign the proposed cycle path at certain pinch points away from mature tree cover to prevent long-term damage from arising.

5.0 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no finance or resource implications associated with this report.

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

There are no Equality or Good Relation Implications/Rural Needs Assessment requirements associated with this report.

During discussion, several Members highlighted the need for the delivery of the Belfast Cycling Network, connectivity across all Council areas in respect of sustainable and active travel, and travel routes that were accessible, inclusive, and safe. A Member also highlighted issues regarding current transport planning and the impact on traffic congestion and air quality.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Hanvey,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to invite the Department for Infrastructure to a future meeting of the Committee to present on the Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan.

Arising from discussion, it was also:

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Moved by Councillor Smyth,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite and

Resolved – That the Council response to the Northern Ireland Active Travel Delivery Plan consultation highlights the need for a joined-up approach in respect of transport planning to improve sustainable transport connectivity across all Council areas so as to increase sustainable travel, alleviate traffic congestion and improve air quality.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- i. noted that the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) was undertaking a public consultation on the Northern Ireland Active Travel Delivery Plan;
- ii. approved the draft Council response to the Northern Ireland Active Travel Delivery Plan consultation, contained within [Appendix A](#) of the report, subject to an addition that highlighted the need for a joined-up approach in respect of transport planning to improve sustainable transport connectivity across all Council areas so as to increase sustainable travel, alleviate traffic congestion and improve air quality;
- iii. noted that the draft response would be submitted, subject to Council ratification on the 3rd March 2025;
- iv. noted correspondence received from DfI, contained within [Appendix B1](#) of the report, in relation to the Island Street Active Travel and Traffic Calming Scheme and the proposed designs for the scheme, contained within [Appendix B2](#) of the report;
- v. approved the draft Council response to the designs for the Island Street Active Travel and Traffic Calming Scheme, contained within [Appendix B3](#) of the report, that is being delivered as part of the Belfast Cycling Network; and
- vi. agreed to invite the Department for Infrastructure to a future meeting of the Committee to present on the Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan.

Positioning Belfast to Compete

Major Events Update - Christmas Programme 2024

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on activity delivered as part of a Christmas programme in November - December 2024.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1** Members are asked to note the contents of this report on recent Christmas activity.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Christmas Programme 2024 Evaluation

Building on the success of the 2023 event, the Christmas Lights Switch-On in Donegall Square North, returned on Saturday 16th November 2024.

This particular event remains a key driver in animating and activating the city. The Switch-On has always been a specific milestone for City centre stakeholders as the official opening to the Christmas period.

Located in a busy, 'live' city centre with high pedestrian footfall, the Switch-On is an operationally multi-faceted event to deliver. Planning began in July 2024, with engagement of primary stakeholders such as Translink, Visit Belfast and delivery agents. There is significant multi stakeholder input involved in the early planning process, and as plans develop other city centre stakeholders are further engaged.

In line with the Cultural Strategy's themes of community and sectoral co-design, an exciting programme was developed. This included cultural sector, community and school groups and further details are within this report. Tickets were fully allocated, and on the evening the site was at full capacity.

In 2024, the Christmas Lights Switch-On followed the same format at the front of City Hall, taking place on Saturday 16th November. Due to the nature of the t-shaped event site comprising Donegall Square North and Donegall Place (Fountain Lane and Castle Lane cross), it was necessary to close roads to facilitate event infrastructure installation and de-rig.

The City Events Team engaged extensively with stakeholders such as Translink, MarketPlace Europe, DfI, public hire taxi and the business sector, as well as with internal council units, to coordinate the build, event delivery and de-rig with as

minimal impact as possible to normal business. Various road closures and suspensions were in place 2am Saturday 16th through to 4am on Sunday 17th November.

Attendance:

In excess of 10,500 citizens and visitors gathered to enjoy the event. The event was free and ticketed via Visit Belfast. There was an initial ticket release on the morning of 5th November, with a second release to accommodate those who couldn't secure tickets during the morning release. The City Hall Christmas Market opened at 12 noon the same day. During this year's event, it was noticeable that there was a significant number of non-ticket holders attending the event. Officers are reviewing the current approach to ticketing and options aligned to potential reconfiguration of the site that are in line with health and safety requirements, need for access to retail and retaining a positive attendee experience.

Marketing and Communications Activity:

Council operated a digital campaign with online advertising to promote this year's Christmas Lights Switch-On event, as well as Winter's Den season in 2 Royal Avenue.

Council directed people to the Christmas Lights Switch-on event page on the BCC website as well as the /Christmas URL where it was displayed prominently on the page.

Bauer NI were the official media partner and offered a strong package across Cool FM and Downtown from 2nd November to 13th November, including promo trails, competition package, live reads, an interview with the Lord Mayor, and outdoor broadcast with Downtown's Neal McClelland. Pete, Paulo and Rebecca from Cool FM's Breakfast Team were comperes on stage at the event.

Visit Belfast offered box office and visitor servicing, as well as related marketing activity such as digital screen display and social and digital campaign.

The event was featured in City Matters, circulated to just under 160k homes w/c 6th November and full event details of the Switch-On and Winter's Den were highlighted on page 4 and in the What's On section.

A press release was issued 30th October to promote the event. From 30th October, media coverage was secured on Belfast Live, Belfast Telegraph, Irish News, NewsLetter, BBC, Belfast Media Group, Yahoo UK and 4NI. In addition, the

media partnership with Bauer NI included coverage across Cool FM and Downtown.

Council took paid-for online advertising to raise general awareness, targeting Belfast and surrounding areas for a two week period in advance of the ticket release. This approach was light touch given the experience of tickets going quickly, and was across a small number of media – Facebook, Belfast Media Group, Belfast Telegraph online and Daily Mirror/Belfast Live.

The Visit Belfast Christmas Campaign began on 16th November and ran until 22nd December. This was a 2-phase campaign with the first phase targeted to the ROI market (70%) and the NI market (30%). In Phase 2, utilising additional funding secured by BCC, we were able to deliver upweighted activity to both the ROI and NI market with a 50/50 split. The objective of the campaign was to capture the “festive energy” of the city and promote day trips and overnight stays using a targeted mix of Video on Demand, Outdoor, Radio and digital elements. Supporting this activity included both paid social media advertising and influencer activity.

This campaign resulted in a total of 63.5 million impacts across the entirety of the campaign.

3.2. Programming:

The ‘City Imagining Strategy’ approved by Council has a focus on supporting developing local arts and cultural organisations, through funding, commissioning and capacity building.

To this end, *Oh Yeah* were engaged to arrange a performance by *Sasha Samara*, who is a graduate of their creative talent development programme; the MAC were invited to show an extract of their upcoming Christmas production; *Tumble Circus* were engaged to choreograph a circus piece; and the *Rock Choir* were invited to produce a medley of singalong Christmas favourites. *The Belvoir Players* also performed, and by invitation of Lord Mayor, Finaghy Primary School choir sang. Meet and greet performers were also engaged from two local companies.

Every act participating in the 2024 switch on expressed very positive feedback on the experience, with the profile of taking part increasing publicity for those companies that had their own Christmas shows.

The Christmas Lights Switch on in 2023 and 2024 featured local acts. On both occasions, tickets sold out very quickly, and capacity was reached in 2024. In section 3.3.2, audience participating in the survey were asked if they supported council supporting local talent or if there was a preference for the 'big name'. 61% opted for the current position with 31% preferring a big name.

Officers will continue to work on all levels to ensure the Christmas Programme of animation and activation continues to develop, grow and leverage all available civic and visitor opportunities for Belfast for 2025 within the budget available, aligned to the principles of the cultural strategy on providing support for the cultural sector and showcasing homegrown talent. A number of benchmarking exercises are underway to review approaches to festive lights switch on and will be brought back to committee in due course.

2 Royal Avenue:

Following on from 2023's model of uplifting the Christmas programme in 2 Royal Avenue, the Winter's Den opened on Saturday 16th November 2024. The Winter's Den season features a selection of free entry festive activities. The venue was dressed by *MayWe*, and included a living 12ft tree that will be replanted in January, art installation by local artist *Carla Hodgson* and reused Christmas décor from previous years.

- Total building footfall across Winter's Den (from Saturday 16th November to 31st December) was 49,434. This included an opening weekend footfall of 5,022 (Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th November)
- 36 funded workshops / events, supported by 17 external events / markets / performances and a further 35 community groups and 10 schools engaged including 14 community / school musical performances
- 5 markets including approximately 140 makers / groups / artists (Potters Markets, Social Enterprise Market, Christmas Queer Art Fair and Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful Market)
- Santa's Post Office (Belfast Bid One) opened 16th November – 24th December and remains very popular
- Sensory area provided on 16th November to compliment the City Hall Switch - on including

sensory workshops, a snow dome, sensory silent disco, walk about characters and a quiet light switch on

- Most popular programmed events this year included festive film screenings, a *New Years Eve Ceili*, themed workshops and musical performances, family art workshops, *Jingle and Jazz* for seniors and storytelling. This was further enhanced by a popular community led programme including the Potters Market, Community carolling, Primary School traditional music concerts, Christmas Tea Dance and a concert by the *Ulster Sinfonia*.

**3.3 Belfast Christmas Lights Switch-On 16th November
- Socio-Economic Survey results**

- A total of 115 face-to-face interviews were conducted with visitors to the Belfast Christmas Lights Switch-On event. A further 123 interviews were completed online by visitors who had booked tickets to the event. 238 interviews were completed in total.
- The overall estimated direct spend for the Belfast event was £195,585 (2023: £193,950)
- The total average spend per group was £76.93. (2023: £86.20) 79% ate out during the event.
- 52% of survey respondents were from the Belfast City Council area, and a further 40% were from elsewhere in Northern Ireland. A slightly higher than last year but small number of visitors were from GB (2%), ROI (4%) and outside the UK and Ireland (2%). 8% of survey respondents were staying in accommodation away from home.
- 62% of respondents said they had attended a Christmas event hosted by Belfast City Council previously and 38% were new
- 61% (2023:75%) of survey respondents attended the event with children
- 37% (2023:46%) said they had no preference on when tickets became available, with 30% preferring them to be released in the morning and 25% after work hours

- Two-thirds, (63%) said they were supportive of Belfast City Council's preference to source local talent for stage acts. Under one third (31%) would prefer a big-name act
- 45% (2023:51%) gave the event an overall rating of between 8 and 10, including 17% who rated it as '10 - Extremely good'. At the other end of the scale, 13% gave it a rating between 1-3.
- 88% thought that events like these encourage people to come to Belfast, while 81% of those living in Belfast said that events like these improve their sense of well-being and community.
- 77% of visitors said the Belfast Christmas Lights Switch On event improves Belfast's reputation as a host for events like these; and 75% stated it improves the reputation of Belfast as a place to visit
- 42% (2023: 62%) of respondents living outside NI confirmed that the event makes them more likely to visit Belfast again, while 62% commented it makes them more likely to recommend friends and family to visit Belfast
- 90% agreed that there should be more events like this in Belfast.
- 93% said that they felt safe during the event.

3.4 Festive Lighting Scheme

The Switch On event marked the turning on of the festive lighting scheme throughout the city centre, comprising a number of cross street features and pole mount features. In liaison with Facilities Management, the lighting of the City Hall façade also took place the same evening.

2025 saw the final year of the existing Christmas lights contract. This year there were a number of new sites included. With projections on Church Lane, bank street and castle lane, lighting of Belfast Stories, repair and reinstalment of Anne Street icicles and Donegall Place trees.

There was some damage incurred to features on Castle Street as a result of Storm Darragh. The provider was engaged in emergency planning protocol and was on site to deal with issues as they occurred, ensuring that the features were removed in a safe and timely manner.

As part of the ongoing development aligned to the issue of the new festive lighting scheme tender officers are working closely with City Hall to ensure alignment in scheme designs and also with the BIDs on business engagement opportunities aligned to scheme development. The tender will run over a total 5 year period and will provide for ongoing development and agility within the scheme that is cognisant of the city lighting strategy and makes recommendations for additional infrastructure to support this.

Officers are currently working in partnership with the estates team on the development of new wayleave agreements to come into ownership of BCC as these were previously managed by BCCM.

Officers recognise the importance of a partnership approach with the successful appointee and look to developing a future festive lighting masterplan and associated infrastructure planning.

3.5 Christmas Market 2024

The Christmas Market was a huge success this year again and ran from Saturday 16th November to Sunday 22nd December. Markets Officers worked with BCC Events team on the opening of the market and the light switch-on which took place on the same day. Market Place Europe Limited (MPEL) has held the Continental Markets contract for the past 19 years and have been awarded the contract for in total 3+2 years.

This year the market attracted over a million visitors and was a celebration of 20 years of the Belfast Christmas Market, to celebrate there were a number of Dickensian themed weekends when all the staff and traders dressed up as Characters from Dickens novels.

This year there was a larger seating and food court area and an enhanced Christmas experience with themed and animated walkways. There were over 100 stalls, this included 40% local traders and 60% continental traders. As always there was a Santa's Grotto supporting the Lord Mayors Charity and a return of free school educational tours. MPEL also ran the Jolly Big Business Boost competition and offered a free chalet to a young business selling dog products. When the Continental Market trades at the front of the city hall the footfall increases into St Georges Market and throughout the city centre. The Christmas Market and the local Christmas offer in St George's trade side by side very successfully.

MPEL gave a free pitch to St George's Market traders this year again.

3.6 Financial and Resource Implications

All expenditure was within existing departmental budgets and approvals.

**3.7 Equality and Good Relations Implications /
Rural Needs Assessment**

None.

During discussion, the Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, answered a range of questions on the potential expansion of the Christmas Market and Festival Lighting Scheme, ticketing of the Christmas Lights Switch-On Event, the potential to extend a programme of events to New Year's Eve, and the potential economic benefit for Belfast of the Open Championship, to be held at Royal Portrush in July, 2025.

She advised the Committee, in response to a Member's question regarding the expansion of the Christmas programme events to local communities across the city, that the Council's Cultural Unit had supported a number of community events through the Community Festivals Fund.

In response to several Members questions in respect of the Festival Lighting Scheme, the Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, advised that the contract period had ended and that a new tender was in development and would be issued imminently to deliver a new lighting scheme.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Kelly,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees that, as part of a future report on major events, information would be brought back to the Committee in respect of the feasibility for a New Year's Eve Event Programme for Belfast.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the contents of the report; and
- ii. agreed that, as part of a future report on major events, information would be brought back to the Committee in respect of the feasibility for a New Year's Eve Event Programme for Belfast.

Bank of Ideas

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1** To provide an update to the Committee on the proposed opening of Cultural Participatory Budgeting scheme – Bank of Ideas – as a core part of the engagement delivery for the Cultural Strategy *A City Imagining* workplan 2025/26.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1** It is recommended that Members:

- Note the contents of this report and agree to open the Cultural Participatory Budgeting scheme “*Bank of Ideas*” on 19th March 2025 as part of the core delivery of the cultural strategy workplan for 2025/26.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background and context

As part of Belfast 2024 Creative Me Programme, a participatory budgeting scheme was created to fund creative ideas from individuals and groups across the city. This scheme, called The Bank of Ideas, awarded £50,000, divided equally between ideas for North, South, East, West, and the City Centre. Residents within a community could submit their creative ideas for funding. The projects were then voted on by residents to allow the allocation of funding.

3.2 The rationale for the project

The pilot Bank of Ideas programme delivered on a range of priorities within the cultural strategy. These include:

- Providing a more accessible way for individuals and un-constituted groups to access funding and participate in cultural activity by proposing and delivering creative ideas in their local area.
- The funding provides a ‘stepping stones’ approach for those who do not have capacity yet to access grants, with a focus on capacity building to enable groups/individuals to build skills needed to develop creative work and access funding in the future. This grassroots approach allows for the avoidance of duplication whilst adding value to existing small grants ecosystem.
- The participatory nature of allocating the funds through a decision-making public vote meant that residents of Belfast became co-curators of the Belfast

2024 programme. This increased ownership over the definition of 'creativity' and therefore enhanced sense of belonging, civic pride and agency.

3.3 Impact of the programme

The 2024 Bank of Ideas project funded 28 projects, with over 4,842 people involved in the total project number. Additionally, 2,253 people cast votes in the process. The average award under the Bank of Ideas was £2,000.

3.4 Capacity building and City-wide reach

The capacity building and idea generating phase of the fund involved 26 idea generating workshops and drop-in sessions across Belfast to help people come up with and develop their ideas. These sessions took place across the city in informal, approachable settings such as local cafes, community centres and arts centres. This led to an application process and then a voting date run in City Hall where citizens voted on the projects they wanted to see funded.

Post award the capacity building elements continued with additional sessions aimed to bringing people together and supporting capacity building, sharing information on other funding sources, how to become constituted, audience development and collaboration. This was available for all applicants and not just those who were successful.

3.5 The breakdown of voters across the city is detailed below:

Area of the City	Votes Cast
North	475
South	390
East	505
West	296
City Centre	587
Total	2,253

Recognition

3.6 There has been recognition for the success of the Bank of Ideas project, including:

- Belfast 2024 lead on Bank of Idea's is participating in the Design Team for the next phase of Belfast Health Development Unit's Participatory Budgeting on the theme of wellbeing.

- The Place and Tourism Manager in Fife Council, Scotland has approached Belfast 2024 team to share best practice and support the delivery of their own Participatory Budgeting fund based on the work we have developed.
- Belfast City Council have been shortlisted for 18th International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD) Best Practice in Citizen Participation Award and are speaking at the IOPD Conference in October 2024. From that conference, officers from Reykjavik who were also presenting on Participatory Budgeting are planning to visit Belfast in early Spring to explore participatory democracy practices and intercultural projects.

3.7 Key learnings from the 2024 pilot

There are a number of key learnings from the original pilot which will be taken forward into phase 2 delivery in 2025/26. These include:

- Practical realisation of the Cultural Strategy delivery – voting and engagement fosters a sense of belonging, the ideas generation supports creativity and innovation. The programme is created, delivered, and decided by the people of Belfast enabling active participation and promoting active citizenship.
- Participatory budgeting as a method for decision making delivers increased transparency and supports active citizenship by giving residents the power to make decisions on the activity they want to see in the city.
- Viable grant making process, significant numbers of projects came forward ranging from small community-based events to skills and storytelling projects.
- The scheme has funded a range of groups across a number of diverse sectors; such as PUL (Spectrum Centre), disability-led groups (Black Moon), BAME groups (Belfast Massage Project)
- Ideas generation workshops facilitated the production of new work, building of new collaborations between groups and individuals and led to wide impact throughout the city.
- The Participatory Budgeting process builds trust in council while promoting the cultural strategy- this is an

access point for communities and individuals who may not necessarily see themselves as being part of cultural activity in the city and to engage with culture and creativity - contributing to the realisation of the Cultural Strategy.

- Proportionality of process must be balanced with managing risk and prudent project delivery including eligibility, reputation, and financial management. Following feedback, this phase of the project will now include an additional eligibility check and declaration process as part of the project initiation process.
- To ensure the engagement and delivery is of the highest standard significant resource requirement in terms of staff time and capacity is needed and sufficient promotion including social media.

3.8 Contributions to council objectives

The projects during the first phase of Bank of Ideas contributed to a range of council objectives such as:

- Wellbeing - Chill with Gill Yoga with Suicide Awareness, Wonder Bubble Magic, Dreamer's Space GROW Community Garden & Cavehill Conservation
- Young people & Older People - Lower Oldpark Community Association Children's Community Library & Bookclub, The Meadow Heart Mosaic Project at Bog Meadows, Spectrum Centre Young People's Ausume Rascal's Art Explosion
- Good Relations – Cosmopolitan Cooking Club by Forward South, Cregagh and Woodstock Diversity Carnival, Ballynafest Community Fair
- Placemaking – Sailortown Regeneration: A Brush with History, East Belfast Late Night Art
- Climate outcomes - The Wee Swap event for children's clothes and toys, Bee Wildflowers seedbomb making
- Good Relations – Cosmopolitan Cooking Club by Forward South, Cregagh and Woodstock Diversity Carnival, Ballynafest Community Fair
- Accessibility – Black Moon Accessible Pop Up Picnic Party, Between Galaxies Theatre Show for Children with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities

3.9 Recommendation for 2025-26 Financial year

The delivery of Bank of Idea's 2024 closed in November 2024. It is recommended that the Bank of Idea's as a participatory budgeting model continues in 2025-2026 as part of the core delivery of the cultural strategy workplan and commitments to engagement with citizens via strategic priorities.

After consultation with the sector there is an evident appetite for the project and to see it continue. This was a new pilot project for Belfast 2024 and much of the work done this year was an investment in developing the process which can be replicated.

In order to implement a second run of the Bank of Ideas in 2025 to a similar timeline, the planning process would need to begin Spring 2025 (detail on timeline below). This aligns with how other small grants run on an annual basis – the planning, guidance and application stage is open before the new financial year, under the caveat that it is subject to budget approval by committee for the new financial year.

3.10 Proposed budget

The proposed budget for the programme is similar to the pilot programme delivered in 2024. The budget is broken down as follows:

Financial Year	Budget Heading	Budget Description	Amount
2025-26	Initiation of 2025 Bank of Idea's – Design phase	Design team, application development and Support Workshops for ideation in advance of process	£2,000
2025-26	Capacity building	Venue hire across city for yearlong workshops, accessibility and facilitation support for applicants and projects, consultation with external community and arts organisations city wide, design work	£4,500
2025-26	Voting Day	Voting Day Event Costs – potential to do 2 events next year as current year was at capacity for City Hall	£7,000
2025-26	Final Evaluation and Celebration event	Exhibition creation and evaluation costs	£3,000

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 5th February, 2025**

Total Design and Implementation Budget			£16,500
2025-26	Funding Pot	50,000 (10k per area, minimum 5 projects)	£50,000
Total funding			£66,500

3.11 Timeline

To ensure that funds would be received by awardees for delivery of projects in Summer/Autumn 2025, the following timeline would be required:

Date	Details
February 2025	Committee sign off in February 2025 Development of process to reopen including changes to application, schedule of workshops created and voting day event developed
19th March 2025	Applications Open – series of workshops delivered over these weeks to support idea generation
6th May 2025	Applications Close (After the bank holiday)
10th May 2025	Criteria Check and feedback to applicants
22nd June 2025	Voting Day – City Hall
26th June 2025	Secondary eligibility check carried out re Declaration Risk check; results sent out. This is an Additional element of the process following learnings from the pilot project.
2nd July 2025	Letters of offer issued.
4th August 2025	First Payments
August – October	Projects delivered
November	Celebration Event in November after all projects delivered

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

Funding for this project will be met from the recurrent budget for Cultural Development subject to Committee approval and confirmation of departmental budgets for 2025-26. Payments and costs won't be incurred until the new financial year.

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

The Cultural Strategy - *A City Imagining* - carried out an extensive EQIA covering the duration of the strategy 2020-2030. The Council's Culture team have a dedicated, full time and permanent Engagement Officer focussed on accessing a wide range of marginalised groups to co-design an extensive Engagement Programme which has fed directly into the development and delivery of the Belfast 2024 programme.

The Committee:

- i. noted the contents of the report; and
- ii. agreed to open the Cultural Participatory Budgeting scheme "Bank of Ideas" on 19th March, 2025, as part of the core delivery of the cultural strategy workplan for 2025/26.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Bristol Music Fund (Councillor de Faoite to raise)

At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the Committee agreed that officers would engage with their counterparts in Bristol City Council in relation to the establishment of the Bristol Music Fund, and that a report would be brought back to the Committee in respect of the feasibility of establishing a similar fund for Belfast.

Chairperson

Planning Committee

Tuesday, 11th February, 2025

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor Carson (Chairperson);
Aldermen Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers;
Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Bell, Brennan,
T. Brooks, Doran, S. Douglas, Ferguson, Garrett,
Groogan, Hanvey, Magee, McCabe, McCann,
Murphy and Whyte.
- In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Mr. K. McDonnell, Solicitor (Regulatory and Planning);
Mr. E. Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management),
Mr. D. O’Kane, Planning Manager (Plans and Policy)
Mr. M. Whittaker, Acting Principal Planning Officer;
Mr. R. Taylor, Senior Planning Officer; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 21st and 29th January, 2025 were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 3rd February, 2025, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Withdrawn Items

The Committee noted that the following item had been withdrawn from the agenda:

- Draft Planning Committee Operating Protocol.

Planning Appeals Notified

The Committee noted the appeals decisions.

Planning Decisions Issued

The Committee noted the planning decisions issued in January, 2025.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 11th February, 2025**

Live Applications for Major Developments

The Committee noted the list of live applications for major development.

Committee Decisions that have yet to issue

The Committee noted the list of Committee decisions which had not yet been issued.

Miscellaneous Reports

**Proposed adoption of SPG on Purpose Built
and Managed Student Accommodation
(PBMSA) including report on Public
Consultation of Draft SPG for notation**

The Acting Development Planning and Policy Manager provided the Committee with an overview of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) that related to Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA), following a 12-week public consultation period.

The Committee agreed to the publication and adoption of the Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and the associated Consultation Report.

**Response to Consultation on Private
Member's Bill relating to Tree Protection**

The Acting Principal Planning Officer explained to the Committee that Mr. P. McReynolds MLA had written to the Council in connection with a Private Member's Bill that *"seeks to strengthen the legal protections of individual and groups of trees, as well as ancient and long established woodland in Northern Ireland"*.

He reported that Mr. McReynolds had stated that the current measures for tree protection were not adequate for mitigating against the risk of unauthorised removal of mature trees and that he had been concerned at the loss of trees and the consequent impact on biodiversity.

He outlined the Private Member's Bill to the Committee and the proposed response from the Council to the public consultation.

A number of Members indicated that they were not supportive of the proposed response as it did not recognise the ecological benefit of trees or consider an alternative system of protection, and the Chairperson put the recommendation to the Committee.

On a vote, fourteen Members voted for the recommendation, five against and one no-vote, and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee noted the public consultation on tree protection matters and approved the response to the consultation questions.

Discussion on Draft Planning

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 11th February, 2025**

Application Validation Checklist

The Planning Manager explained that the Council was currently consulting on its Draft Planning Application Validation Checklist, used to inform customers of the level and type of information required to be submitted for an application to be considered valid and subsequently processed by the Council.

He stated that the propose of the Validation Checklist was to improve the quality of applications received that would therefore result in quicker decision making and more efficient consultee responses for application for full permission, outline permission and approval of reserved matters.

He explained that the Draft Planning Application Validation Checklist included an indicative guide to information requirements for the following types of application:

- Hotels;
- Householder;
- Houses in Multiple Occupancy;
- Major development;
- Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation;
- Residential Development (various scales);
- Short-term Let Accommodation;
- Specialist Residential Accommodation;
- Telecommunications Infrastructure; and
- Town Centre uses.

With regard to householder applications, the Planning Manager stated that it was proposed that such applications would be accompanied by a Biodiversity Checklist and a short and succinct Climate Change Statement.

He outlined the right of appeal and the DfI Development Management Practice Note 8 on Council preparation and implementation of Validation Checklists.

He informed the Committee that the Planning Service had completed a ten-week consultation on the Draft Planning Application Validation Checklist and that the feedback had been broadly supportive of the principle of the checklist but raised concerns about its usability and were unsupportive of additional information requirements for householder applications.

He outlined the next steps and stated that a report on the proposed final Validation Checklist would be presented to the Committee in March, with the aim of adoption in early April, 2025.

A Member of the Committee suggested that it would be helpful to Householders for the Council to publish best practice examples of a Climate Change Statement and other documentation. The Chairperson asked that the final checklist includes a Glossary with plain language explanation of the technical terms.

Following discussion, the Members noted the update.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 11th February, 2025**

Planning Applications previously considered

(The Committee agreed to consider the following two applications together.)

LA04/2019/0081/F - Erection of 12No. apartments (social/affordable housing units comprising 3No. one bed and 9No. two bed) with provision of community pocket park, car parking, landscaping and all associated site and access works (Amended site location plan / site layout) - Lands at former Maple Leaf Club, 41-43 Park Avenue; and

LA04/2020/2325/F - Proposed erection 21no. dwellings (social/affordable housing units comprising 17no. townhouses and 4no. semi-detached), car parking, landscaping and all associated site and access works (Amended drawings, additional information) - Lands at former Maple Leaf Club, 41-43 Park Avenue

The Planning Manager provided an overview of the applications which had been approved by the Committee at its meeting in March, 2022, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement and re-approved in June, 2023, following the adoption of the Belfast Local Development Plan: Plan Strategy.

He reported that, in December, 2024, the Committee had approved an adjustment to the parking layout and noted that the Section 76 planning agreement had still not been completed. The Committee had agreed that, should the Section 76 planning agreement not be completed by the end of January, 2025, the applications would be reported back to the Committee.

He explained that the outstanding Section 76 planning agreement was necessary to secure the following:

- A Financial Developer Contribution towards improvements to King George V playing fields;
- Affordable Housing;
- Delivery and management of the proposed pocket park; and
- Temporary treatment of the pocket park site if the development was delayed (landscaped within 3 years).

He reported that, although the Section 76 planning agreement had been outstanding from December, 2019, progress was being made and that there was a willingness to resolve the issues. He recommended that the applications be approved, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 11th February, 2025**

LA04/2019/0081/F

The Committee approved application LA04/2019/0081/F, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement, provided that the planning agreement be completed by 21st March 2025 and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and Section 76 planning agreement.

The Committee further agreed that, should the Section 76 planning agreement not be completed by 21st March 2025, the application would be refused on the grounds that the planning obligations necessary to make the development acceptable had not been adequately secured and that, in such circumstances, delegated authority would be given to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the refusal reasons.

LA04/2020/2325/F

The Committee approved application LA04/2020/2325/F, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement, provided that the planning agreement be completed by 21st March 2025 and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and Section 76 planning agreement.

The Committee further agreed that, should the Section 76 planning agreement not be completed by 21st March 2025, the application would be refused on the grounds that the planning obligations necessary to make the development acceptable had not been adequately secured and that, in such circumstances, delegated authority would be given to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the refusal reasons.

**LA04/2024/1623/F - Change of use from 4
bed dwelling (C1) to 4 bed House of Multiple
Occupancy (Sui Generis) - 49 Woodcot Avenue**

The Planning Manager summarised the application which had been deferred by the Committee at its meeting in November, 2024 and the Committee had subsequently undertake a site visit to the application site.

He explained that, during the site visit, it had become apparent that the plans of the rear yard had been inaccurate and that amended plans had been submitted which showed the rear amenity space was 9.4sqm rather than 12.9sqm and that the yard therefore was not large enough to accommodate the bins required to support a five-bedroom HMO property and refusal of the application had been recommended in the report to the January meeting of the Committee.

He stated that, since publication of the report before the Committee, amended plans had been submitted which had reduced the proposal from a five-bedroom HMO to a four-bedroom HMO with a resulting larger kitchen, dining and living room.

He explained that the reduction in bedrooms meant that there was sufficient space for bin storage and that, having regard to the Local Development Plan and other material considerations, the application, on balance, was considered acceptable and it was recommended that the application be approved, subject to conditions.

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The Chairperson welcomed Mr. A. Olphert, Create Architecture, to the meeting.

Mr. Olphert explained that the property had been listed for sale in 2022, however, it went unsold due to its poor condition and was purchased by the applicant in 2024. He stated that, whilst the property lay derelict, its condition deteriorated further and there had been penetrating damp throughout, rising damp, structural issues and falling lintels to the front façade.

He stated that, without the applicant's intervention which addressed all of the aforementioned issues, the property would be uninhabitable. He informed the Committee that the applicant was an experienced HMO investor with six fully licenced properties and three projects currently under construction, had never had a complaint submitted with regard to any of his properties, either from a tenant or neighbour.

He explained that the applicant had been investing significant sums of money into run down, uninhabitable properties to return them to the housing market for young professionals.

Mr. Olphert addressed the housing crisis and the number of derelict homes and stated that a HMO property could contribute positively to easing pressures on the housing market and that approval of the application would provide quality accommodation for four people working and living in Belfast and would bring the percentage of HMO properties on Woodcot Avenue to 2.7%, well below the 10% threshold.

A number of Members commented on the housing crisis and stated that families were looking for homes in Belfast and that HMOs put pressure on the market and change the nature of residential areas.

A Member pointed out that HMO properties were managed properties that were intended to improve the quality of shared housing and that whilst amenity space was a consideration, there was a need for shared accommodation in the city.

Proposal

Moved by Alderman Lawlor,
Seconded by Councillor Doran,

“That the Committee agrees to refuse the application on grounds of insufficient amenity space and that authority be delegated to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the refusal reasons.”

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

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
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New Planning Applications

LA04/2024/1458/F - Alterations to the site include refurbishing and repurposing of 3no existing vernacular buildings and replacing 1 shed, a small garage and an agricultural structure with a new amenity building. Enhancements to the existing pond network, introduction of signage interpretation and a suite of site-appropriate furniture. Wider site improvement works are proposed including path enhancements and new routes, installation of site furniture and interpretation signage. - Divis and The Black Mountain National Trust Site, Divis Road

The Senior Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the application and highlighted the following key areas for consideration:

- Principle of development in the countryside;
- Layout, scale, massing and design and impact on the Belfast Hills and Area of High Scenic Value;
- Impact on natural heritage;
- Impact on the archaeological assets;
- Flood risk;
- Climate change;
- Proposed access and car parking; and
- Pre-application community consultation.

He stated that it was considered that the proposal would enhance the existing National Trust site by enhancing the existing walking trails, the addition of new walking trails, signage and appropriate furniture to aid the visitor experience.

He explained that the proposed building was sympathetic to the rural character of the surrounding area and would not have significant impact on the Belfast Hills Area or the Area of High Scenic Value.

He reported that DAERA's Natural Environment Division and Water Management Unit had requested further information which had been submitted and that the response was outstanding and that, given the funding pressures associated with the application, it was recommended that the Committee delegate authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to deal with the outstanding consultation response.

He stated that, having regard to the Development Plan and material considerations, it was recommended that planning permission would be granted, subject to conditions.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 11th February, 2025**

conditions and resolve the outstanding DAERA and DfI Rivers consultation responses, and deal with any other matters that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

**LA04/2024/1837/F - Variation of condition No. 20
of planning permission LA04/2022/0129/F to
amend trigger point for implementation of
APPROVED foul and surface water drainage
programme, from prior to commencement to
prior to occupation. Lands north of 14 Mill Race
and 15 Belfield Heights and south of 2-15 St
Gerards Manor**

The Senior Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee for the variation of condition 20 on planning approval LA04/2020/0804/F to alter when the details of the foul and surface water drainage were to be submitted, approved and implemented on site.

He highlighted the following key issues for consideration:

- Acceptability of revised trigger point for implementation of foul and surface water drainage solutions; and
- Impact on water environment and protected sites.

He reported that NI Water had offered no objection to the rewording of the condition and revised trigger and that none of the approved drawings, stated in the original conditions, had been amended as a result of the proposed change.

He stated that, having regard to the Development Plan and other material considerations, the proposed variation of condition 20 was considered acceptable.

The Committee granted planning permission for the variation of Condition 20. Delegated authority was given to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of conditions and Section 76 planning agreement, if required.

**LA04/2024/1551/F - Public Realm Environmental
Improvement scheme - Cathedral Gardens
(Buoy Park), Donegall Street**

The Senior Planning Officer summarised the application for the Committee and pointed out the following key issues to be considered:

- Principle of development;
- Design, character and appearance;
- Health and wellbeing;
- Access, movement, and transport;
- Environmental considerations;
- Landscaping, green infrastructure and trees;
- Built heritage; and
- Amenity.

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He explained that, since publication of the report, NI Water had submitted its consultation response which recommended approval with standard planning conditions.

He stated that the application was considered acceptable and that it was recommended that planning permission be granted.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other issues that arise, provided that they were not substantive.

Additional Item

LA04/2024/0714/F - Proposed development to create a private medical facility (a hospital within Class C3) comprising of the change of use of part of retail warehouse and the extension of the building to create a private medical facility with a significant element of overnight residential care together with all associated ancillary development. - Units 2A and 2B at 38 Boucher Road

The Director of Planning and Building Control explained that the Committee had approved the application at its meeting in January, however, it had since come to light that the applicant was not the owner of the site and had a long-term lease with the Council, the site owner.

She explained that, as the Council was the site owner, the application was before the Committee to remove the requirement for a Section 76 planning agreement.

The Committee agreed that its decision of 21st January, 2025, when it approved the application, be amended to remove the requirement for a Section 76 planning agreement, due to the fact that the Council had ownership of the site and, legally, could not enter into a Section 76 planning agreement with itself.

The Committee delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions, including a condition to secure the Employability and Skills Plan that would otherwise have been provided within a Section 76 planning agreement.

Chairperson

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Standards and Business Committee

Thursday, 20th February, 2025

HYBRID MEETING OF THE STANDARDS AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Lawlor (Chairperson);
The High Sherriff, Councillor McAteer;
Aldermen McCullough and Rodgers;
Councillors Bradley, Carson, de Faoite,
P. Donnelly, D. Douglas, Groogan, Lyons,
Magee, McCallin, McDonough-Brown,
R. McLaughlin and Murphy.

In attendance: Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor and Director of Legal
and Civic Services;
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager, and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance
Coordinator.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Maghie.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 7th January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd February.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Motions

The Committee considered the following three motions which had been received in advance of the Council's meeting on 3rd March:

Notice of Motion - Action to Address Empty Homes

The Committee agreed that the motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Collins and seconded by Councillor Groogan, be referred, in the first instance, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Notice of Motion - Developing a Sponsorship and Philanthropy Network in Belfast

The Committee considered the recommendation.

**Standards and Business Committee,
Thursday, 20th February, 2025**

In response to a Member's question in relation to referring the motion directly to the Social Policy Working Group, the City Solicitor reminded the Committee that the motion required Committee approval, in the first instance, in accordance with Standing Order 13 (n).

Accordingly, the Committee agreed that the motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Long and seconded by Councillor McAteer, be referred, in the first instance, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

**Notice of Motion - Dogs in Kennels
Transfer of Ownership**

Proposal

Moved by the High Sheriff, Councillor McAteer,
Seconded by Councillor McDonough-Brown

That the motion be rejected.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin,

That the Committee agree that the motion be referred to the Council for debate, with no restriction to be placed on the number of speakers.

On a vote by show of hands, fourteen Members voted for the proposal and two against and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed that the motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Flynn and seconded by Councillor Verner, be referred to the Council for debate, with no restriction to be placed on the number of speakers.

Chairperson

Dogs in Kennels Transfer of Ownership

"This Council recognises that the safety of people and communities is paramount, and that any dog irrespective of breed or type may display aggression.

However, this Council also recognises that the provisions, as set out within the Statutory Rule The Dangerous Dogs (Designated Types) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024, under powers conferred by Article 25(1)(c) and (8) of The Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 (the 1983 Order), as relates to XL Bully dogs that make it an offence to rehome is unnecessary cruel. Restriction of rehoming, even by establishments such as rescue centres and animal shelters has led, as is leading to, the unnecessary destruction and euthanasia of healthy animals, which have no history of violence or aggression, and goes against the 'unnecessary suffering' clause in the Welfare of Animals Act NI 2011.

Therefore this Council will write to the DAERA minister outlining our opposition to the continuation of the legislation as currently set out and asks that the Minister allow for managed rehoming by shelters and other specific animal rescue establishments, of dogs including those considered to be XL Bullies with no history of aggression or violence, to suitable owners, to prevent further animal suffering."

Proposer: Councillor Anthony Flynn

Seconder: Councillor Nicola Verner

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