

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall
on Tuesday, 1st July, 2025 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Lord Mayor, Councillor Kelly (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Doherty;
The High Sheriff, Councillor McAteer;
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, M. Donnelly, P. Connelly, R.M. Donnelly,
Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson,
Flynn, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey, Long, Lyons,
Magee, Maghie, Maskey, McCabe, McCallin,
McCormick, McCann, McCusker, McDonough-Brown,
McDowell, McKay, McKeown, I. McLaughlin,
R. McLaughlin, Murphy, Murray, Nelson, Ó Néill,
Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported on behalf of Councillor Smyth.

Declarations of Interest

Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Councillor McCann declared an interest in relation to the item '2024-25 Quarter 4 Finance Report' in that his relative was employed by HERe NI.

Councillors R.M. Donnelly, Duffy, Groogan, McCabe and Verner declared an interest in relation to the item 'Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 9th June 2025' in that they were associated with organisations which had applied for, or were in receipt of, PEACEPLUS funding. As this item did not become the subject of discussion or debate during proceedings, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Councillors R.M. Donnelly and Verner declared an interest in relation to the item 'Requests for the use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality' in that they were associated with organisations which had submitted an application. As this item did not

become the subject of discussion or debate during proceedings, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor Ferguson declared an interest in relation to the item 'Social Value Levy Fund Update' in that he was on the Board of Group associated with a project and left the meeting whilst this item was under consideration.

Minutes of the People and Communities Committee

Councillor R.M. Donnelly declared an interest in relation to the item 'Ending Violence Against Woman and Girls - Change Fund Agreement' in that she was associated with an organisation which had applied for funding and left the meeting whilst this item was under consideration.

Councillor McCann declared an interest in relation to the same item in that his relative was employed by HERe NI and left the meeting whilst this item was under consideration.

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in relation to the item 'Healthwise and Physical Referral Update' in that his employer was associated with the programme. As this item did not become the subject of discussion or debate during proceedings, the Member was not required to leave the meeting.

Minutes of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Councillor Duffy declared an interest in relation to item 2(a) 'Vacant to Vibrant Programme' in that his employer had applied to the scheme.

Councillor Groogan declared an interest in relation to the same item in that her employer was in receipt of a grant through the scheme and that she was acquainted with an applicant to the scheme.

As the above-mentioned item did not become the subject of discussion or debate during proceedings, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor Kelly),
Seconded by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Doherty) and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Council of 2nd June, 2025, be taken as read and signed as correct.

Call-In - Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service

The Council considered a copy of the legal opinion which was obtained in relation to the call-in of the Council decision of 2nd June, 2025, in respect of the delivery of the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Collins,
Seconded by Alderman McCullough, and

Resolved – That the Council agrees to extend funding to the current service provider until 31st March, 2026.

Accordingly, the Council:

- i. noted the content of the legal opinion;
- ii. noted that the call-in was not considered to have merit on either procedural grounds or community impact grounds;
- iii. noted that the transition to procured services should be kept under close scrutiny to ensure that there would be continuity in service provision;
- iv. noted that, as the decision was called-in, the approval for the public advertisement of the Belfast Citywide Appeals Service was not able to be brought to the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in June, 2025;
- v. approved the public advertisement of the tender as per Standing Order 37(a) for the delivery of a Belfast Citywide Appeals Service from 1st October, 2025 to 31st March, 2028 (with the possibility of an extension to March, 2030) with an estimated contract value of £270k per annum; and
- vi. agreed to extend funding to the current service provider until 31st March, 2026.

Official Announcements

The Lord Mayor wished Ms. Jennifer Tosh, Deputy Registrar, well in her retirement following thirty-six years' service to the Council.

The Lord Mayor congratulated Ms. Jenny Pogue, principal of Arellian Nursery School, who was recently awarded an MBE for services to Early Years Education.

The Lord Mayor congratulated Councillor Murphy and his wife on the recent birth of their son.

Councillor Bunting highlighted the efforts of two local men, Mr. Mark Oliver and Mr. Chris Boyd, who had recently undertaken a "Walk the Country" fundraiser to raise awareness and funds for stroke-related charities. The Lord Mayor acceded to a request from Councillor Bunting that Mr. Oliver and Mr. Boyd be invited to City Hall to congratulate them for their efforts on behalf of the citizens of Belfast.

Councillor Murphy commended the Lord Mayor for her first weeks in office and the wide range of events she had attended across Belfast.

He also raised concern in relation to the removal of a portrait of the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, from the Lord Mayor's Parlour.

Councillor R. Brooks congratulated Ballymacarrett Defenders Flute Band on their 90th anniversary. She also extended her thanks to St. Martins Church Defenders LOL 1980 for their continued support to the band.

Alderman Copeland congratulated the pupils of Park School, Belfast, and teacher, Mr. Jon McKinley, on their recent success in winning the Best Film (12-15 age category) at the Into Film Awards in London. The Lord Mayor acceded to a request from Alderman Copeland that Mr. McKinley and the pupils of Park School be invited to City Hall to congratulate them on their success.

Councillor T. Brooks congratulated the the Belfast Philharmonic Choir which recently marked its 15th anniversary with a celebration dinner in City Hall.

She also extended her congratulations to the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) which recently held its Members' Forum event in Belfast.

Councillor de Faoite congratulated the Quire LGBT Choir which recently celebrated its 20th anniversary in the MAC Belfast.

Councillor Whyte congratulated the City of Belfast Youth Orchestra (CBYO) which recently marked its 70th anniversary with a performance at the Ulster Hall and wished them well for their forthcoming tour of Italy. He highlighted the attendance of world-renowned flautist Sir James Galway, a founding member of the CBYO, at the Ulster Hall anniversary celebration and stated that, given that his status as one of Belfast's most famous citizens and his contribution to music and the local community, consideration should be given to awarding him with the Freedom of the City.

**Change of Membership on Committees/
Outside Bodies/Position of Responsibility**

The Chief Executive reported that notification had been received from:

- i. Sinn Fein which indicated that it wished to replace Councillor Duffy with Councillor Magee on the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership; and
- ii. the Green Party which indicated that it wished to replace Councillor Smyth with Councillor Groogan on the Arc21 Joint Committee.

The Council noted the changes.

Request to Address the Council - Lagmore Community Forum

The Council agreed to receive a deputation from Ms. M. Smyth, Lagmore Community Forum, Ms. M. Gallagher, Christ the Redeemer Girl Guide Unit, and Ms. M. McCann, Little Saints Out of Schools Club, in relation to the minute within the Planning Committee of 17th June, 2025, under the heading 'LA04/2023/2890/F - Lagmore Drive, Dunmurry - Use of Financial Developer Contribution.'

Ms. Smyth, Lagmore Community Forum, addressed the Council in relation to the allocation of a financial developer contribution to mitigate the impact of the development of social housing units on lands on and adjacent to Christ the Redeemer Parish Hall, Lagmore Drive, Dunmurry. She raised concern regarding the decision process to allocate the developer contribution of £27,140 towards the funding of a permanent building for the Lagmore Youth Project, located within the grounds of Christ the Redeemer Church, stating that there had been a lack of consultation with other community groups in respect of the allocation.

Ms. Gallagher, Christ the Redeemer Girl Guide Unit, explained that the service provided fun and learning activities to girls within the local Lagmore and Colin community. She stated that the Girl Guides had previously occupied the Christ the Redeemer Parish Hall, however, due to the planned removal of the Hall, it had to relocate to a local school. It was reported that due to rental costs, the service has had to reduce from two nights per week to one. She highlighted that a proposal had been suggested to use the developer contribution towards a mobile unit within the Church grounds that would facilitate multiple community groups. She concluded by highlighting the significant and important service that the Lagmore Youth Project provided within the local community and stated that her concern was solely in respect of the lack of consultation with other community groups prior to the Planning Committee's consideration of the recommended allocation.

Ms. McCann, Little Saints Out of Schools Club, explained that Little Saints Out of Schools Club was a front-line service for childcare in the Lagmore and Colin area for approximately eighty working families. She advised that Little Saints had proposed that it be considered in relation to the developer contribution, with it being used towards a mobile unit within the grounds of the Church. She stated that a mobile unit would have enabled the service to remain in the Lagmore area and expressed her fear that the service could now be lost to the local community. She concluded by also raising concern at the lack of prior consultation with the community groups impacted by the development.

The Lord Mayor thanked the representatives, and they left the meeting.

Request to Address the Council - Trócaire

The Council agreed to receive a deputation from a Mr. P. Heaney, Head of Region Northern Ireland, Trócaire, in relation to the minute within the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 12th June, 2025, under the heading 'Notice of Motion - Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.'

Mr. Heaney highlighted to the Council the power of international treaties in effectively tackling global environmental issues such as the Montreal Protocol, signed in 1987, to protect the Earth's ozone layer by phasing out the production and consumption of ozone-depleting substances.

He stated that there was now an urgent need to address climate change and that, even though the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement remained critical in addressing the issue, there was a need to secure commitment to phase out fossil fuels.

He reported that, to date, sixteen nation states, the World Health Organisation, the European Parliament and various organisations had supported the call for the development of a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty that would provide the global roadmap needed to halt the expansion of fossil fuel and manage the phase-out of coal, oil and gas to enable a global just energy transition.

Mr. Heaney concluded by praising the Council for the steps it had taken in relation to climate change that included its declaration of a climate emergency in 2019 and the launch of its Local Area Energy Plan as a roadmap to transition to a net-zero energy system by 2050. He stated that the Council's endorsement of the proposed treaty would build on these steps and provide a significant and influential voice in calling upon the UK and Irish Governments to endorse the development of a treaty to phase out fossil fuels and help the most vulnerable within Belfast and across the globe.

The Lord Mayor thanked Mr. Heaney, and he left the meeting.

Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Brennan,
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

"That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 20th June, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted."

2024-25 Quarter 4 Finance Report

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Brennan,
Seconded by Councillor Long,

"That the decision under the heading '2024-25 Quarter 4 Finance Report' be amended to provide that £2.94 million of underspend be allocated as following:

- Irish Language Policy - £1.9 million;
- Resilience Fund for newcomer families and communities - £500k;
- Cleansing equipment - £440k; and
- Biodiversity measures - £100k."

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

Pilot Sunday City Animation Project

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Nelson,
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

“That the decision under the heading ‘Pilot Sunday City Animation Project’ be rejected, and accordingly the Council agrees:

- i. in principal, to progress the Holiday Resort designation citywide under paragraph (9) of the Shops Sunday (Sunday Trading &c.) (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, to be introduced on an ongoing basis commencing March, 2026, following further consultation and engagement with relevant stakeholders, including trade unions;
- ii. that the designation would include a public consultation; and
- iii. that the designation would be accompanied by a city centre, family friendly animation programme created in cooperation with other local stakeholders.”

On a vote, thirty-two Members voted for the amendment and twenty-one against and it was declared carried.

Irish Athletic Boxing Association (IABA)
Boxing Camp

At the request of Councillor R. McLaughlin, the Council agreed that the funding of £25k to the IABA, ratified by the Council at its meeting in June, 2025, to help support the cost of hosting an elite boxing camp in Belfast in August, 2025, be used towards an IABA event in October, 2025, due to the cancellation of the August event.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 20th June, 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 3rd June, 2025, be approved and adopted.”

Dual Language Street Signs

Amendment

Moved by Councillor P. Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

“That that the decision under the heading ‘Dual Language Street Signs’ be rejected and, accordingly, that Shandon Park be included within the list of streets for which a second street nameplate in Irish would be erected.”

On a vote, thirty Members voted for the amendment and twenty-five against and it was declared carried.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 3rd June, 2025, were thereupon approved and adopted.

Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee

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

“That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 4th and 25th June 2025, be approved and adopted.”

**Belfast City and Region Place Partnership (BCRPP)
2025/26 Programme**

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor Collins,

“That the decision under the heading ‘Belfast City and Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) 2025/26 Programme’ be rejected and, accordingly, the Council does not approve the attendance of senior officers at MIPIM 2026 as part of the BCRPP 2025/26 programme.”

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

**York Street Interchange Placemaking
and Active Travel Review (PATR) –
Committee Response**

At the request of Councillor Groogan, the Council agreed that the decision under the heading ‘York Street Interchange Placemaking and Active Travel Review (PATR) – Committee Response’ be amended to provide that the issues raised by the Member be included in the Council’s formal response to the Minister for Infrastructure.

Belfast Zoo Q4 Performance Report

At the request of Councillor R. McLaughlin, the Council agreed that the decision under the heading 'Belfast Zoo Q4 Performance Report' be amended to provide that membership of the proposed Council body to focus on the long-term financial sustainability of Belfast Zoo and complementary assets, be appointed using the Sainte-Laguë method.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 4th and 25th June 2025, were thereupon approved and adopted.

Minutes of Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor Doran,
Seconded by Councillor McCann, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 18th June, 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 S. Douglas,
Seconded by Councillor Carson, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 17th June, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee

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

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 12th June, be approved and adopted.

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Committee

Moved by Councillor Hanvey,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Committee of 16th June, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Standards and Business Committee

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

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 24th June, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson