

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

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

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

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Beattie declared an interest in the item under the heading “Department for Communities (DfC) Letter of Offer Community Support Programme (CSP) 2025/26” the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that he was associated with a group/organisation which had applied for or received funding.

Alderman McCullough and Councillors Black, Bradley, Doran, Duffy, McCabe and Verner declared an interest in the item under the heading “Department for Communities (DfC) Letter of Offer Community Support Programme (CSP) 2025/26” the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that their employers were recipients of funding.

Councillor T. Brooks declared an interest in the item “City Innovation programme update” within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that she was employed by Queen’s University.

Councillor Canavan declared an interest in the item “Department for Communities (DfC) Letter of Offer Community Support Programme (CSP) 2025/26” the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that she was a Committee Member of an organisation in receipt of funding.

Councillor de Faoite declared an interest in the item “Planning Information” within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that he was a member of the Board of Governors of a primary school which had submitted a planning application.

Councillor M. Donnelly declared an interest in items “Department for Communities (DfC) Letter of Offer Community Support Programme (CSP) 2025/26” the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes and “End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) - additional in year Local Community Fund allocation” within the People and Communities Committee minutes, in that his employer was associated with both items.

Councillor R.M. Donnelly declared an interest in the items “Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 4th August 2025” and “Requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality” within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and the item “End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) - additional in year Local Community Fund allocation” within the People and Communities Committee minutes, in that her employer had been associated with those items.

Councillor Ferguson declared an interest in the item “Requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality” within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that he was associated with an organisation which had submitted an application.

Councillor Groogan declared an interest in the items under the headings “Department for Communities (DfC) Letter of Offer Community Support Programme (CSP) 2025/26” the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, “Department of Communities (DfC) Letter of Offer Community Support Programme 2025-2026” within the People and Communities Committee minutes and “ Vacant to Vibrant Programme” within the City Growth and Regeneration Committee minutes, in that her employer, Forward South, was a recipient of funding.

Councillor Groogan also declared an interest in the item “Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 4th August 2025”, within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, in that her employer was a voluntary sector partner and a PEACEPLUS recipient and “Artist Studio Organisational Grant 2025/26”, within the City Growth and Regeneration Committee minutes, in that a recipient was a friend of hers.

Councillor Murray declared an interest in the item “End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) - additional in year Local Community Fund allocation” within the People and Communities Committee minutes, in that his employer had applied for funding.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor Kelly),
Seconded by Councillor R. Brooks, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the meetings of the Council of 1st July, 2025, be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

Condolences

The Lord Mayor, together with representatives from several political parties, extended sympathy to Councillor McCormick and his family on the recent passing of his mother-in-law.

The Lord Mayor paid tribute to Rev. Martin Smyth and offered her condolences to his family and friends in respect of his recent passing.

Councillor Murray extended sympathy to the families of Mia Keevan and Trae Keenan who had tragically died following their attendance at the Emerge Music Festival.

Councillor Black paid tribute to Mr. Jim McKee who had recently passed,

Retirement

The Lord Mayor congratulated Ms. Teresa Hughes on her retirement from the Council after almost 45 years of service.

Congratulations

Councillor Murray congratulated Belfast Pride on the recent successful Belfast Pride Festival.

Councillor S. Douglas congratulated Van Morrison on his 80th birthday and the Lord Mayor acceded to his request to write a letter of congratulations.

Condemnation

Councillor Nelson expressed his condemnation of the recent intimidation and violence which had taken place in relation to ethnic minority communities.

Councillor Collins condemned the arrests of anti-war protestors.

Upcoming Events

Alderman Lawlor highlighted the programme of events for the 125th anniversary celebrations of the Irish Guards.

Councillor Flynn highlighted the Trans Pride event and expressed his support for the trans community.

Requests to address the Council

Ms. Sarah McCann

The Council agreed to receive a deputation from Ms. Sarah McCann in relation to the motion: Support for Endometriosis Patients.

Ms. McCann explained that she was a health journalist and an advocate, who lived with endometriosis. She outlined how patients in Belfast with endometriosis were struggling to receive diagnosis or access services, and were feeling overwhelmed, many of whom were turning to private healthcare at great personal and financial costs.

She stated that, in her role as a health journalist, she had spearheaded a campaign called 'End the Battle' which highlighted the challenges that patients with endometriosis were facing. She explained that as part of the campaign, she had undertaken a survey of patients and she outlined results, pointing out the difficulties those patients had faced.

Ms. McCann shared the experience of a patient who was the subject of a case study and had undergone three exploratory laparoscopy surgeries, each time with a different surgeon and each time having been told she did not have endometriosis. She explained that it was only when the patient had turned to private healthcare for her fourth surgery that she was given a diagnosis.

She explained that discussions about endometriosis were essential in order to highlight the changes that were required for patients, which included up-to-date education for medical professionals, access to multidisciplinary teams and tackling the stigma attached to symptoms for future generations.

The Lord Mayor thanked Ms. McCann for her deputation.

Benview Community Centre

The Council agreed to receive a deputation from Ms. Robyn Jordan and Ms. Julie Ann Kirk in relation to a new 5-year licence agreement for the use of a portion of Benview Community Centre as a play centre,

Ms. Kirk explained that she was a parent of a child to attend Benview Community Centre and that Ballysillan was a deprived community that relied on the extracurricular services provided at the centre.

She stated that the service had requested \$4,225.56 annually, which was a small amount that would make a significant impact on the local community.

Ms. Kirk outlined her personal situation and explained that whilst she has been fighting cancer, the service has provided a lifeline for her daughter through afterschool and summer scheme provision, and that

the removal of the service would greatly disadvantage the local community.

She urged the Council to reconsider its decision and provide the required funding for the service.

Ms. Jordan explained that she was also a parent of children who availed of the services provided at Benview Community Centre. She stated that without the service rental agreement between Benview Community Centre and the Council, the Ballysillan community would be negatively impacted through the removal of services which were the cornerstone of community life in the area.

She outlined her personal situation and how the service had contributed to the mental wellbeing of her son who had severe learning and social communication difficulties and allowed him to integrate into a community he wouldn't otherwise be a part of.

She stated that whilst services are offered in other centres, they were outreach programmes and that Benview Community Centre had operated as a dedicated play centre and Council staff hub, the loss of which would have a knock on effect on whole area and diminish community spirit.

She urged the Council to consider their children who lived in an already deprived area.

The Lord Mayor thanked Ms. Kirk and Ms. Jordan for their deputation to the Council.

Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Brennan,
Seconded by Councillor Bunting,

“That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 3rd and 9th July, and 22nd August, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.”

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Verner,
Seconded by Alderman McCullough, and

Resolved – “That the minute under the heading “2025-26 Quarter 1 Finance Report” be amended to provide that the £948,064 underspend be committed to Fernhill Capital Works to support the emergence of restoration works, act as leverage for further funding to be secured and that a report on heritage and community tourism projects also be taken forward.”

Amendment

Moved by Alderman McCullough,
Seconded by Councillor Doran,

“That the minute under the heading “30 Under 30 Climate Change-Makers Initiative 2025-6” be amended to provide that the Council contributes £8,750 plus VAT to the overall programme costs.”

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

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Doran,
Seconded by Alderman McCullough,

“That the minute under the heading “Benview Community Centre – New Licence” be amended to provide that a new 5-year licence agreement for the use of a portion of Benview Community Centre as a play centre and for use of storage container be approved”

On a vote, eighteen Members voted for the amendment and thirty-seven against and it was declared lost.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Nelson,
Seconded by Councillor Murphy, and

Resolved – “That the minute under the heading “Benview Community Centre – New Licence” be amended to provide that the decision be deferred and that officers would engage with Benview Community Centre to ensure that it was availing of all funding opportunities, and that service provision was not being affected.”

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Bunting,
Seconded by Alderman McCullough,

“That the minute under the heading “Draft Irish Language Policy – Update on Consultation” be amended to provide that the decision be deferred until all costs for implementation are available and open and transparent details are put out for consultation through a platform that will count responses only from those who can prove that they are a Belfast City Council resident or rate payer.”

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

Amendment

Moved by Councillor T. Brooks,
Seconded by Councillor Hanvey, and

Resolved - "That the minute under the heading "Asset Management" be amended to provide that officers engage with the Client Manager (Physical Programmes), to consider the Blackstaff Greenway, in relation to the further report on the future use of Boucher Road Playing Fields."

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 3rd and 9th July, and 22nd August, 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 5th August, 2025, be approved and adopted."

Amendment

Moved by Alderman McCullough,
Seconded by Councillor Doran,

"That the minute under the heading "Notice of Motion – Safeguarding Belfast's Playparks" be amended to provide that the Council affirms the full wording of the motion and commits to full consultation, once the framework is prepared."

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

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 5th August, 2025, were thereupon approved and adopted.

Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor I. McLaughlin,
Seconded by Alderman Lawlor,

"That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 6th and 27th August, 2025, be approved and adopted."

Amendment

At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the Council agreed that the minute under the heading "Translink - Belfast Grand Central Station Update" be amended to provide that the Council writes to the Minister for Infrastructure and Translink to request consideration of a scheme that would reduce fares to encourage the use of public transport and reduce traffic congestion during the Christmas period.

Amendment

At the request of Councillor Ferguson, the Council agreed that the minute under the heading "Vacant to Vibrant Programme" be amended to provide that a report be brought back to the Committee that would outline how many applicants remained without funding and the cost of approving those grant awards.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 6th and 27th August, 2025, were thereupon approved and adopted.

Minutes of Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor Doran
Seconded by Councillor Smyth, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 20th August, 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 Murphy
Seconded by Councillor McLaughlin, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 12th August, 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 McLaughlin, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 7th August be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Councillor Flynn
Seconded by Alderman Rodgers,

“That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 21st August, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.”

Amendment

At the request of Councillor Bower, in respect of the item under the heading “Motion - Summer Scheme Providers to be inclusive of a wider range of disabilities and individual needs”, which had been withdrawn from the agenda, the Chief Executive informed the Council that the content of the proposed motion would be reflected in a report that had been requested by People and Communities Committee at its meeting in June, under the heading “Summer Schemes - Additional Needs Grants”.

Amendment

At the request of Councillor Collins, in respect of the item under the heading “Motion in Support of Leisure Workers”, the Chief Executive agreed to invite representatives from the NIPSA and UNITE Trade Unions to a future meeting of the Party Group Leaders.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 21st August, 2025, were thereupon approved and adopted.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson