

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall
on Monday, 3rd November, 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. Donnelly,
R.M. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas,
Duffy, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey,
Long, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, McCabe, McCallin,
McCann, McCormick, McDonough-Brown,
McDowell, McKay, McKeown, I. McLaughlin,
R. McLaughlin, Meenehan, Murphy, Murray,
Nelson, Ó Néill, Smyth, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive read the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

There were no apologies received.

Declarations of Interest

Regarding the item 'Additional Budget Social Supermarket Fund' within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes of 24th October, Councillors Beattie, Canavan, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, Duffy and Groogan declared interests in that they were associated with groups or organisations which had applied for within the terms of the fund. As the item did not arise during discussion, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Councillors Long and R. McLaughlin declared an interest in the Notice of Motion on Greyhound Racing in that their partners were Ministers in the NI Executive. They left the meeting during the item.

Councillors I. McLaughlin and Verner declared an interest in the item "Requests for Funding" within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes of 24th October, in that they were associated with an organisation in receipt of funding. They left the meeting during the discussion of the item.

In respect of the item 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls – Additional Funding' within the People and Communities minutes of 7th October, Councillors R.M. Donnelly and Murray declared an interest in that their employers had applied for support under the project. Councillors Long and R. McLaughlin also declared an interest in the item, in that their partners were Ministers in the NI Executive. As the matter did not arise during discussion, they were not required to leave the meeting.

In respect of the item 'Shared City Partnership' within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 24th October. Councillors Duffy, P. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly, Groogan and McCabe declared an interest in the PEACEPLUS Programme item in that their employers were in receipt of funding under the terms of the fund. As the matter did not arise during discussion, they were not required to leave the meeting.

Minutes of the Council

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

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

Official Announcements

The Lord Mayor, along with a number of Members of the Council, expressed her condolences to Councillor Carson, whose sister had recently passed away.

A number of Members congratulated Alderman McCullough on his recent marriage to Jessica and wished them well.

A Member extended her thanks to the Ulster Unionist and Democratic Unionist Party members who had recently participated in a charity Football match to raise money for Little Heroes NI, the Lord Mayor's chosen charity.

In response to a request from a Member, the Council agreed that, in light of Andrew Mountbatten Windsor recently having had his royal title removed by the King, a report be submitted to the appropriate Committee on the City's procedures to re-name streets.

A Member paid tribute to organisers of the Oireachtas na Samhna which had been held in the ICC Belfast over the weekend and had brought 20,000 Irish speakers together in the City.

A Member congratulated Gort na Móna minors on their recent football championship success against St. John's and paid tribute to the hard work of their coaches.

He also welcomed the opening of the recently completed Black Mountain Shared Space, and paid particular thanks to the local coaches, Caoimin and Gary, who had recently established Ox Performance at the site.

A Member congratulated Glentoran Women's Football Club on winning the Premiership.

A further Member thanked those officers in Emergency response for their help and assistance during recent flooding across the City.

A further Member congratulated St. John's Senior Hurlers on becoming the Antrim Senior Hurling Champions, having beaten Loughgiel in the final.

A Member highlighted that tomorrow would mark the 75th Anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights.

A Member congratulated the Shankill Protestant Boys Flute Band on their 45th Anniversary, for which a dinner had recently been held in the City Hall to mark the occasion. The Lord Mayor agreed to write and congratulate them.

The Member also paid tribute to Ms. Betty Carlisle MBE and her team on the flagship Shankill Shared Women's Centre, which had recently won the Community Benefit Project of the Year at the RICS Awards 2025. The Lord Mayor agreed to send a letter of congratulations.

A further Member congratulated those who had organised and attended the inaugural Hall of Fame event for Glentoran Football Club. He paid tribute to Mr. Roy Coyle, Director of Football at Glentoran, and the Lord Mayor agreed to send a letter of congratulations.

A further Member wished all four Council nominees well at the upcoming Pride of Place Awards, which would be held in Limerick on 7th November. He highlighted the work of the Half Moon Lake Men's Shed which did great work for its community.

A Member congratulated Catherine Connolly, the President-elect of Ireland, and also paid tribute to the outgoing President M. D. Higgins for his time in office.

Change of Membership on Outside Bodies

The Chief Executive advised the Council that notification had been received from Sinn Féin indicating that it wished to replace Councillor Micheal Donnelly with Councillor Duffy on the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership.

The Council approved the change.

Requests to Address the Council

The Chief Executive advised the Council that requests to address the Council had been received from Mr. Kieran Connolly, Ms. Stephanie English and Mrs. Lynda Bonner OBE, representing Greyhound Racing Constituents Northern Ireland, and Mr. Daniel Barclay, who was opposed to Greyhound racing.

The Council acceded to the requests.

Firstly, the Lord Mayor welcomed Mr. K. Connolly, Ms. S. English and Mrs. L. Bonner OBE (Greyhound Racing Constituents Northern Ireland - GRCNI) to the meeting. Together they outlined that greyhound racing was a cross-community, working class sport. They stated that GRCNI prioritised greyhound welfare and adhered strictly

to greyhound racing regulations. The Members were advised that greyhound welfare was regulated by The Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and that all their owners adhered to strict rules on licensing, microchipping and breeding. The Racing operated under the Greyhound Racetrack NI Regulations 1962, as amended in 2007, with oversight from the Irish Coursing Club under the Greyhound Industry Act 1958. They also outlined that, under the Act, the Club managed the Irish Greyhound studbook for the registration and identification of all greyhounds. Both Drumbo and Brandywell racetracks were members of the Club, as were all the owners. They highlighted the importance of having well-regulated, safe racing surfaces for the greyhounds and that Club Stewards were always on hand for the welfare of the animals. They stated that retired greyhounds were re-homed responsibly. The representatives cautioned that banning greyhound racing could push the sport underground, putting the animals at risk. They thanked the Council for its time and the representatives retired from the meeting.

The Lord Mayor then welcomed Mr. D. Barclay to the meeting. He outlined that greyhound racing should be banned due to cruelty and corruption. It was only legal in five countries, namely, the U.K., Ireland, Australia, Mexico and Vietnam. He stated that, contrary to what the previous deputation had claimed, there was no regulation of NI's Greyhound Racing Industry, as Greyhound Racing Ireland did not have the jurisdiction to inspect or give welfare checks in Northern Ireland, nor did the regulations for Great Britain apply. He stated that there was therefore no legal requirement for the industry to publish data on deaths on track, registered owners, health and safety requirements or adherence to the Welfare of Animals Act. He stated that thousands of greyhounds went missing each year, despite them all having to be registered and traceable. He gave an example of a lorry full of unregistered greyhounds which had died in transit on their way to Spain for hunting purposes. He emphasised that regulation did not stop the cruelty and he highlighted that emaciated dogs and cruel treatment of greyhounds still occurred in regulated parts of the world, such as GB and Ireland. He thanked the Members for their time and retired from the meeting.

The Chief Executive advised that a further request had been received from Ms. Sue Pentel and Ms. Rossa Coyle, representing Belfast IPSC (Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign), who wished to address the Council in relation to Barclays Bank.

The Council acceded to the request and they were admitted to the meeting.

The Lord Mayor welcomed Ms. S. Pentel and Ms. R. Coyle, Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC) and Jews for Palestine Ireland, to the meeting. They advised the Council that they wished to highlight the complicity of Barclays Bank in the Israeli genocide. They explained that the genocide was not only being fought with weapons but also with money, namely Israeli Bonds, and that it was more important than ever to speak up and to hold companies which were profiting from the genocide to account and to ensure that no public money went to complicit companies. They stated that over 11,000 people had signed a petition to condemn the Bank's complicity in the genocide.

They stated that over 750 days, over 68,000 people had been killed and over 100,000 people had been injured, including over 20,000 children, many of whom had now lost their entire families. According to the United Nations, Gaza now had the highest number of child amputees in world history. They highlighted that teachers, journalists, aid workers, doctors and healthcare workers had been killed, abducted or tortured by the Israeli regime. While a ceasefire had been agreed on 10th October,

2025, over 200 people had been shot since that date, with 100 Palestinians having been killed in one day last week. Aid, fuel, building materials and clean water were all still severely restricted. They stated that Israel had seized more land since October 2023 than in the last 20 years. They highlighted the violations of international law by Israel, the Declaration of Famine, forced starvation and the deliberate devastation of 90% of Gaza's buildings, all of which were reported by Francesca Albanese, UN Special Rapporteur, in July 2025. They urged the Council to cease trading with Barclays Bank and to adopt an ethical procurement policy. They thanked the Council for its time and they retired from 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 24th October, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted, subject to the following amendment of the minute under the heading "Requests for Funding", to provide that:

"It is proposed that there would be a one-week expression of interest including project details forms which would be released for North, South, East and West Belfast which would include:

- Organisation would have to demonstrate support from a minimum of four neighbourhoods within one quadrant of the city.
- The fund would cover either one large or a range of mini winter programmes.
- There would need to be a minimum of 2,000 participants across all events.
- The activities must be inclusive for the entire community.
- The events would not be at the same time as Belfast City Councils main Christmas event.
- Governance and spend would be aligned to current grants programmes.

Officers will assess the returned expression of interest and project details forms to appoint the appropriate organisation. The process will follow all due diligence and governance arrangements, with delegated authority being granted to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to appoint the appropriate organisation and allocate the funding."

Request to Adjourn

Moved by Councillor Long
Seconded by Councillor Nelson

That the Council resolves to adjourn proceedings.

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

(The Council stood adjourned for a period.)

After discussion, and in response to a Member's suggestion, the Council agreed to adopt the amendment moved by Councillor Brennan to the Strategic Policy and Resources minutes of 24th October regarding the "Requests for Funding", with the addition that officers would also engage with smaller community organisations to advise them of the funding.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Murphy
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

That the minute under the heading "Human Rights Day 2025 - Flag Requests" be amended to also provide that, in recognition of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, that the Council agrees to erect the National Flag of Palestine above the City Hall on 29th November, 2025.

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

Exclusion of the Press and Public from the Meeting

The Council agreed, in accordance with Section 42(4) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, to exclude the press and public from the meeting to allow consideration of confidential information in relation to the minutes of the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 24th October, under the heading "Belfast Stories Update".

In accordance with the aforementioned Act, the press and public were excluded from the meeting to enable the matter to be discussed in private.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Smyth
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite and

Resolved – That, under the heading "Belfast Stories Update", that the decision be amended to provide that the Council approves the recommendations (points 1-7) as outlined within the report and that recommendations 8 and 9 be referred back to the next meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for further discussion, supported by additional information in relation to potential additional market demand for the use of a media production studio.

(The press and the public were re-admitted to the Chamber at this point in proceedings and the Chief Executive informed the meeting of the decision which had been taken whilst the Council had met in Committee.)

Correspondence - Translink – Belfast Grand Central Station Update

At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the Council agreed to write to the Belfast Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), the Belfast and Northern Ireland Chambers of Commerce and the hospitality sector's Trade Unions to ask them to join with the Council in requesting that Translink lowers its bus fares over the Christmas period to encourage more footfall in the city centre and to lower traffic congestion.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Long,
Seconded by Councillor Murray,

That the minute under the heading "EV Update - EV Charging Network on Council sites and Depot Charging Scheme" be amended to provide that the Council agrees that officers begin the tender process based on a Concession Operating model as outlined in the report and defers consideration of the specific locations of the proposed Phase One sites so that a broader list could be submitted to the Committee.

On a vote, twenty-eight Members voted for the amendment and twenty-eight against. There being an equality of votes, the Lord Mayor exercised her second and casting vote for the amendment and it was subsequently declared carried.

**Supporting Area-based Community Planning and
Community Wealth Building**

At the request of a Member, the Council agreed that the recommendations would go straight to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for its consideration, removing the requirement for Area Working Groups to consider them initially.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the aforementioned amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 24th October 2025, were thereupon approved and adopted.

Minutes of People and Communities Committee

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

"That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 7th October, 2025, be approved and adopted."

Amendment

Moved by Councillor D. Douglas,
Seconded by Councillor R. Brooks,

"That the decision of the People and Communities Committee of 7th October, under the heading 'Applications for Dual Language Street Signs with Potential for an Adverse Impact, be rejected, given the

potential for an adverse impact on community relations, and that no surveys on the erection of a second street sign in Irish be carried out on the residents of Knock Eden Crescent, Willowfield Gardens, Wynchurch Road, Sicily Park, Upper Knockbreda Road, Annandale Crecent, Kingsberry Park and Ardenlee Court.”

On a vote, fifteen Members voted in favour of the amendment and forty-one against and it was declared lost.

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 7th October were thereupon approved and adopted.

Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee

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

“That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 8th October, 2025, be approved and adopted.”

Amendment

Moved by Councillor C. McCann,
Seconded by Councillor Murphy,

“That the minute under the heading “International Engagement” be amended to also provide that the Council writes to the Department of Education, asking it to remove the content posted on their communication channels regarding the Minister’s trip to occupied Palestine, declares that Belfast City Council has no confidence in the Minister for Education, and to write to him informing him of our position.”

On a vote, forty Members voted in favour of the amendment and fifteen against and it was declared carried.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor de Faoite
Seconded by Councillor Lyons

“ That the minute under the heading “International Engagement – Update on Proposed Approach” be amended to also provide that the Council, in acknowledging that Ireland will assume the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in July 2026 for six months, agrees to write to the Irish Government and to the President of the EU Council to advise that Belfast City Council wishes to deepen its engagement with the European Union and that it would encourage European representatives to visit Northern Ireland during that six month period.

On a vote, forty-one Members voted in favour of the amendment and fourteen against and it was declared carried.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the aforementioned amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 8th October were approved and adopted.

Minutes of Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 14th October, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Request from a Member

LA04/2022/0809/F - Amendments to approved schemes ref. Z/2008/0993/F (erection of 53 No. dwellings) and ref. Z/2013/0120/F (erection of 46 No. dwellings); to reduce overall density from 99 No. dwellings to 94 No. dwellings and associated and ancillary works. - Lands to the south and west of Woodland Grange to the north of Blacks Gate and to the east of Moor Park Mews

At the request of Councillor Collins, the City Solicitor agreed to liaise with the Planning officers in respect of examining the trees at the site.

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 14th October were approved and adopted.

Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee

Moved by Councillor M. Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor Magee and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 9th October be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Councillor Flynn
Seconded by Councillor Smyth and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 23rd October, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Notice of Motion

Ban on Greyhound Racing in Northern Ireland

Councillor Flynn proposed the following:

“This Council notes that greyhound racing in Northern Ireland is unregulated, with no statutory oversight of welfare, injuries, or retirement outcomes. Thousands of greyhounds across the UK and Ireland die each year due to racing-related harm, and Northern Ireland lacks transparency, accountability, and legal protections for these animals. This Council further notes that other jurisdictions in the UK are moving towards reform or abolition of greyhound racing, with increasing public and political support for a ban. This Council believes that the absence of regulation poses unacceptable risks to animal welfare and public confidence. This Council resolves to call on the Northern Ireland Executive and DAERA to introduce legislation banning greyhound racing, and to support rehoming efforts and welfare organisations working to protect retired greyhounds.”

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Groogan.

Amendment

Moved by the High Sherriff (Councillor McAteer)
Seconded by Councillor Nelson

To delete everything after “This Council” and replace with the following:

“resolves to call on the Northern Ireland Executive and DAERA to improve regulation of greyhound racing, noting the developments in other jurisdictions, and to support rehoming efforts and welfare organisations working to protect retired greyhounds.”

On a vote on the amendment, forty-six Members voted in favour of the amendment and four against and it was declared carried.

The amendment was thereupon put to the Council as the substantive motion and passed.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson