

Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 12th March, 2026

MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

Members present: The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Doherty);
The High Sheriff (Alderman McCoubrey);
Alderman Copeland;
Councillors Anglin, Bell, R. Brooks, T. Brooks,
Collins, P. Donnelly, S. Douglas,
Ferguson, Groogan, Lyons, Magee,
McCann, Meenehan and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;
Mr. O. Crolly, Local Energy Systems Advisor; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported from the Chairperson (Councillor M. Donnelly) and Councillor Murray.

Chairing of the Meeting

As neither the Chairperson nor the Deputy Chairperson were present at the start of the meeting, nominations were sought for the chairing of the meeting.

Moved by Councillor Collins,
Seconded by Councillor Bell and

Resolved – That Councillor McCann be elected to take the Chair for the meeting.

(Councillor McCann in the Chair)

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 12th February were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd March.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Restricted Item

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

Update on the Innovate UK project to de-risk rooftop solar and a heat network

The Climate Commissioner provided a detailed overview of the Innovate project, including the rationale for a low carbon heat network in central Belfast, a summary of the various workstreams, off-taker engagement, the delivery model, procurement, governance and oversight, the heat tariff and an update on the visit to an operational heat network in Leeds.

After addressing several Members’ questions in relation to the project, during which officers agreed to bring a further report back to the Committee with information on other places in the UK and Ireland which had heat networks and how they were funded, the Committee noted:

- I. the extensive stakeholder engagement undertaken since 2024 and the work completed including: 1) heat mapping and initial feasibility, 2) community opportunities assessment, 3) route to market analysis, 4) market readiness assessment, and 5) the Business model analysis;
- II. that since 2024, in excess of £300k has been spent de-risking and developing the heat network and rooftop solar project for investment to strengthen the delivery pathway for the Belfast Local Area Energy Plan to help achieve the City’s ambitious emission reduction targets;
- III. the ongoing work including: 1) further development and market testing of the business model for rooftop solar; 2) economic appraisal of the thermal storage component of a heat network; 3) engagement of off-takers and co-design of letters of intent to connect; 4) pre-market engagement of developers, legal review and development of a procurement roadmap; and 5) the UK-wide dissemination and communication of findings;

- IV. that the project has generated significant interest from Innovate UK, other UK Councils and DNOs who will be attending a series of project webinars and a Knowledge Exchange visit to Belfast on 19th March;
- V. the need for Council to lead the development of any heat network in Belfast due to its critical role in convening off-takers and other key stakeholders, estate aggregation, planning, project sponsorship and potentially providing land for an energy centre;
- VI. that an affordable heat tariff of 10p/kwhr is achievable with the right delivery model and investment partner, and that ongoing analysis and market engagement are targeting ways of attracting grant finance and reducing operating costs;
- VII. that DfE, is preparing a series of draft policy proposals on heat networks and is exploring options for NI to join the Heat Network Technical Assurance Scheme (HNTAS), currently being developed by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) for GB;
- VIII. that the outcomes of the ongoing work will be reported back to committee in due course with a request to give approval to utilise the outputs of the work to date to move into a formal market engagement phase, lasting 6-12 months; and
- IX. that an alternative date is being sought for a visit to the Leeds heat network.

Notice of Motion quarterly update

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy provided the Committee with an update on the Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance for which it was responsible.

After discussion, the Committee:

- agreed that whilst an impact assessment for the Upsurge Project would be brought to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee as part of the Pitches Strategy Implementation Plan, a report on the UPSURGE project would also be brought to the Climate and City Resilience Committee; and
- noted the updates to the other Notices of Motion / Issues Raised in Advance for which Climate and City Resilience Committee was responsible.

Chairperson