

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 22nd May, 2026

HYBRID MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Brennan (Chairperson);
Councillors Beattie, Black, Bunting, Cobain,
Doran, de Faoite, R-M Donnelly, Ferguson,
Garrett, Long, Maghie, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin,
Murphy, Murray, Nelson, Ó Néill, Smyth 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;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. K. Forster, Director of Economic Development;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. E. McConville, Director of Communications, Marketing
and External Affairs;
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood
Services;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of City and Neighbourhood
Services;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources;
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and
Governance Coordinator.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 24th and 30th April, were taken as read and signed as correct, subject to the amendment to the Minutes of 30th April under item 2.b) Request for Funding. The Committee noted that the funding decision which noted Mid Falls Alleyway Regeneration Scheme as the recipient would be amended to note the applicant, namely, St. James' Community Forum.

It was reported that the aforementioned minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meetings on 5th May, subject to the following amendments:

- **NICVA Summit 2026 (24th April)** - the Council agreed that the decision be amended to provide that the Council contribute £20,000 of sponsorship to support the NICVA 2026 Summit event.

- **Notices of Motion - Quarterly Update (24th April)** - the Council agreed that the decision be amended to provide that the Notice of Motion 'Save West Wellbeing Suicide Awareness' (ID 331) remained open.
- **Notice of Motion – Proposed City Ambassadors Scheme (24th April)** - the Council agreed that the Notice of Motion be amended to include the following paragraph:

“Proposals shall be brought back to the Committee in respect of addressing the gender imbalance amongst recipients of the Freedom of the City, including a process, in consultation with the women's sector, to identify four women who have made a lasting positive impact in Belfast, to be awarded the Freedom of the City as part of the International Women's Day programme of events in March 2027.”
- **Bonfire Update (30th April)** - the Council agreed that the decision in relation to the temporary fencing of bonfire sites, be referred back to the Committee for further consideration.
- **Requests for Funding (30th April)** - the Council agreed that the decision be amended to provide that the Director of Finance submit a report to the Committee which would outline how the remaining requests could be funded.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor R-M. Donnelly declared an interest under item 9.a) Minutes of Shared City Partnership, in so far as it related to PEACEPLUS in that she worked for an organisation which was funded under the Programme. As the item did not become the subject of debate, she was not required to leave the meeting.

In relation to item 3.a) Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, Councillor Murray declared an interest, in that he was employed by S.O.S NI who were a delivery partner of the Fleadh, as the related interests did not become the subject of debate, he was not required to leave the meeting.

In relation to item 6.g) Call for Evidence by Criminal Justice Committee, Councillor Long declared an interest, in that his wife was the Justice Minister and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councillor Bunting declared an interest under item 3.b) Request for Funding, in that she was on the Committee of one of the of the applicants and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councillor Doran declared an interest in relation to item 3.b) Requests for Funding, and 6.h) Summer Scheme Small Grant Funding 26/27 in that he was associated with some of the applicants and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

In relation to item 3.d) Belfast Stories - Community Grants and 6.d) Belfast Child - Seamless Pathway for Children and Families, Councillor Smyth declared an interest in that he was employed by the Belfast Trust.

Presentations

**Retail NI/USDAW
(Sunday Trading consultation)**

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Mr. G. Roberts, Retail NI and Mr. L. English, Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW) to the meeting.

Mr. English stated that the Members of USDAW did not support the proposed extension to Sunday opening hours as outlined in the consultation. He provided an overview of the Survey which the USDAW had undertaken in May, 2026 and highlighted the impact the potential extended hours would have on family life, work-life balance, job growth and the economy. He highlighted that retail workers felt undervalued and there was no incentive to work longer hours. He also questioned how longer hours would be facilitated by the retail companies.

Mr. Roberts provided an overview of why Retail NI did not support the extension to Sunday Opening Hours. He stated that there was a 'poverty of ambition' for the City and pointed out that there were other ways to animate the city. He questioned why a Working Group had not been set up to discuss the issues and the delay in bringing the consultation forward.

During discussion, the representatives answered a range of questions in relation to the survey responses, workers rights, alternative options and engagement with stakeholders.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives for their deputation.

The Committee noted the information provided by the deputation and that, where relevant, the USDAW would provide further survey data on the issues raised.

**Belfast One Business Improvement
District (Sunday Trading consultation)**

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Ms. M. Connolly representing Belfast One and the Belfast Chamber of Commerce.

Ms Connolly provided an overview of the support for the proposed extension to Sunday opening hours as outlined in the consultation. She stated that other locations already benefited from extended Sunday opening hours and highlighted the volume of weekend and cruise ship visitor and their needs.

She described the animation activities that had been undertaken by Belfast One throughout the year. She suggested that businesses needed to have the choice to open if they wished.

During discussion, she explained further the support for the consultation from retailers and hotels.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked Ms. Connolly for her deputation.

Noted.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following eight 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 eight items 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 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.

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann

(Ms. L-A O’Donnell, Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism
attended in connection with this item.)

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Supt. G. Kirkpatrick representing the PSNI. Supt. Kirkpatrick provided an update on the Policing Plan for the Fleadh.

The Director of Economic Development and Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism also provided an update on the planning to support the hosting of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Belfast in August 2026.

During discussion, Members raised a number of queries in relation to vulnerable people. The Chief Executive advised that an update would be provided in June on the issue.

One Member suggested that a meeting should also be set up between the inner city communities and relevant agencies before the next Committee, to help alleviate concerns in relation to parking.

In response to a Member’s question in relation to street vendor locations and licensing, the Director of Economic Development advised this would be investigated.

In relation to city dressing on arterial routes, the Director of Communications, Marketing and External Affairs advised that the potential costs would be reported back to the next meeting of the Committee.

After discussion, the Committee noted the progress to date on the development of the Fleadh Cheoil and that further updates would be provided on the issues which had been raised.

Requests for Funding

The Director of Finance provided an update on the outstanding requests which had been received by the Council for funding.

During discussion, in response to a Member's query regarding an update on a Sports Fund to deal with additional special sporting requests, the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services advised that this was being explored and the criteria would be submitted to a future People and Communities Committee for consideration.

Proposal

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

That the Committee agrees that an application process for the Discretionary Fund requests be implemented and capped to a maximum of £5k per applicant for requests that do not fit into any other Funding Streams, up to the amount of £290,742, and will be funded from the non-recurrent community capacity building monies included in the Growth Fund for 26/27.

Amendment

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

That the Committee agrees to fund the 47 discretionary funding support requests as outlined in the report and agrees that the funding, totaling £339,242, be allocated from the non-recurrent community capacity building monies included in the Growth Fund for 26/27.

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

The original proposal standing in the name of Councillor Murphy and seconded by Councillor R-M Donnelly was put to the meeting when nine Members voted for it and eight against and it was subsequently declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee:

1. Agreed that an application process for Discretionary Fund requests be implemented and capped to a maximum of £5k per applicant for requests that did not fit into any other Funding Streams. The Committee agreed that the fund, up to the amount of £290,742, would be funded from the non-recurrent community capacity building monies included in the Growth Fund for 26/27;
2. Agreed for West Well Being to present to the Party Group Leaders to outline their request;

3. Agreed to the holding of Party Briefings to review the Discretionary Fund policy.

Asset Management

The Committee:

- i) **St George's Market 1st Floor Restaurant – Lease renewal**
 - Approved the renewal of a Lease to The Mount Charles Group Limited for the 1st Floor Restaurant Premises at St George's Market.
- ii) **Forth Meadow Community Greenway (Springvale Park) – Acquisition of Lands**
 - Approved the transfer of c. 12.95 acres of land at Springvale Park, Springfield Road, on which Section 2 of the Forth Meadow Community Greenway had been constructed, from the Department for Communities to the Council.
- iii) **Lagan Gateway Phase 2 Project**
 - Approved the use of compulsory purchase powers should they be required to complete land assembly for the Lagan Gateway Phase 2 Project.
- iv) **Alexander Park – Easement**
 - Approved the granting of a 99-year Easement to Alpha Housing Association for the installation of a storm drain and associated headwall within Alexandra Park, with the installation works to be undertaken by JAMDAC Developments Ltd.

Belfast Stories - Community Grants

The Committee was provided with an update on the proposed award of Belfast Stories Community Grants strands 2 and 3 following completion of the application, assessment and moderation process.

Proposal

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

That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the report so that further information on the process could be provided to Party Group Leaders.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Bunting,
Seconded by Councillor Doran,

That the Committee agrees to the recommendations as outlined in the report to:

- Award the recommended 5 creative project grants (up to £30,000) following completion of the assessment and moderation process;
- Note the 12 small grants up to £10,000 approved under delegated authority; and
- In light of the significant demand and high quality of submissions received, as outlined at 3.15, agrees to increase the fund for small grants utilising an additional allocation of £41,560 from the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) reserve to fund 4 additional projects.

On a vote, eight Members voted for the proposal and eight against. There being an equality of votes, the Chairperson exercised her second and casting vote against the proposal and it was subsequently declared lost.

The original proposal standing in the name of Councillor R. McLaughlin and seconded by Councillor Beattie was put to the meeting and passed.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the report so that further information on the process could be provided to Party Group Leaders.

(Councillor Nelson in the Chair)

Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 13th May, the City Growth and Regeneration Committee:

- i. noted the contents of the report, which included progress to date on neighbourhood tourism development and the findings from the Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme;*
- ii. agreed to defer consideration of the proposed strategic direction and phased delivery approach as set out within the Tourism Plans for North and South Belfast;*
- iii. agreed that approval be sought from the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for the funding of £300,000 for neighbourhood tourism;*
- iv. agreed that the approach to support neighbourhood tourism delivery would be outcome based and consistent with the existing approach adopted in East and West Belfast, with the delivery aligned to the Council's neighbourhood tourism and cultural investment programmes and local area plans; and*

- v. ***approved the continuation of funding to EastSide Partnership and Fáilte Feirste Thiar to support neighbourhood tourism delivery, coordination, and capacity building across the city.***

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Murray,
Seconded by Councillor Nelson,

That the Committee agrees that up to £300,000 be allocated from the growth fund to fund the Neighbourhood Tourism Programme in 2026/2027 on a non-recurrent basis, including £75k to each area of the city (North, South, East and West), with delivery aligned to Belfast City Council's neighbourhood tourism and cultural investment programmes and local area plans.

Amendment

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

That the Committee proceeds with the recommendations as outlined in the report to:

- agree that up to £300 000 is allocated from the growth fund to fund the Neighbourhood Tourism Programme in 2026/2027 on a non-recurrent basis, including £75k to both East and West Belfast with delivery aligned to Belfast City Council's neighbourhood tourism and cultural investment programmes and local area plans; and
- note proposals for the remaining funding to be allocated to North Belfast, South Belfast and Shankill, subject to agreement of strategic direction and phased delivery approaches and a further report to the City Growth and Regeneration committee on the tourism plan for the Greater Shankill area.

On a vote, five Members voted for the amendment and thirteen against and it was declared lost.

The original proposal standing in the name of Councillor Murray and seconded by Councillor Nelson was put to the meeting and passed.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed that up to £300,000 be allocated from the Growth Fund to fund the Neighbourhood Tourism Programme in 2026/2027 on a non-recurrent basis, including £75k to each area of the city (North, South, East and West) with delivery aligned to Belfast City Council's neighbourhood tourism and cultural investment programmes and local area plans.

Extended Cultural Programme

The Committee was apprised of the proposed arrangements for 2026/2027 in relation to the extended cultural programme which had been established following a request from members in relation how they might address under representation of certain groups within previous rounds of funding.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Councillor Murphy,

That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the report to invite representatives from Seachtain na Gaeilge and Belfast Orangefest to a Special Meeting to present information on the inclusivity and equality of their events.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Bunting,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

That the Committee:

1. agrees to approve up to £100,000 towards an Extended Cultural Programme and to develop and issue Funding Agreements for 2026/27 as detailed in the report in relation to:
 - Seachtain na Gaeilge / Irish language week
 - Belfast Orangefest
2. agrees to the additional funding of up to £20,000 for Belfast Pride, subject to legal advice, due diligence and funding agreement.

On a vote, eleven Members voted for the proposal and eight against and it was declared carried. The amendment was put to the Committee as the substantive motion and agreed.

Accordingly, the Committee:

1. Agreed to approve up to £100,000 towards an Extended Cultural Programme and to develop and issue Funding Agreements for 2026/27 as detailed in the report in relation to:
 - Seachtain na Gaeilge / Irish language week
 - Belfast Orangefest;
2. Agreed to the additional funding of up to £20,000 for Belfast Pride, subject to legal advice, due diligence and funding agreement;

3. Agreed the allocation of up to £35,000 to support the Lord Mayor's Installation Event for 2026, taking recognition of the significance presented in hosting the Fleadh Cheoil in August and allowing to maximise the opportunity that this presented to engage with key stakeholders; and
4. Agreed that officers submit a future report to the Committee to outline options for events currently or previously supported by the Extended Cultural Programme to be delivered on a recurrent basis and considered as part of the rate setting process for 2027/28, to include economic impact data on Belfast Pride from 2024 and 2025.

Update on Phase 1 of the Governance Review

The Committee noted:

1. the update in relation to Phase 1 of the Governance Review;
2. that Party Briefings would be arranged to discuss the key governance documents; and
3. that updated documents would be brought to Committee in June for approval.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Bonfire Update - Temporary Fencing (RESTRICTED)

The Committee was reminded that, the Council, at its meeting on 5th May had agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 30th April, 2026, under the heading "Bonfire Update" in relation to the temporary fencing of bonfire sites, be referred back to the Committee for further consideration.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to rescind its decision of 30th April in relation to the Temporary Fencing of Bonfire Sites and agreed to delegate authority to officers in relation to the Health and Safety requirements and temporary fencing of bonfire sites at Benmore, Pitt Park, Cregagh Green, Tommy Patton Park and Orangefield Park.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Performance Improvement Plan 2026/27

The Committee was provided with an update on the findings of the public consultation on the draft performance improvement objectives and presented with the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) 2026-27 for consideration and approval.

The Committee approved the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) 2026-27 as outlined in [Appendix 2](#) of the report, for publication on the council's website, subject to minor edits and formal ratification by the full council on 1st June, 2026.

Workstyles Policy

The Committee considered a report regarding an update on the Workstyles Policy.

The Committee was reminded that the policy had been implemented on the basis of an 18-month pilot and subject to review on a six-monthly basis throughout, with review points at the end of September 2023, March 2024, and September 2024.

The corporate review measures were: building occupancy levels; customer complaints related to remote working; compliance with the 60% workplace / 40% remote strategy; and completion of the Homeworker and DSE self-assessment checklists and a pulse survey to gather participants' views on the policy and its overall personal impact; the views of line managers, managing in a hybrid environment; and the impact on individuals, the Council, and its customers / stakeholders when individuals were working remotely and when working in the office.

It was reported that consultation with management and trade unions on the revised policy took place in late 2025 / early 2026 and, at its meeting on 26th March 2026, the JNCC had approved the revised [Workstyles Policy](#).

In addition, the revised policy was reviewed by subject matter experts from legal services, digital services, information governance, insurance services, finance and corporate health and safety.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

Sunday Trading

The Director of Planning presented the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The report sets out the results of the recent public consultation on the proposed designation of the Belfast City Council area as a holiday designation to enable extended Sunday Trading hours for larger retailers.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Note the results of the public consultation and additional direct responses received from stakeholders attached as appendices 3-7;**
- **Note the issues and viewpoints expressed in the course of the public consultation process, as set out in section 3.5; and**
- **Agree the implementation of the in-principle, council decision from July 2025 and designate the entire Belfast City Council area as a Holiday Resort**

designation under Article 6, paragraph (9) of the Shops Sunday (Sunday Trading &c.) (Northern Ireland) Order 1997. Any resolution passed by the council on 01 June would take effect from 01 July (i.e. one month after the date on which the resolution may be passed by council).

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 At its meeting on 01 July 2025, the Council agreed, in-principle, to progress the Holiday Resort designation citywide under paragraph (9) of [the Shops Sunday \(Sunday Trading &c.\) \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1997](#) ('the legislation'), to be introduced on an ongoing basis commencing March, 2026, following further consultation and engagement with relevant stakeholders, including trade unions.

Designation as a Holiday Resort

Under paragraph (9) of the legislation, a Council may designate 'any area in its district as a holiday resort'. This means that for 18 Sundays between 1 March and 30 September in any calendar year (apart from Easter Sunday) a large shop which has a relevant floor area exceeding 280 square metres) may open on Sundays in accordance with notice given to Council. Before making any designation, the Order is clear that a Council should consult those likely to be affected by the proposed designation.

The council has consulted on the designation of the *city centre* as a holiday destination under the legislation on several previous occasions, most recently in 2019-20 but also in 2018 and 2017. On the previous occasions, there was engagement with a broad range of stakeholders including retailers (small and large); trades unions; statutory bodies; cultural sector; families; young people; tourism and hospitality representatives and transport providers.

The issues behind the proposals to designate the city centre as a holiday resort were similar to the current position: ongoing challenges to city centre viability; a desire to accommodate a growing tourism audience and a recognition that there was limited retail and hospitality provision in the city centre on a Sunday morning, compared to other days of the week.

The 1997 Order sets out in paragraph 10 that any resolution to designate a Holiday Resort can only take effect from a specified date, which must be at least one month after the date on which the resolution is passed. Should a decision be taken at this Committee, following due process the specified date on which the decision could take effect would be

Sunday 5 July 2026. The extension of Sunday trading hours would therefore run for 13 weeks until Sunday 27 September 2026. The Council will also have to publish a notice of the designation in such a manner as it considers appropriate.

The most recent engagement commenced in April 2025 linked to a Notice of Motion from September 2024 to deliver a pilot Sunday City Animation Project. Council officers held a number of discussions with key stakeholders including management at Victoria Square, Castle Court and the Kennedy Centre, Belfast One, Cathedral Quarter and Linen Quarter BIDs, Belfast Chamber, Retail NI, NI Hotel Federation, Visit Belfast, Translink, USDAW and the Department for Communities. At that time, Shopping Centre management teams were generally supportive of any proposal to extend hours of opening on Sundays, suggesting that retailer buy-in to the proposal shouldn't be an issue. Views were expressed that flexibility was key for retailers and their workers and that most would probably want to open from 11am onwards rather than anything earlier. The recent engagement and public consultation exercise has confirmed that the positions taken, and views expressed in previous consultations remain relevant.

3.2 Sunday Opening Public Consultation 2026

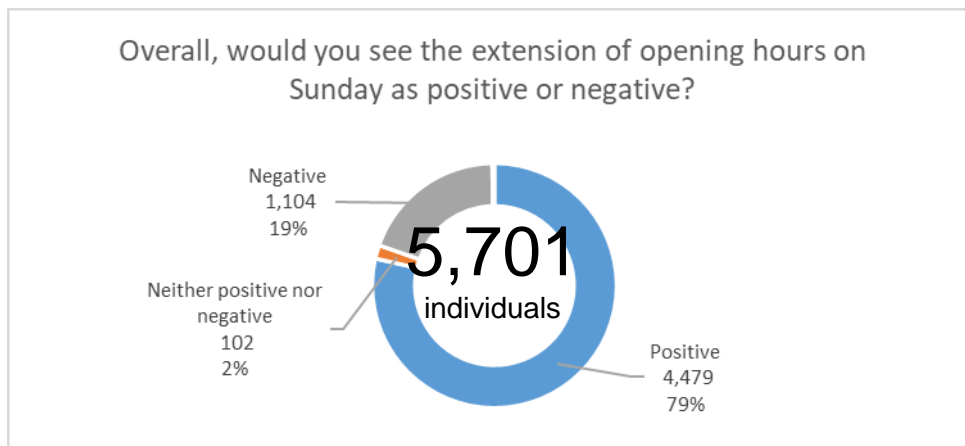
Following the council decision in July 2025, officers developed an engagement programme to further consult with relevant stakeholders, including trade unions. Crucially this engagement would seek views on the holiday designation being extended across the entire Belfast council area. Officers utilised Your Say Belfast, the council's engagement platform with created two survey instruments targeting both individuals (residents, visitors and workers) and business responses (all sectors including retailers, business representatives, unions and community organisations). The consultation was launched on Monday 23 March and ran for 7 ½ weeks, closing on Wednesday 13 May. In addition, key stakeholders including trade unions who had previously been engaged in April 2025 were contacted directly to discuss their previously expressed opinions.

The council issued a press release, and the consultation received considerable press coverage over this period. There were over 11,100 visits to the Sunday Openings 2026 webpage on Your Say Belfast. Almost half of these visits were directed via social media, over 80% of which, came from Facebook, with the remainder coming from other platforms including Instagram, LinkedIn and Reddit. In addition, visitors to the page were also directed from the Belfast City Council website, search engine results pages and other media outlets including Belfast Live, the Irish News and the Newsletter.

In total, there were 5,701 responses to the individual survey and a further 101 responses to the business survey. Additional replies were also received from 5 stakeholder organisations (USDAW, Belfast Chamber, Translink, NI Hotel Federation and Association of Convenience Shops). These are summarised in section 3.6 below and attached as individual appendices.

3.3 Key Findings (Individual Survey)

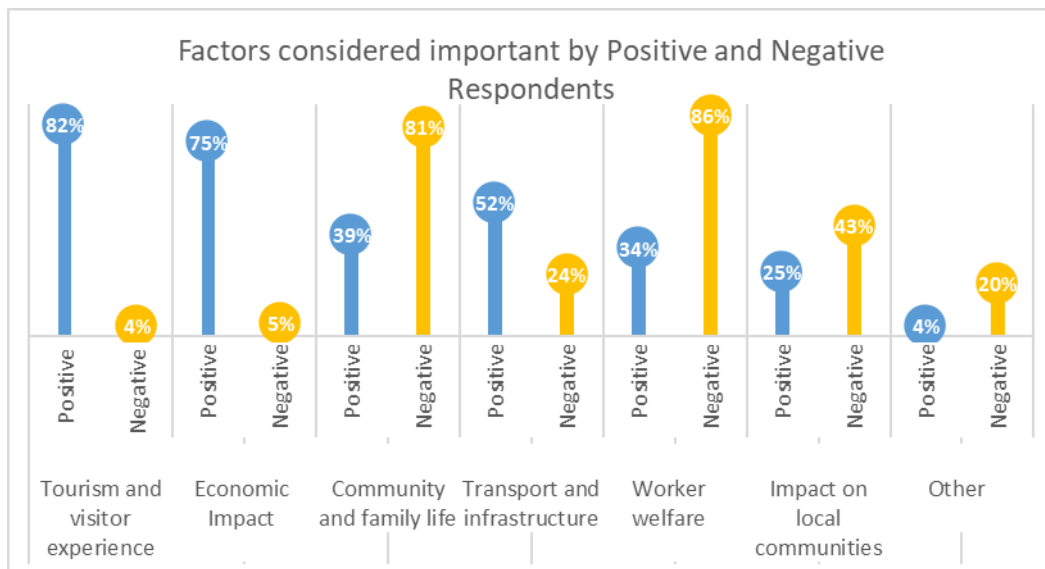
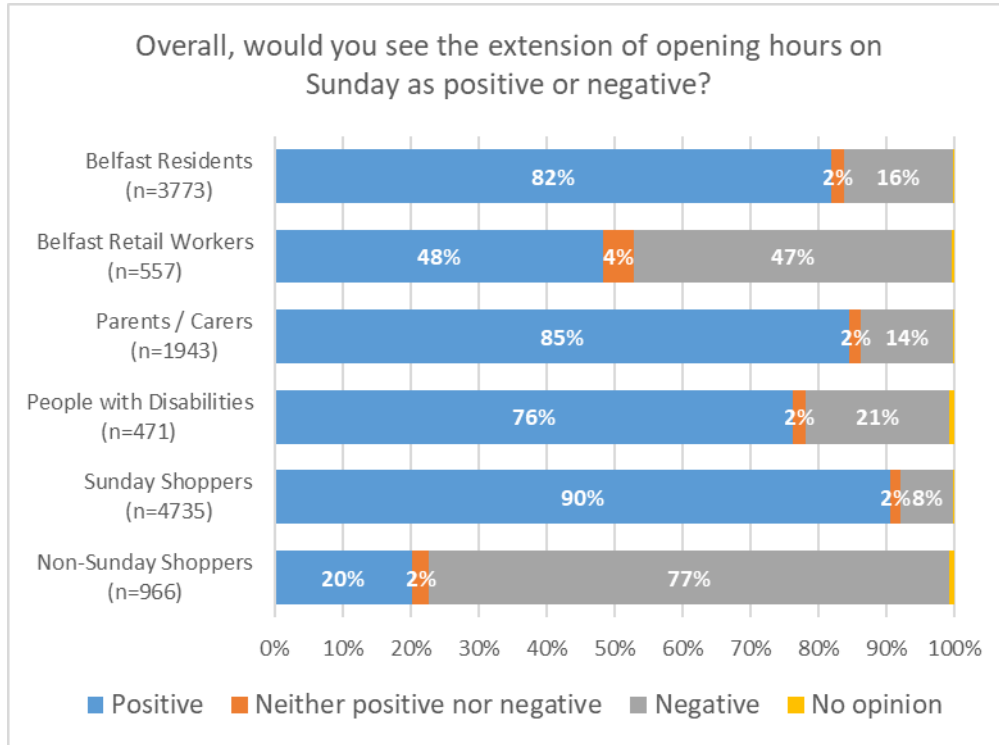
Overall, the majority of (79%) individuals expressed that the extension of Sunday opening hours would be positive, with 19% reporting it as a negative.



Disaggregation by specific cohorts of interest shows a range of perspectives:

- Belfast residents (82% positive) are in favour of extending Sunday trading hours, by a slightly larger proportion than respondents overall.
- Belfast Retail Workers are divided on the issue, with almost identical numbers of respondents expressing a positive or negative view.
- Those who stated they care for children (parents/carers) and people with disabilities are both heavily in favour of the proposal.
- There is a clear divide in views on the proposal based on whether the respondent currently shops on a Sunday. Those who currently shop on Sundays are 90% positive; whereas those who don't shop on Sundays are 77% negative.
- Views on the proposal varied by age-group. Those aged 25-40 (86% positive) were most in favour about extending opening hours on Sunday.
- Members of the Roman Catholic community background (91% positive) were most in favour of

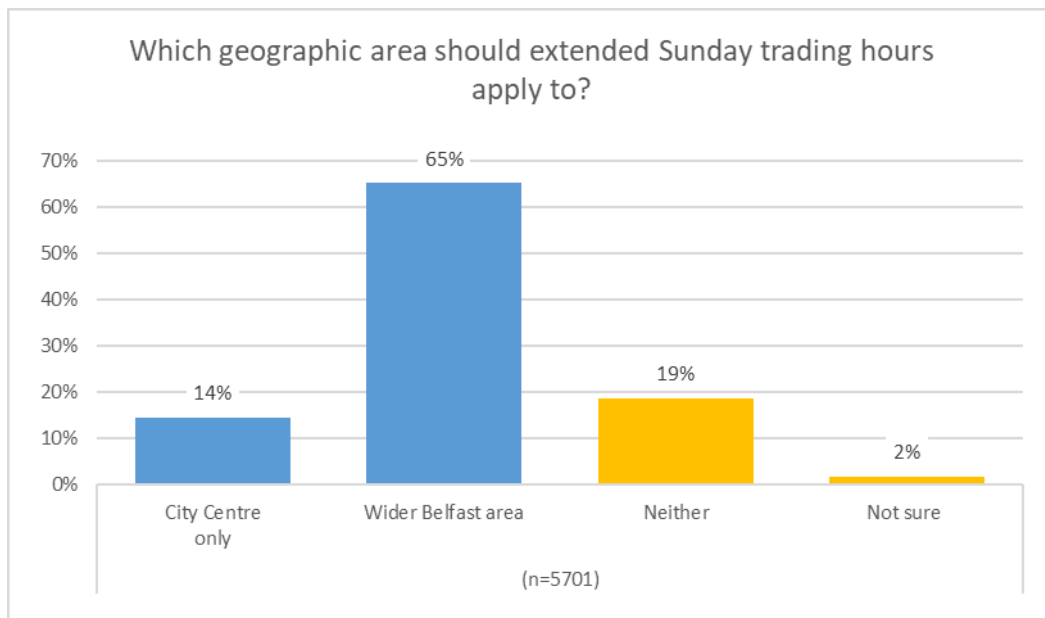
extending Sunday trading; compared with those from the Protestant community background (64% positive). Those from neither background were also strongly in favour (85% positive).



Respondents were asked to identify the factors that the council should consider most, when assessing the proposal to extend Sunday trading hours. They were allowed to pick more than one factor, and most respondents chose to do so. Responses varied depending on whether they saw the overall proposal as positive or negative.

Tourism and Visitor Experience (82%) and Economic Impact (75%) were the most selected factors by positive respondents, conversely, Worker Welfare (86%) and Community and Family Life (81%) were the most selected factors by negative respondents. Negative respondents were most likely to specify 'Other' factors, with 20% doing so. Additional factors covered a range of issues including religious observance, comparison of Belfast to other cities, sentiment that existing arrangements were archaic and concern about rest for workers.

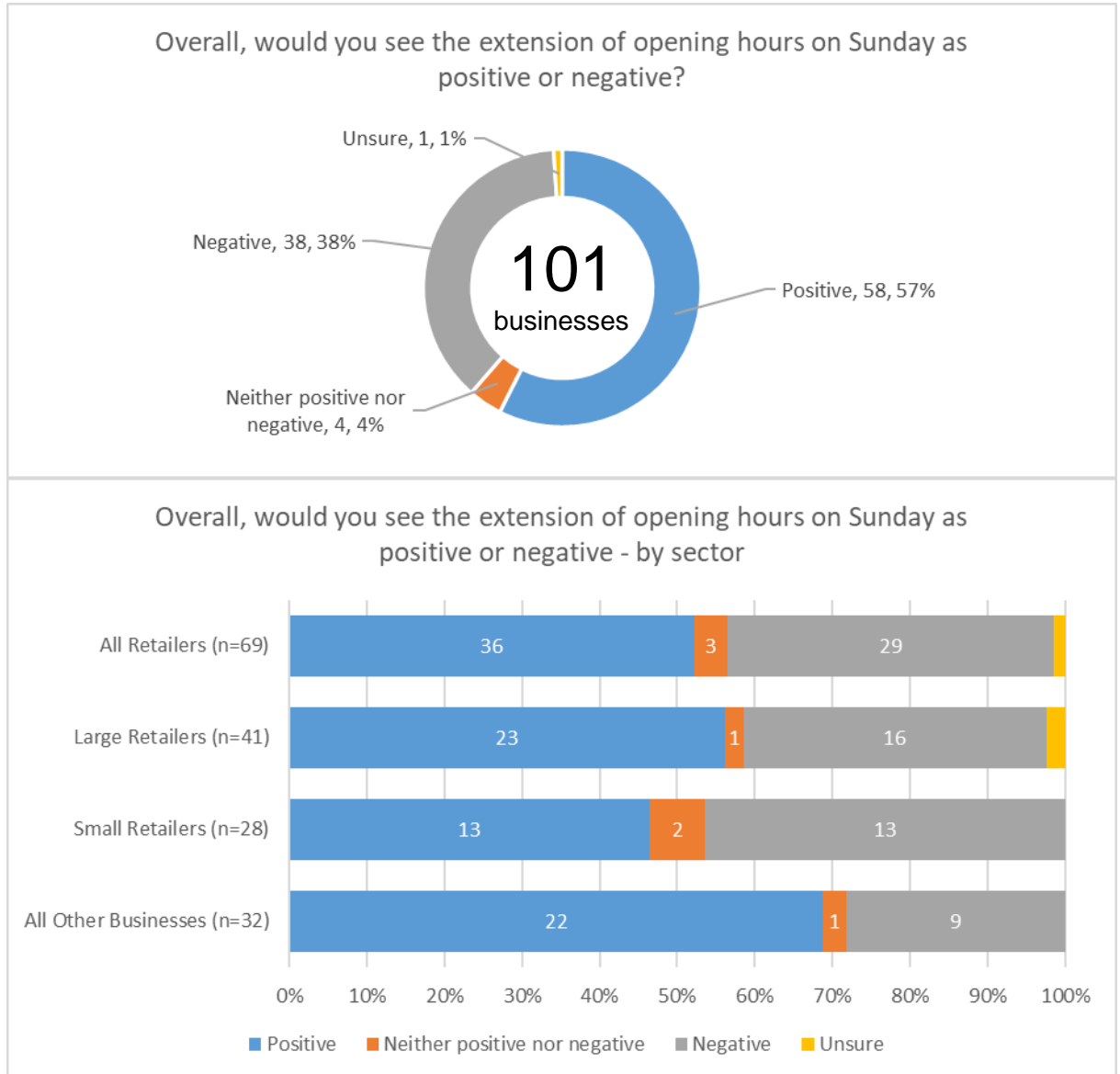
Respondents were asked where they thought the 'holiday resort' designation should apply, a large majority of respondents (65%) thought that, should the designation occur, it should apply across the entire district, rather than solely for the City Centre. This was consistent with the responses to the 2017 and 2018 consultations.



3.4 Key Findings (Business Survey)

Similarly, a majority (57%) of businesses seen the extension of opening hours on Sundays as a positive with 38% expressing it as a negative. Most retailers (52%) also reported extending Sunday trading hours as positive.

A larger proportion of large retailers were in favour, whereas an equal number of smaller retailers reported the extension of opening hours as both positive and negative. A majority of all other businesses (69%) seen it as a positive.

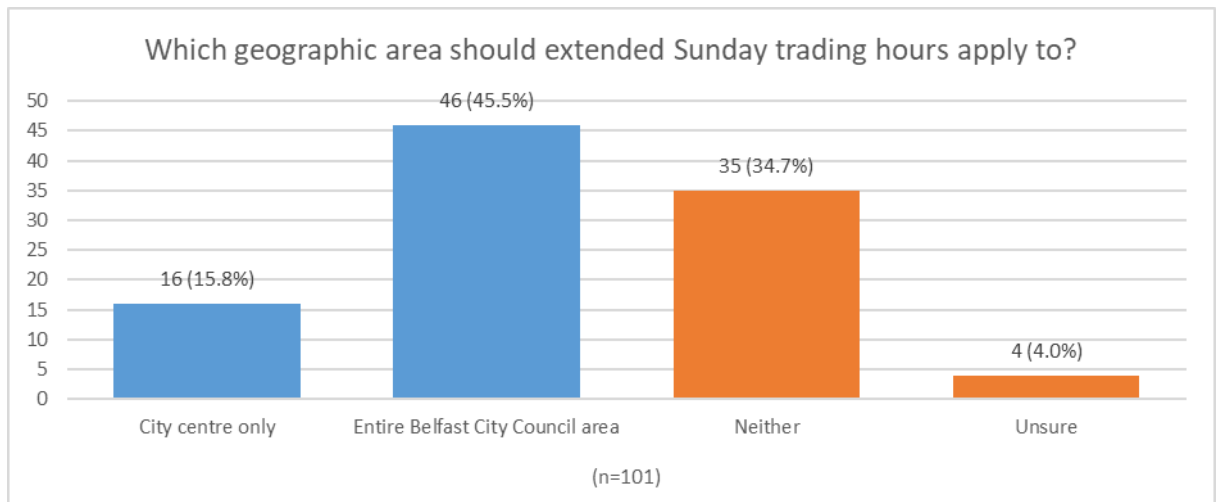


Businesses were also asked which geographic area extended Sunday trading hours should apply to. The entire Belfast City Council area was the most frequent option of responding businesses (46%). Businesses were asked to explain their answer and a selection of responses are listed below:

- 'Having one rule for city centre and another for surrounding areas seems unnecessary and could be confusing to local patrons and tourists who

increasingly stay in and visit wider areas of the city and surrounding countryside.’

- ‘We have premises in North, East, South, West and city centre.’
- ‘Visitors want to explore whole city’
- ‘As this is related to Holiday resort status, the city centre is where the highest % of tourists will be, it is logical, as with other towns throughout NI who have had their councils designate them HRS.’



A detailed feedback report of the public consultation is attached at appendix 1. This includes a further breakdown of the respondents to each survey including crosstabs of results (where appropriate) and a summary of qualitative responses to open-ended questions.

3.5 Main Issues

Tourism and Economic Potential

Should committee agree with the in-principle decision to designate the entire Belfast City Council area as a Holiday Resort designation, large retailers will have the opportunity to extend their Sunday opening hours on 13 Sundays before the end of September as follows:

- July – 5th, 12th, 19th, 26th
- August – 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th
- September – 6th, 13th, 20th, 27th

Analysing the 2026 Belfast Cruise Schedule with the above dates shows that there will be 8 cruise ships docking in the city with approximately 20,000 visitors. Many respondents noted the increase of neighbourhood tourism, highlighting

that several tourist attractions and retail offerings are outside of the city centre boundary. This rationale was provided to explain the majority answer to recommend that the entire Belfast City Council area is designated as a holiday designation. Many respondents to the consultation survey highlighted the potential tourism benefits this proposal presents for the city and its neighbourhoods.

Employee Protections

Article 11 and Schedule 2 of the legislation provide employment rights for shop workers, except those contracted to work only on Sundays. They aim to ensure that shop workers are not compelled to work on Sundays against their wishes. The new rights apply irrespective of age, length of service or hours of work. The Schedule provides that dismissal of a shop worker (including dismissal for reasons of redundancy) is unfair if the reason for it was the worker's refusal to work on Sundays. It also provides the right not to suffer any other detriment (such as denial of normal promotion or training opportunities, or refusal to pay seniority bonuses etc) for refusing to work on Sundays. All shop workers employed when the Order came into operation (1997) are automatically eligible for these rights. Those who enter a contract of employment requiring Sunday working after the commencement date will be able to 'opt out' of Sunday working subject to giving the employer three months' notice.

The core protections focus on any Sunday work rather than specific times (e.g., Sunday mornings). If a worker is protected or has opted out, the employer cannot require them to work any part of Sunday, including mornings, without agreement.

Imposing Sunday work could however raise issues if it indirectly discriminates (e.g., on religious grounds), requiring justification and possible reasonable adjustments. Otherwise, there are limited employee protections for retail workers contracted to work solely on Sunday. It should be noted that in the Republic of Ireland, where Sunday trading is effectively deregulated, there is a [Code of Practice on Sunday Working in the Retail Trade](#). The Code promotes best practice for Sunday rostering and compensation, recognising the impact on workers' quality of life while supporting business needs. It encourages consultation and agreement between employers and employees (or unions), promoting that existing staff should generally volunteer for Sunday work on a rota basis. The Code does not have the force of law, but it is admissible in evidence in proceedings before the Workplace Relations Commission, Labour Court, or civil courts.

As part of the 2018 consultation process, the Council developed a draft Charter (attached at Appendix 2). This Charter sets out a voluntary undertaking for large retailers seeking to operate extended trading hours on designated Sundays.

Should the Committee approve the implementation of the holiday resort designation, the draft Charter will be reviewed and updated in consultation with key stakeholders prior to any application process. This review will be undertaken with specific regard to the Northern Ireland Good Jobs Employment Rights Bill, to encourage retailers not to utilise zero-hours contracts in an exploitative manner when recruiting additional staff for extended Sunday trading.

Religion

Historically, Sunday trading laws in the UK have long reflected religious and cultural traditions, particularly the observance of Sunday as a day of worship and rest for many citizens within the Christian faith. This significance continues to resonate with many citizens, for whom Sunday serves as a vital day for religious practice, family time, and recuperation. The consultation process clearly reflected these concerns. A substantial number of respondents, particularly in response to all open-ended questions, expressed opposition to the proposed extension of Sunday trading hours on religious grounds. Many highlighted the potential erosion of Sunday's unique status as a day set apart from commercial activity, emphasising its importance for spiritual wellbeing and community cohesion.

3.6 Additional Responses

There were written responses submitted on behalf of five organisations (USDAW, Belfast Chamber, Translink, NI Hotel Federation and Association of Convenience Shops). These are summarised below and attached at Appendices 3-7.

- **USDAW** - Usdaw's survey of 220 Belfast retail workers shows strong opposition to extending Sunday trading. 82% view it negatively, with 76% of working parents and carers saying it would negatively impact their family life. Respondents fear increased pressure to work Sundays without additional pay, reduced wellbeing, and harm to work-life balance. They report that their workers would rather be spending time with family and engaging in community, sports and leisure activities or attending church. Usdaw also highlights concerns about negative impacts on smaller retailers (referencing in particular St. George's Market traders) who can already open and argues there is no clear

economic benefit, urging the Council to retain existing arrangements.

- **Belfast Chamber – A May 2026 Belfast Chamber member survey of 94 businesses found strong overall support for extending Sunday trading. 66% believe it would benefit business or the city, and 78.7% support opening before 1pm. Most (68.1%) do not anticipate staffing difficulties. Feedback highlights benefits for tourism, footfall, city activity and business flexibility, though a minority raised concerns around staffing pressures, employee wellbeing, and preserving Sunday as a day of rest.**
- **Translink - while recognising potential benefits of extended Sunday trading, Translink stresses severe funding constraints. Current resources do not allow for extended or enhanced Sunday services across bus and rail networks, and any changes would require dedicated additional funding. Translink therefore takes no position on the proposal but confirms that it lacks capacity to support it operationally at present.**
- **NI Hotel Federation - the NIHF supports limited extension of Sunday trading hours via holiday resort designation, viewing it as a pragmatic step to boost Belfast's weekend economy. Current restrictions create a morning activity gap despite strong demand and high Saturday hotel occupancy. Extended hours would enhance the visitor experience, increase dwell time and spending, support hotels, and create a more vibrant, family-friendly city. The flexible, seasonal approach is welcomed as balanced and aligned with tourism needs.**
- **Association of Convenience Shops - ACS opposes extending Sunday trading hours, arguing there is no unmet consumer need as convenience stores already open freely. The proposal would mainly benefit large supermarkets, displacing trade from independent retailers without increasing overall spending. It also extends beyond the city centre rationale and lacks evidence for supporting high street regeneration. ACS urges the Council to prioritise issues like rates, crime and accessibility instead of changes that could disadvantage small businesses and workers.**
- **Retail NI - Officers also engaged the Chief Executive of Retail NI, who re-affirmed the organisation's opposition to any designation of holiday resort designation within the city (particularly at a citywide geography), mirroring previous representations on this issue.**

3.7 Animation

There is currently no budget available to deliver a dedicated city-centre, family friendly animation programme on Sunday

mornings during any period of extended Sunday trading hours. Staffing resources are also prioritised on the successful delivery of the Fleadh. Nevertheless, there is scope to develop a comprehensive calendar of events highlighting 'What's On' across festivals, events, and activities delivered by both the council and partners funded through CMAG, CFF and the Bank of Ideas.

3.8 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report. Should council designate the entire Belfast City Council area as a Holiday Resort designation, officers from the Place and Economy department will lead the preparations required to enable larger retailer businesses to apply for extended Sunday trading hours. This will include the development of a schedule that will be made available to the public upon request. The Building Control Service currently perform the enforcement role in relation to Sunday trading under the 1997 Order and the designation of the Belfast district as a 'holiday resort' would require an additional level of resource to manage the registration of participating shops and enforcement of same.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

The decision to designate the entire Belfast City Council area (Sunday Openings 2026) has been subjected to an equality screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment. The policy has been screened out with identified mitigating actions. These actions include monitoring and evaluation of the impact of extended Sunday opening hours. While the council's designation will impact future years, elected members do have the opportunity to de-designate the district as a 'holiday resort'."

During discussion, the Director highlighted the engagement that had been offered and undertaken with stakeholders.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

That the Committee:

- Agrees that a Pilot-Scheme be undertaken to designate the entire Belfast City Council area as a Holiday Resort designation under Article 6, paragraph (9) of the Shops Sunday (Sunday Trading &c.) (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 for the two Sundays during the

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann on 2nd August and 9th August from 11am; and

- Agrees that a timebound Working Group be set-up with relevant stakeholders and trade unions to further engage on the issues, to include consideration of a city centre animation programme and potential alternative activities, funding options and a review of the pilot by the end of October.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Nelson,
Seconded by Councillor Long,

That the Committee agrees to proceed with the recommendations as outlined in the report.

On a vote, four Members voted for the amendment and sixteen against and it was declared lost.

The original proposal standing in the name of Councillor Beattie and seconded by Councillor de Faoite was put to the meeting when fifteen Members voted for the proposal and five against and it was subsequently declared carried.

Proposal 2

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Brennan and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to write to The Executive Office to affirm the Council's support for the 'Good Jobs' Employment Rights Bill and to request that it was progressed as a priority.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- Noted the results of the public consultation and additional direct responses which had been received from stakeholders, attached as appendices 3-7 of the report;
- Noted the issues and viewpoints expressed in the course of the public consultation process, as set out in section 3.5 of the report;
- Agreed that a Pilot-Scheme be undertaken to designate the entire Belfast City Council area as a Holiday Resort designation under Article 6, paragraph (9) of the Shops Sunday (Sunday Trading &c.) (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 for the two Sundays during the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann on 2nd August and 9th August from 11am;
- Agreed that a timebound Working Group be set-up with relevant stakeholders and trade unions to further engage on the issues, to include consideration of a city centre animation programme and

potential alternative activities, funding options and a review of the pilot by the end of October;

- Noted that any resolution passed by the Council on 1st June, 2026 in relation to the pilot scheme would subsequently require the Council to de-designate the district as a 'holiday resort' on completion of the pilot; and
- Agreed to write to The Executive Office to affirm the Council's support for the 'Good Jobs' Employment Rights Bill and to request that it be progressed as a priority.

Belfast Child - Seamless Pathway for Children and Families

The Committee considered the following 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 Members the 'Belfast Child' Strategy document for formal endorsement, following its consideration at the Community Planning Partnership on 16 April 2026.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- I. note the work undertaken by the Belfast Area Outcomes Group to develop 'Belfast Child' blueprint under the auspices of the Belfast Agenda commitments.**
- II. note that the Community Planning Partnership considered the Belfast Child document on 16 April 2026, and requested that individual partner organisations seek endorsement through their respective governance and decision-making processes.**
- III. note the next steps for the development of an associated action plan, to be brought back to the Partnership in due course; and**
- IV. consider and agree that Council endorses the 'Belfast Child' blueprint, in principle, with any specific resource considerations emerging from the action plan relating to the Council brought back for members consideration and approval.**

- V. agree that the Chief Executive (or a nominee) attend the proposed launch event.

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1** Members will be aware of the importance given within the Belfast Agenda to supporting our children and young people to reach their full potential and achieve the best educational outcomes and life chances possible. As part of the associated 4-year implementation plan, there is a commitment to ‘design a seamless developmental pathway’ for children and create a joint resourced delivery model’ for children aged 0-8 years.
- 3.2** In line with this commitment, the Belfast Area Outcomes Group (convened by the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust) has led the development of the ‘Belfast Child’ pathway framework’ which is attached at Appendix 1. This blueprint sets out a citywide vision to ensure that every child aged 0-8 years in Belfast can benefit from a seamless developmental journey. It’s built on a shared commitment to a whole-child, whole-family, and whole-community model, which creates support networks where families, communities, and services all play a crucial role.
- 3.3** This document shares the story of how a vision has been collaboratively designed, drawing on the wisdom of experts and the vast experience of Belfast’s community and government partners. Ultimately, this document provides a clear roadmap for how partners will work together to create an environment where every child in Belfast can truly thrive. The shared vision is that every child in the city is supported to realise their full potential through a clear commitment by agencies and services in Belfast to align, connect and collaborate around families. This collaborative approach aims to deliver the best possible outcomes for children.
- 3.4** The Belfast Child is intentionally ambitious. It seeks to build an integrated, city-wide support ecosystem capable of providing timely and effective intervention beginning at pre-conception and continuing until at least age eight. This represents the first stage of a journey that will, over time, extend to all children and young people under 18, aligning with the Belfast Agenda’s 2035 vision.
- 3.5** At the Community Planning Partnership meeting on 16 April 2026, the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust presented the final draft of the Belfast Child document for the consideration of the CPP. Members will note that there was broad support for the Belfast Child framework and the ambitions contained therein including Belfast becoming a ‘Child Friendly City’. It was acknowledged however, that further work still

remained to create a supporting implementation/action plan as well as the need for individual partner organisations to seek endorsement through their respective governance and decision making processes of the Belfast Child framework.

- 3.6 Within this context, correspondence from the Chief Executive of the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has been received by the Chief Executive (attached an Appendix 2), requesting that the Council consider the 'Belfast Child' document, with a view to supporting its endorsement. It outlines the opportunity presented to create important foundations for Belfast's development as a truly child friendly city and represents a significant opportunity to strengthen partnership delivery under the Belfast Agenda. The correspondence also requests the possible involvement of the Chief Executive in the future launch of the 'Belfast Child' document.

Next steps

- 3.7 It is understood that the next steps for the Belfast Area Outcomes Group is to engage with partners to consider key actions and potential lead partners in the development of an action plan with clear resource considerations set out. It would be the intention that the emerging draft action plan would be brought back to the Community Planning Partnership for consideration in due course. Any proposals which relate to the Council would be subject to direct engagement and be subject to established governance and decision-making processes.
- 3.8 Members are asked to consider endorsing the Belfast Child Strategy Document, in principle, with any specific resource commitments emerging from the action planning process to be brought back for members consideration in due course.

Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.9 There are no immediate financial or human resource implications arising directly from this report. Resource implications will be understood and considered following the development of a detailed action plan, which will provide assurance around the delivery of the Belfast Child Strategy.

Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.10 The Belfast Child document has a strong focus on equality and inclusion. It explicitly recognises the need to support high-risk and vulnerable groups and promotes a preventative, whole system approach that will have positive equality and good relations impacts across the city.

Any Equality Impact Assessment would be carried out by BHSCT who are the lead for this work. There are no rural needs implications.”

During discussion, the Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty answered a range of questions relating to accessibility, funding and viability of the blueprint, realignment of resources of statutory agencies and child-led co-design.

One Member suggested that reference to SEN children’s journey should also be discussed as part of the blueprint.

One Member suggested that Belfast Area Outcomes Group be invited to present at the Party Group Leaders Forum to discuss the approach and application of the document.

After discussion, the Committee:

1. noted the work undertaken by the Belfast Area Outcomes Group to develop ‘Belfast Child’ blueprint under the auspices of the Belfast Agenda commitments;
2. noted that the Community Planning Partnership considered the Belfast Child document on 16th April, 2026, and requested that individual partner organisations seek endorsement through their respective governance and decision-making processes;
3. noted the next steps for the development of an associated action plan, to be brought back to the Partnership in due course;
4. agreed that Council endorses the ‘Belfast Child’ blueprint, in principle, subject to feedback from the Committee, with any specific resource considerations emerging from the action plan relating to the Council brought back for members consideration and approval;
5. agreed that the Chief Executive (or a nominee) attend the proposed launch event; and
6. agreed that the Belfast Area Outcomes Group be invited to present at the Party Group Leaders Forum.

Outcome of the Judicial Review in relation to Animal Welfare Services and new Animal Welfare Legislation

(Ms. H. Morrissey, City Protection Manager and Mr. D. Bone, City Service Manager, attended in connection with this item)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 **The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Members on the outcome of the High Court Judicial Review in relation to Animal Welfare Services and to advise the**

Committee about new Animal Welfare legislation that the Department intends to introduce in April 2027.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to approve:

1. Support to write to the AERA Committee (Appendix 1).
2. The continuation of the existing Animal Welfare Service Delivery Model to March 2027 subject to the agreement of respective Councils within each region, to enable continued service delivery.
3. Note that a review of future Service Delivery Options may be required depending upon the response from the AERA Committee.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Since April 2012, councils have held responsibility for the enforcement of the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011, in relation to non-farmed animals, namely companion animals and equines.

3.2 Region and Belfast which is a standalone region. The five regions employ a total of 10 Animal Welfare Officers (who are authorised to carry out work in all 11 council areas) and 5 administration staff across NI. Based on the contents of this report, members are asked to approve the continuation of the existing Animal Welfare Service Delivery Model to March 2027, subject to the agreement of the other councils to enable continued service delivery.

3.3 The Animal Welfare Service within councils was fully funded (approx. £1.25M per annum) by DAERA until August 2023, when DAERA advised that it was unable to continue to provide funding to support councils in relation to non-farmed animal welfare services.

3.4 A Judicial Review was then lodged in the High Court by Belfast City Council & Fermanagh Omagh District Council on behalf of SOLACE against DAERA, to challenge the Department's decision to cease funding of the Animal Welfare Service.

3.5 The court found that there was a breach on the grounds of a procedural legitimate expectation. The Judge concluded that *'the making of that decision by the Minister without giving advanced notice to the relevant Assembly Committee was in breach of a procedural expectation.'*

- 3.6 The Judgement of the Court can be found at the following link: <https://www.judiciaryni.uk/judicial-decisions/2025-nikb-58>
- 3.7 Members are advised that the final Court Order required the following:
- Before making any decision in respect of funding for non-farmed animal welfare services provided by district councils for the financial year 2026/2027 only, the Department must give such advance notice to the AERA Committee for its consideration and must notify councils once it has done so.
 - DAERA must reimburse the Councils' full legal costs in relation to the Judicial Review.
- 3.8 At a meeting of councils CXs SOLACE on 6th March 2026, it was agreed that councils would:
- a) Continue current delivery model for the Animal Welfare Service in 2026-27, which is subject to the consideration of the 11 councils on an individual basis;
 - b) Consider options regarding the future delivery of the Animal Welfare Service from April 2027 onwards, in advance of the 2027-28 rates setting process, and when the funding position is clarified by the DAERA Minister.
- 3.9 Officers are now aware that a letter from the Minister / Permanent Secretary was tabled at the AERA Committee on Thursday 16 April 2026. The letter advised the Committee that DAERA does not intend to provide funding to councils for Animal Welfare Services in 2026/27 due to budget constraints. Members of the Committee raised a query around the budget and requested further explanation as to why the budget changed, why the Department was deciding now when budget was not yet finalised and also asked if the Department had made a bid for the funding in 2026/27.
- 3.10 Members are asked to consider whether they wish to write to the AERA Committee setting out the Council's position in advance of the Departmental response to the questions raised and any further debate about funding.
- 3.11 On 18th February 2026, the Minister outlined that officials would now take forward legislation to require sellers and suppliers of puppies, and sellers of kittens, under six months of age, to register with their local council. The registered seller and/or supplier will be required to meet specified conditions of registration.

- 3.12 Whilst officers welcome any steps to improve animal welfare it has been stressed to Departmental officials that councils do not have the capacity to implement this legislation and therefore there needs to be appropriate assurance around the resources which will be provided to councils to deliver this additional function.
- 3.13 The Department has indicated that the registration scheme would be self-financing. Officers have asked for evidence to demonstrate that would be the case. To date this additional, supporting financial information has not been provided by the Department.

Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.14 The annual cost of operating the basic shared Animal Welfare function within Belfast City Council is approx. £210k. Since funding ceased this has been met from reserves.

Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.15 No equality or good relations implications envisaged.”

During discussion, the City Protection Manager advised that officers would be writing to SOLACE on the matter also.

After discussion, the Committee agreed the recommendations as outlined in the report.

Call for Evidence by Criminal Justice Committee

The Committee was reminded that, on 3 March 2026, the Justice Minister had introduced a draft Criminal Justice (Sentencing etc) Bill. The Bill was in response to a review that was undertaken by the Department of Justice in respect of sentencing in criminal matters in Northern Ireland.

It was reported that, as a result of the review, the Department had identified a number of areas that needed to be addressed, one such area was the need to legislate for a new offence of assaulting a public worker.

The City Solicitor highlighted that the new offence was very important to the Council as it was the first time that there was a differentiation in the legislation acknowledging public workers. The proposed offence identified the vital role that public workers, whether employed or engaged, have to ensure the delivery of public services and that all public workers should be able to carry out their functions without fear of violence, abuse or intimidation.

The proposed Bill included the new offence at clause 37, assault of a public worker who was exercising one of their functions. The public worker can either be paid

or unpaid and was defined as someone employed or engaged to a) provide a service to the public, b) perform a public duty, or c) deliver a public service.

Clause 37 would deal with assaults that would fall within the threshold of common assault but under the new offence there was a higher sentencing maximum of 12 months custodial sentence as opposed to 6 months for common assault. Under the proposed Bill, assaults on public workers would be deemed to be indictable triable summarily offences and therefore were not subject to a summary only time limit of 6 months from the date of the offence for a prosecution to be laid before the court.

It was reported that the draft Bill made provisions for an allegation of aggravation by reason of being committed against a public worker to be specified alongside a charge of a specified offence. If the offence and the allegation are proven, then the court must specify so and record the aggravation in the conviction.

Any offender that was convicted and their offending was accepted to be aggravated by the fact that it was on a public worker would result in the seriousness of the offence being increased and this should be acknowledged by the sentencing court when sentencing the offender by explaining how this aggravation had affected the sentence imposed.

The proposed offence of assault on a public worker and the provision for aggravation where an offence was committed against public workers were welcomed steps for the protection of public sector workers, including Council staff.

The Council employs over 2000 workers that were required to deliver a wide range of public services on a daily basis, and the proposed legislation, if enacted, would only serve to strengthen the Council's zero tolerance approach to assaults on staff whilst the increase in sentencing powers would act as a further deterrent to any potential offenders.

The City Solicitor advised that submissions had been drafted for consideration in response to the Bill in relation to Part 6, draft Clauses 37-39 in respect of assault on public workers. She also highlighted that the provision within the Bill on aggravated events where the person was vulnerable should also be commended.

During discussion, one Member questioned the potential for the powers to include the seizure of illegal e-scooters. The City Solicitor advised that this would be reviewed.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Approved the draft submission (Appendix 2), as the Council's formal response.
- Endorsed the Council commending the provision within the Bill on aggravated events where the person is vulnerable.
- In relation to the potential of the Justice Bill to grant statutory powers to seize illegal e-scooters, the Committee delegated authority to the City Solicitor to include in the aforementioned response, if appropriate.

Summer Scheme Small Grant Funding 26/27

(The Committee agreed to consider this item alongside 3.b) Requests for Funding)

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in May, the People and Communities Committee had received an update on summer programmes supported by Neighbourhood Services, which included an update on funding provided through the Summer Scheme small grant programme. Following discussion, the Committee agreed that; ***'the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 22nd May, be requested to provide the maximum Summer Scheme Small Grants award to all organisations which had scored over 50 within the original assessment'***.

It was reported that the total budget required to award all applicants scoring over 50 100% of their requested eligible costs would be £214,418. This would require an additional budget of £45,874 and Neighbourhood Services did not have any available budget that could be used to cover this additional cost.

During discussion, in response to a Member's question regarding transportation to youth schemes, the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services advised that a report would be submitted to the People and Communities Committee once evaluation of this year's summer schemes had taken place.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that the additional budget required of £45,874 to award all applicants scoring over 50 100% of their requested eligible costs be approved from the Discretionary Fund Reserve.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Physical Programme Update

The Committee:

Capital Programme

- **Waterfront Hall - Chiller Units** – Noted that a satisfactory tender return had been received; that the Director of Finance had confirmed that this project was within the affordability limits of the Council; and agreed that a maximum of £545,000 be allocated.
- **Waterfront Hall - Smoke Curtains** – Noted that this project was being removed from the Capital Programme.
- **Drumglass Park SuDS Project** – Noted that this project with DfI be added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow the project to be developed.

Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

- Noted the update regarding NRF projects as outlined at 3.6 of the report.

Local Community Ownership Fund

- Noted that the £1.5m Local Community Ownership Fund was launched on 20th May and that the Expressions of Interest process was currently open.

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**)
- Approved the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (**Table 2**)
- Approved 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**)

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Supply and delivery of uniforms, footwear and PPE	Up to 5 years	£1,500,000	S Grimes	This is a recurring contract for supply and delivery of specific uniforms, footwear and various PPE to BCC stores that are required throughout BCC for services to carry out their daily operations. The contract will include clauses that will ensure the provision of agreed corporate branding and logos.	Y	N	N

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Measured Term Contract for specialist fencing contractors to supply and install new various metal fencing	Up to 4 years	£300,000	S Grimes	To support the Property Maintenance Unit with installing fencing requirements at BCC sites in line with emerging programmes of work.	N	N	N
Mobile Catering at BCC parks/open spaces	Up to 3 years	Concession Contract (Income)	D Sales	Covers the provision of mobile catering across a number of BCC parks/open spaces. Concession contract – approx. £65k per annum income.	Y	N	N
Corporate Health and Safety IT System	Up to 3 years	£31,000	P Gribben	The Corporate Health and Safety 'H&S' IT system supports the Council's established H&S management arrangements. The Council's Corporate H&S Unit uses the system to monitor the effective implementation of H&S arrangements through audits, inspections, and fire risk assessments.	N	N	N
NI Entrepreneurship Support Service (NIESS/Go Succeed) – Telehandling Service	Up to 4 years	£500,000	D Martin	The telehandling service is vital to the effective running of the NIESS/Go Succeed and ensuring that support is available to new and existing entrepreneurs, businesses, and social enterprises	N	N	Y

**B
1640**

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Friday, 22nd May, 2026**

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
				across the region.			
Framework A – NIESS/Go Succeed - Enterprise Support Solutions	Up to 4 years	£26,000,000	D Martin	The framework will provide capacity to future proof the delivery of agile and responsive enterprise support solutions to individuals, entrepreneurs and businesses, adding value to the existing enterprise and business support provision in place across the region. BCC taking the lead in procurement exercise on behalf of all NI councils.	N	N	Y
Framework B – NIESS/Go Succeed – Specialist Mentoring Services	Up to 4 years	£6,000,000	D Martin	The framework will provide capacity to future proof the delivery of agile and responsive specialist mentoring services to individuals, entrepreneurs and businesses, adding value to the existing enterprise and business support provision in place across the region. BCC taking the lead in procurement exercise on behalf of all NI councils.	N	N	Y

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
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1641

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Framework agreement for the provision of marketing and communications services	Up to 5 years	£5,000,000	E McConville	A framework of suppliers with marketing and communications services expertise is an effective way of meeting Marketing and Corporate Communications service requirements where, on occasions, the scope and timing of required outputs cannot be specified. In certain circumstances the framework would be utilised where the skills and expertise are not available in house to deliver services required.	Y	N	N
Supply and delivery of goalposts and associated accessories and equipment	Up to 3 years	£48,900	S Leonard	Supply of a range of goalposts and related accessories and equipment for installation at new facilities and upgrade of existing sports pitches within OSS/CNS department	N	N	N
A benchmarking exercise on tourism project operators to support BRCD projects	Up to 6 months	£37,000	S McNicholl	To appoint a provider to conduct a benchmarking exercise on tourism project operators to support BRCD projects	N	BRCD Executive Board	Y

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason	Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
The repair, deployment, filling and storage of 20 beacons	Up to 5 years	£850,000	D Sales	<p>A recent open tender exercise for this requirement did not provide a suitable bid. The original tender was for a 3+2 year contract subject to annual review.</p> <p>The Procurement Act permits switching to a Direct Award (STA) should no responses or suitable responses be received following an advertised procurement exercise.</p> <p>The Dept have confirmed this is Works contract; therefore, it is considered a below threshold contract under the Procurement Act (£5.3m threshold value for Works).</p>	Logwood Plant Centre LTD	1	N	N

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Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason	Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Distribution for City Matters and any other bespoke maildrops	Up to 2 years	£100,000	E McConville	Following a previous a tender exercise where no bids received were received and further market research it has been determined that Royal Mail Door to Door are the only supplier who can provide the service required.	Royal Mail Door to Door	3	N	N
To deliver collaborative research and development project - Belfast Region City Deal	Up to 12 months	£90,000	S McNicholl	This is a proposed collaborative research and development project with the Connected Places Catapult to co-design and pilot a methodology to support SMEs involved in City Deal innovation projects. CPC are contributing 50% of budget costs.	Connected Place Catapult	6	N	Y - CPC are contributing 50% of budget costs.
Removal, Storage and Retrieval of Office Records T629(a)	Up to 6 months	£28,000	Nora Largey	STA is required to ensure the continuity of services required to ensure the safe storage of records for the	Morgan Document Security	11	N	N

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason	Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
				<p>Council. This requirement has been out of contract for a significant period of time. Progress on re-tendering has been delayed due to the continued critical staffing levels and exceptional demand on IGU resources. Plan now in place with Dept to progress and award a replacement tender by December 2026.</p>				

Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Original Duration & Value	Modification Required	SRO	Description	Supplier
Provision of Traffic Management Services (T2578)	Up to 5 years & £200k	Additional £300,000	D Martin	At the time of the tender (Q1 FY25/26), in advance of the scope of road closures, logistics and Park and Ride requirements being understood in detail, it was envisaged that the traffic management requirements for	TCMC Crowded Space Ltd t/a The Traffic Management Company

Title of Contract	Original Duration & Value	Modification Required	SRO	Description	Supplier
				<p>Fleadh 26 could be delivered through the new T2578 contract under the contract option to cover 'Other events'.</p> <p>However, following engagement with statutory agencies, detailed planning and the need for additional measures, including security considerations, a final draft plan and costings has been prepared and there is a need to extend the overall contract by up to £300k.</p> <p>This represents a procurement risk as this level of overspend under the contract could be considered a material change under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. However, given the complexities of the plan, timescales and the statutory requirements e.g. in relation to road closures, it was considered</p>	

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Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
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Title of Contract	Original Duration & Value	Modification Required	SRO	Description	Supplier
				essential to be able to proceed using the existing contract. To help mitigate this risk work is underway to put in place a new tender to cover traffic management requirements for Fleadh 27.	
Provision of Autodesk Software Subscription (T2440)	Up to 3 years & £74k	Additional 1 year and £30,848.50	S McNicholl	A 1 year extension and increase in value will allow for the Council to carry out a corporate review of the licenses in 2027 to align with a re-tender and contract award in December 27 and avail of a significantly discounted rate for 1 year.	Pentagon Solutions Ltd

Table 4: Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Title of Contract	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason	Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Removal, Storage and Retrieval of Office Records T629(a)	Up to 6 months	£28,000	Nora Largey	Further to STA request above this is retrospective STA approval to cover services from 01 Dec 2025 to 31 st May 26.	Morgan Document Security	11	N	N

Diversity Mark Summit 2026 – Sponsorship

It was reported that approval was sought to sponsor the Diversity Mark Summit 2026 taking place at Titanic Belfast on 7th October, 2026.

It was highlighted that the investment required for this sponsorship was £3000, which included ten places at the summit and a seat at the Steering Committee, and would be met from the existing Organisation Development budget.

The Committee agreed to the sponsorship of the Diversity Mark Summit 2026.

Equality and Good Relations

Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting of 6th May, 2026

The Committee approved the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 6th May, including:

Members Update – Red Cross Presentation

- Shared City Partnership recommends that members note the presentation.

Good Relations Interface Programme

- The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also note the contents of the report and agree the proposed approach detailed in the Shared City Partnership Minutes.

Asylum Funding Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee notes the contents of the report.

TEO Framework for Race Relations Consultation – BCC Response

- The Shared City Partnership agreed the draft response and recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also note the contents of the report and approve the draft response for submission to the Executive Office.

The Committee noted that, in line with the consultation closing date of 3rd June, this would be submitted as a draft response, subject to ratification by Council on 1st June and any further comments or amendments at Council would be forwarded to the Executive Office.

PEACEPLUS – Local Community Action Plan Secretariat Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report

Peace Plus Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report

Peace Plus Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report

Community Regeneration and Transformation Thematic Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report

Any Other Business

- The Shared City Partnership thanked Mr. Gunn for his contributions to the Partnership and wished him well in his retirement.

Operational Issues

Minutes of the Party Group Leaders
Consultative Forum of 14th May, 2026

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum of 14th May, 2026.

**Requests for use of the City Hall
and the provision of Hospitality**

The Committee approved the recommendations as set out in Appendix 1 of the report:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	CHARGES
Shankill Baptist Church	21 August 2026	130th Anniversary Commemoration and Celebration for local congregation who work in the community assisting in local nursing homes, running summer football camps, children's events, providing a safe space for young people of the Shankill Numbers attending - 70		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NO ROOM HIRE • Any applicable additional charges <i>With 20% charity deduction applied to final total</i>
British Council	5 November 2026	British Council Schools Connect - COP31 - The debate engages students (aged 16-18) from approx. 30 schools in Northern Ireland to debate live and topical COP31 issues through a climate negotiation simulation. Numbers attending - 150		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room Hire of £1250 • Any applicable additional charges <i>With 20% charity deduction applied to final total</i>
MDSG (Mineral Deposits Studies Group)	5 January 2027	MDSG Winter Conference Dinner - Conference showcases the latest scientific research in economic geology, attended by academic staff, PhD students and personnel from government and industry. Numbers attending - 160	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room Hire of £1250 • Any applicable additional charges

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	CHARGES
The Open University	8 March 2027	Open University Council Dinner – Tours, reception, dinner and entertainment to mark a quarterly meeting of the University’s executive governing body in Belfast Numbers attending - 70	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room Hire of £450 • Any applicable additional charges <i>With 20% charity deduction applied to final total</i>
QUB School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering	24 March 2027	Emerald Isle Conference Dinner 2027 – Reception, dinner and entertainment as highlight of social activities for conference exploring sustainable chemistry and engineering. Numbers expected; 200	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room Hire of £1250 • Any applicable additional charges <i>With 20% charity deduction applied to final total</i>
British Poultry Council Ltd	13 April 2027	President’s Gala dinner - Reception, dinner and entertainment to close 3 day international poultry industry conference being held at the Europa Numbers attending; 225	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room Hire of £1250 • Any applicable additional charges <i>With 20% charity deduction applied to final total</i>

The Committee also agreed to the request for filming of the John Luke mural by the Ulster Scots Commissioner.

**Minutes of the Language Strategy
Working Group of 27th April, 2026**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Language Strategy Working Group of 27th April, 2026.

**Request for use of City Hall grounds
for Summer Cinema 2026**

The Committee considered the request from Belfast One to hold two 'Summer Cinema' events on City Hall lawns on Sunday, 19th July and Sunday, 26th July, 2026

The Committee:

1. Authorised the use of City Hall grounds on dates noted above;
2. Authorised the events to take place on the basis of submission of an event management plan and risk assessment to ensure delivery of safe public events; and
3. Delegated Authority to the City Solicitor to agree an alternative date with Belfast One, if required, should issues arise for the 26th July screenings.

Request for long term loan of Strand Cinema Key

The Committee was advised that a request had been received for a longer-term loan from Mimi Turtle, Chief Executive of The Strand Arts Centre for the loan of the Strand Cinema opening commemorative key and presentation box.

It was reported that the key was not on general display in the City Hall and was currently in storage. The key was not believed to be of significant financial value but of course is of interest from a social historical perspective and was one of a number presented to Lord Mayors during the picture house boom of the 1920s and 30s in the collection.

The Strand Arts Centre had confirmed they will have a museum grade cabinet in place for the display of historic artefacts and so the items display would be both appropriate and secure.

The Committee approved the request for the loan of the Strand Cinema opening commemorative key and presentation box by the Strand Arts Centre, subject to a legal agreement.

The Committee also noted that an update would be provided in relation to the Council's letter to the Department for Communities regarding the funding for Strand Cinema.

Issues raised in advance by Members

Safety Issues in the City Centre
(Councillor Nelson to raise) (RESTRICTED)

Councillor Nelson raised the issue of ongoing safety concerns in the City Centre. Several Members highlighted concerns regarding staff safety, business continuity, regeneration models and the need for engagement with communities, voluntary sector and government agencies.

The Chief Executive noted that meeting with key stakeholders was scheduled to discuss the issues which had been raised.

The Committee noted the concerns which had been raised regarding safety in the City Centre and the plans to address the issues.

Eternal Funding for Pre-Accession Assistance
(Councillor de Faoite to raise)

Proposal

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

That the Committee agrees to write to the EU Commission and the British and Irish Governments to request that Northern Ireland be granted access to the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) for the ability to draw down on the available funding.

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

Chairperson