

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 8th April, 2025

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor R. Brooks (Chairperson);
Councillors Abernethy, Bell, Black, Bower, Bradley,
Bunting, Canavan, Cobain, Doherty, M. Donnelly,
R-M Donnelly, Flynn, Garrett, Magee, Maghie,
Maskey, McKeown, I. McLaughlin and Verner.
- In attendance: Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and
Neighbourhood Services;
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Mr. S. Leonard, Operational Director of Resources,
Fleet, Open Spaces and Streetscene;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building
Control; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

There were no apologies.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 4th March were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st April, subject to the amendment of the minute under the heading 'Applications for Dual Language Street Signs' to provide that a report be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the feasibility of funding the instalment of communication boards within the Council parks and play areas in 2025/26. In addition, the minute under the heading 'Council Allotment Provision' was amended to provide that Beechvale Farm be included within the sites to be considered within a review of the Council's future allotment provision.

Declarations of Interest

Regarding item 5 (g) 'Integrated Advice Partnership Fund', Councillors M. Donnelly and N. Bradley declared interests in that they worked for the organisations which had been referenced within the report. In respect of item 5 (j) Councillor I. McLaughlin declared an interest in that he was a member of the committee of the Denmark Street Community Centre, which had been referenced within the report. Councillor McKeown reported an interest in item 5 (c) 'Installation of 'Sharps' Bin', in that his employer was referenced within the report.

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 8th April, 2025**

Since none of the aforementioned items became the subject of debate or discussion, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following two 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 two items as due to the nature of the matters 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 Committee was advised that the content of ‘restricted’ reports and any associated discussion were to be treated as ‘confidential information’ and that no such information could be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

Requests for the Use of Botanic Gardens

The Committee considered two applications which had been received for the hosting of events in Botanic Gardens in June and July, 2025. The first request had been submitted by CRD Live, seeking to host the ‘Botanic Summer Sessions’, which would consist of three music concerts on 26th, 27th and 28th of June. The second request had been received from JKS for a ‘Fire and Food BBQ Festival’ from 17th until 27th of July.

Discussion ensued in respect of the applications and a Member suggested, given the lateness of the receipt of the requests, coupled with issues raised relating to the ability of the Council to oversee a comprehensive due diligence exercise, that it would be prudent to refuse the applications. A further Member pointed out that any due diligence process would only commence once approval had been granted and the extent of that exercise, as outlined within the report, was comprehensive and robust.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor McKeown,

That the Committee agrees not to grant permission for the hosting of the two events given the lateness of the receipt of the applications and concerns relating to the ability of the Council to undertake a comprehensive due diligence exercise regarding the ability of the applicants to deliver the events.

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

Accordingly, the Committee granted authority for the hosting of the two events and delegated authority to the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services to oversee

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 8th April, 2025**

a robust due diligence exercise, which would include financial due diligence, to ensure that the applicants met with all of the necessary stipulations regarding community consultation, health and safety factors, licencing and contractual obligations.

The Committee noted that, if deemed necessary, the Strategic Director would exercise his delegated authority to prevent the events from proceeding should the applicants fail to meet with any of the obligations set out within the report

**Dilapidated and Ruinous
Buildings on Arterial Routes**

Further to its decision of 4th February, the Committee noted the contents of a report in relation to the above-mentioned matter, which included an update on the survey of dilapidated buildings on arterial routes and work ongoing to address dilapidation.

**Motions Referred From Council
or Raised at Committee**

**Notice of Motion: 'Dogs in Kennels
Transfer of Ownership'**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 3rd March, had considered a notice of motion, which was moved by Councillor Flynn and seconded by Councillor Verner, entitled: 'Dogs in Kennels – Transfer of Ownership'. That motion related to the Dangerous Dogs (Designated Types) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024 and stated that the powers contained within the legislation were 'unnecessarily cruel' in that it had deemed it as an offence to rehome so-called XL Bully dogs. The Council rejected the motion and passed the following amendment as the substantive motion:

"This Council recognises that public safety is of utmost importance and that any dog, regardless of breed or type, may display aggressive behaviour. It is also essential to ensure that animal welfare is not compromised. The restrictions on rehoming outlined in The Dangerous Dogs (Designated Types) Order 2024 is now in place, and its implementation should be assessed particularly regarding outcomes for public safety and animal welfare. A balanced and evidence-based approach is necessary to ensure that both public safety and animal welfare concerns are addressed effectively. Like any new legislation there is an imperative to consider its outcomes. Therefore, this Council will write to the DAERA Minister requesting an assessment of the impact of these restrictions to date."

The Committee noted the contents of a response which had been received on 31st March from the Office of the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in respect of the above-mentioned matter.

Reading Materials for Refugee Children

Further to its decision of 4th February, 2024, when, at the request of Councillor Bower, the Committee had agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting to examine

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 8th April, 2025**

the feasibility of the Council providing reading materials to refugee children, the Committee considered a report in this regard. It was reported that officers had consulted with two direct service providers, namely, The Book Trust and the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust's Family Help Clinic, both of whom provided support to refugee families.

Accordingly, it was recommended that authority be granted to enter into a formalised agreement with the aforementioned organisations to deliver appropriate reading materials, at a cost not to exceed £2,000.

The Committee granted the authority sought.

Request to Rename Glenbryn Playpark

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 6th December, 2022, it had considered a motion entitled, 'Corey Jack Aughey Memorial Park' which had been proposed by the former Councillor Pankhurst and seconded by the then Councillor McCullough. The motion had called upon the Council to rename Glenbryn Playpark as the 'Corey Jack Aughey Memorial Park' in memory of Corey Jack Aughey, who had died tragically in Spain in June, 2022. At that meeting, the Committee had agreed to adopt the motion, in principle, subject to a further report being submitted which would consider whether the renaming of the park would be within Council policy.

The Committee was informed that, in the absence of an agreed policy for the renaming of parks, amenities and open spaces, it could be deemed reasonable for Members to exercise discretion and approve the request. Such a decision would be in accordance with recent decisions taken regarding the naming of The Lagan Gateway Bridge and The Ruby Murray Village Green.

The Committee agreed to rename Glenbryn Play Park as 'Corey Jack Aughey Memorial Park' and noted that work to install an associated memorial bench within the park was ongoing.

Committee/Strategic Issues

**Strategic Cemeteries and
Crematorium Working Group**

The Committee considered and approved the minutes meeting of the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group of 2nd April, and adopted the recommendations within the associated report, that being, to grant approval to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to erect an additional seven headstone markers; and to undertake repair work across the Council's cemeteries to restore 41 headstones and monuments which had been damaged as a result of Storm Éowyn.

Operational Issues

**Stadium Community Benefits Initiative
Update and Work Programme 2025/26**

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 8th April, 2025**

(Mr. P. McGrattan, Leisure Development Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered a report, together with several appendices, which contained performance statistics for 2024/25 and forward work plans for 2025/26 for the Irish Football Foundation and the Gaelic Athletic Association in respect of their participation in the initiative. In addition, the Committee was provided with an overview of an outcomes-based accountability report, which had indicated that there had been a 100% positive feedback received from participants who had partaken in the initiative.

The Committee noted the progress achieved in the Stadia Community Benefits Initiative and approved the initial work programme for 2025/26 as set out.

**Mary Peters Track - Future
Management Arrangements**

The Committee considered a report which provided an overview of a stakeholders' engagement exercise which had been conducted on the future management options for the Mary Peters Track.

The Operational Director outlined the principal findings of the exercise and reminded the Committee that the Council had a long-standing Facilities Management Agreement with Athletics Northern Ireland (ANI), which was due to end in March, 2026. He pointed out that the current agreement incurred an annual cost of £160,000 and it was suggested that it would be prudent for officers to enter into preliminary discussions with both ANI and Greenwich Leisure Limited to explore several options for the future management of the track. Once that exercise had been completed, he added, a detailed report, based on the outcomes of the discussions, would be presented to the Committee for consideration.

The Committee agreed to adopt Option 1, as outlined within the report, and authorised officers to undertake a pre-market engagement exercise, as outlined, to gauge interest in a future facility management agreement, with a view to either awarding a new arrangement, similar to the one currently operated; or another option that would explore alternative management arrangements.

In addition, the Committee approved the next steps and timeline regarding the future management procurement process.

Installation of 'Sharps' Bin

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st November, 2022, had adopted a motion, which had been moved by Councillor Smyth and seconded by Councillor McCusker, agreeing, amongst other things, that the Council would commit to work with relevant partners, including the Public Health Agency, to explore the feasibility of installing needle/drug waste bins (i.e., 'sharps' bins) within the city centre. As such, the Committee was informed that officers had reviewed data across the city centre and two sites had been identified for consideration, i.e., the Council carpark in Donegall Street or the carpark in Corporation Square.

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 8th April, 2025**

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor Smyth addressed the Committee. He expressed frustration that Writers' Square had not been considered as an appropriate location, given the extent of the problem within that vicinity. He thanked officers for the work which had been undertaken and suggested that the Committee might consider locating the bin within the carpark in Little Donegall Street as the best option available.

It was moved by Councillor Flynn, seconded by Councillor Maghie, and agreed that the 'sharps' bin be located within the Council-owned carpark in Little Donegall Street.

Arising from discussion, it was agreed that consideration be given to examining best practice methods in the management of 'sharps' bins in other cities, such as Glasgow or Dublin. It was agreed also that an invitation to present to a future meeting in the matter be extended to representatives of the Public Health Agency.

Static Park Wardens Pilot Scheme

The Committee was provided with an update on the ongoing Static Park Warden Pilot Scheme, which had been approved at the meeting held on 12th September, 2023. The Members were reminded that the scheme had been introduced as a measure to reduce levels of antisocial behaviour at a number of sites, including the Falls Park, the Dunville Park, the Páirc Nua Chollann and the Woodvale Park.

It was reported that, since 8th October, 2024, when the last report had been considered, there had been a decrease in the recorded instances of antisocial behaviour at three of the aforementioned sites, with a slight increase reported at the Woodvale Park. It was noted that a review and evaluation of the Static Park Wardens Pilot Scheme would be undertaken in conjunction with an overall review of the Park Warden Service.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and approved a final extension to the pilot scheme and noted that a further report in respect of a revised staffing model would be considered on the completion of the review process.

Cave Hill Mountain Bike Trail

The Committee was informed that a request had been received from representatives of the Cavehill Mountainbikers Club seeking permission to establish a 'feeder trail' extension to the existing 'middle trail' within the country park.

It was explained that the proposal, if approved, would formalise the use of an unused woodland trail at the site and help reduce the number cyclists using the main pathways within the estate. It was reported that a pre-assessment had identified no environmental or planning constraints associated with the proposal.

The Committee acceded to the request, subject to an appropriate addendum being incorporated within the existing memorandum of understanding between the Council and the Cavehill Mountainbikers Club.

Closed Bin Lid Policy / Removal of Liners

(Mr. J. McConnell, City Services Manager (Resources and Fleet) attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the following report:

1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to inform members of two operational issues which have Health and Safety implications and to seek approval for operational changes / policy enforcement to ensure the Health and Safety of Waste Collection Operatives as they perform their collection duties. The report was discussed at PGLCF on 27th March 2025, and officers were requested to bring this report to the next People and Communities Committee.

These issues centre round

- 1.** The practice of some households of attaching large bin liners to general domestic (black) bins and the safety requirement to prevent their use
- 2.** The overfilling of bins and the subsequent adaptation / modification of bin lifters on the backs of vehicles following a fatality in mainland UK and the subsequent coroner's findings and recommendations.

Whilst necessary both changes have the potential to increase disrupt bin collections and the report also provides details as to how the service plans to mitigate against any potential disruption caused.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1** Members are asked to note the contents of this report and agree to the next steps as outlined in paragraph 3.29.

3.0 Background

- 3.1** In January 2014, the Council adopted its 'Waste and Recycling Collection Operation Policy' which covered the policies and procedures concerning the collection of Household Waste. For relevance, in relation to overfilled bins and unsafe bins, section 2.31 states:

'The council may reject for collection, waste and recycling receptacles if the following reasons exist:

- If the bin is too heavy due to, for example, it contains heavy waste such as construction / DIY / soil etc;
- If the bin contains hazardous or other waste material deemed to pose a risk under health and safety;
- If the wrong receptacle has been presented for collection;
- If unapproved multiple bins are presented (point 2.10);
- If the wrong materials have been put into any receptacle (point 2.29);
- *If the receptacle appears to be damaged or is otherwise in an unfit state to be emptied safely;*
- If the receptacle is not compatible with the council's waste collection vehicle;
- If the receptacle contains electrical appliances / items (WEEE). (These should be disposed of through the council's bulky household waste collections, detailed in Section 3 of this policy or at the nearest recycling centre.)
- *If the bin lid is not fully closed and could cause a health and safety problem;*
- If the bin has no lid/damage to wheels, body or axle
- Domestic clinical waste'

Domestic Bin Liners – Background

- 3.2 Belfast City Council has an operational protocol, in alignment with the contamination policy, confirming the non-collection of comingled compostable (brown bins) and comingled dry recyclable (blue) bins, which are presented with bin liners. However, this protocol does not currently apply to residual (black) bins and as a consequence there has been a year-on-year increase in the use of bin liners in black bins across the city. It is believed that in the areas with the greatest occurrence, the bin liners are supplied and fitted by companies that provide a black bin cleaning service and examples of bin liners used are illustrated in the pictures below.
- 3.3 It has been recognised by operations that the use of these bin liners had the potential to snag on equipment and bin lifters on occasion and this had a risk of dislodging the bin from the bin lifter as it was being lowered from the collection vehicle. Risk assessments advised operators to stand in safety zones behind vehicles when emptying bins.
- 3.4 Recently a black bin detached from the lifting clamp, injuring an operative. The bin was lined with a liner tied around the clamping edge of the bin. The investigation concluded that the liner between the clamp and the bin contributed to the bin slipping out of the clamp.

3.5 There are currently several serious Health and Safety issues arising from the use of bin liners including:

- Bin liners can impact the lifting gripping force resulting in the bin detaching and falling, placing staff and the public at risk.
- Bin liner usage is not considered in any waste collections risk assessment.
- Bin liners can become entangled in the lifting mechanism causing an unsafe overhead load during collection. This presents a safety risk to the operative to remove the liner.

3.6 In addition, General waste (black) bins often contain sanitary waste, pads, dressings and disposed nappies, along with dog faeces. Instances of needles have also been reported by staff. On review it has been established that bin liners contribute to the splashing/spillage of putrid substances and liquids onto staff and onto the street as the content of the liners are not fully emptied into the collection vehicle and can become entangled with the bin lifter mechanism.

3.7 Waste Collection management are currently dealing with staff impacted by waste materials falling from the bins and liners onto their persons. Putrid liquids, debris, glass, sanitary waste and surgical needles have all been reported.

3.8 In order to clear the snagging of the bin liner, operators have to manually disentangle the bin liner from the lifting mechanism. Although there are Safe Systems of Work (SSOW) in place to allow this to happen, it is not best practice to have this situation occur in the first place as it still exposes the operator to any remaining waste within the liner. Given the accidents that have occurred, and the risks posed to operatives it is felt that removing this risk completely is the correct option.

3.9 Waste Collections Operations have discussed the matter with Health and Safety colleagues. Departmental Health and Safety has conducted some comparisons with other Councils as to their approach to bin liners. They have advised:

'Bin liners have increasingly been raised as a safety concern across Northern Ireland. The liners have the potential to get caught on lifters or caused bin to detach for lifters which have resulted in a number to incidents and injuries to our operatives. The council has a duty of care to prevent injury to our staff, given that we are aware of the safety issues involve with these liners it would be prudent to put in place measures to eliminate this potential risk to our staff.'

Other Councils eg LCCC, ABC, CC&G, Mid & East Antrim and F&O all have put steps in place whereby bins are not collected if there is a bin liner attached to the bin.

Failure for us to act on this could result in further incidents/significant injury to our operatives which we could have prevented, therefore we would be liable for any claim or prosecution in light of this.'

Scale of the issue

- 3.10 Resources and Fleet, through the Departmental Performance and Improvement Unit, commissioned a survey in August / September 2024 to ascertain the size and spread of the issue of bin liners (alongside overfilled bins detailed below)
- 3.11 The exercise covered a total of 6195 bins¹ across selected routes covering all areas of the city. It was found that a range, from 0% up to almost 33% of presented bins, on surveyed domestic black bin routes, had bins lined with single use plastic bin liners. Overall, a total of 6.6% of presented bins surveyed were lined. The survey would indicate that the issue of lined bins may be concentrated in areas in the West and the North of the City.

Impact upon Bin Cleaning companies

- 3.12 With the exception of prohibiting the fitting of a bin liner this measure will have no other impact upon Bin cleaning businesses. It does not prevent them from cleaning the bin. It will only prohibit the fitting of the plastic liner.

Background to the Issue of Raised Bin Lids

- 3.13 Operational crews have been raising for some time the issue of overfilled bins as a both a safety reason and a reason for non or missed collections. As per the Collections Policy mentioned above, section 2.31 states a valid reason for rejection of collection to be
- *If the bin lid is not fully closed and could cause a health and safety problem*

Until now Waste Collections worked in a pragmatic way in that if an individual bin was open slightly then crews would be expected

¹ The sample size will give a confidence level of 99% with a 2% margin of error

to collect. However, in effect this was running contrary to Council Policy.

3.14 Fatality in Coventry 2023 and the subsequent findings from the Coroner's report.

However, unfortunate events have resulted in major safety issues that have a direct impact on the collection or otherwise of bins with open lids.

3.15 In Coventry in 2022 there was a fatality as a result of the operator being caught by the bin lifter and lifted into the back of the collection vehicle and crushed. As part of the coroner's findings, it was stated that the bin lifter mechanism, under certain circumstances, allowed bin lifts to be raised without differentiating what the bin lifter was actually lifting, causing the operator to be lifted into the back of the Refuse Collection Vehicle and subsequently crushed.

3.16 As part of the response and actions following the fatality referenced above, it has been made clear by the Vehicle and Bin Lift Manufacturer (Terberg / Dennis Eagle), that the practice of emptying bins with open lids runs contrary to the Operator's Training Procedure supplied by the Vehicle and Bin Lift Manufacturer, which states as follows

- *Always ensure that the lids of wheeled bins are closed before presenting them to the binlift*
- *DO NOT attempt to empty overfull wheeled bins, this can lead to spillage and falling objects which could cause personal injury or damage to the bin lift equipment*

3.17 They have informed Councils that allowing this practice to continue is at the user's risk.

3.18 In order to prevent a reoccurrence of the fatality, the bin lifter manufacturer has agreed with the coroner to conduct certain modifications to the lifting mechanism. For 'in service' vehicles there will be a 'Bin lift Compaction Control Upgrade (BCCU)' software upgrade to prevent the compaction (crushing) of items suspected of not being 'bin' waste, which may have been lifted and dropped into the main body of the vehicle (the person may still be lifted but the compacting mechanism will be shut off).

3.19 For newly manufactured vehicles, new additional sensors will be attached to the bin lifters. Any object presented to the lifter, or enters within the safety zone of the lifter, which is greater in height than a standard bin (eg an operative or Member of the Public) will not be lifted as the sensor will disable the lifter. As a

consequence, any bin presented with a raised lid will trigger the sensor and the bin lifter will cut out i.e. the vehicle will not lift overfilled domestic bins. In this instance the person will not be lifted.

- 3.20 This issue is of immediate concern as the Council has already taken ownership of 5 of the modified vehicles with 19 more on order, due to arrive by end of 2026. All subsequent Refuse Collection Vehicles will be designed with this safety feature as standard. If we consider that Waste Collections service currently collect approximately 54 routes per day, then currently 9% of routes cannot lift bins with raised lids and this figure will rise to approximately 48% within 2 years.
- 3.21 In addition, BCC has 38 'in service' vehicles. All of these have now received the software retrofit and drivers and operators are receiving refresher training on the vehicle modifications and their safe operation. As already outlined this training instructs them to operate the vehicle in line with the Operator's Training Procedure supplied by the Vehicle and Bin Lift Manufacturer as detailed in 3.18 above.
- 3.22 In light of these developments, it is essential to plan the cessation of the practice of emptying overfilled bins.

Open Lid Data Survey

- 3.23 As outlined above, the Departmental Performance and Improvement Unit conducted a survey in August / September 2024 to ascertain the size and spread of the issue of raised bin lids.
- 3.24 The exercise covered the same 6195 bins across selected routes covering all areas of the city. It was found that an average of 9.5% of bins surveyed presented with raised bin lids, ranging from 2.9% up to almost 18.4% of presented bins. The survey would indicate that the issue of lined bins may be more widespread across areas of the city.

Next steps

- 3.25 A Project Team is currently in the process of developing an implementation plan in relation to tackling the two issues highlighted in this report. The draft plan includes a detailed exercise with Marketing and Comms and proposes the following next steps.
1. Phase 1 (March 2025) CMT report & political engagement. Phase 1 would also include TU & staff engagement and updating of Health & Safety documentation.

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 8th April, 2025**

- 2. Phase 2 (April 2025) On-boarding focusing on Community engagement & Awareness and staff training**
- 3. Phase 3 Bedding in phase 12th May 2025 for 6 weeks - Amber Bin Tags – Notify residents of non-compliance without penalty for three cycles - Monitor Reports & Feedback – Adjust messaging based on common issues.**
- 4. Enforcement of full policy 23rd June 2025 – onwards.**

The Committee welcomed the proposals as set out within the report, given that they sought primarily to protect the health and safety of the Council's staff. Members emphasised the importance of effective community engagement throughout the process.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and approved the four step process (as outlined in paragraph 3.25 above) in the marketing, engagement and implementation process for the proposed new arrangements for the collection of bins.

Integrated Advice Partnership Fund

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The main purpose of this report is to advise members on the outcome of a second call for proposals to deliver activity that will meet the aims of the Integrated Advice Partnership Fund (IAPF) and seek their approval to award funds for delivery until 31st March 2026.**

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Members are asked to

- approve funding for the bids received from organisations that are part of existing advice consortia; and**
- to consider and agree if the remaining unallocated IAPF budget can be used to recruit a dedicated staff member (who would be employed by one of the Lead Partners) whose role would be to co-ordinate the services offered by all BCC funded advice services.**

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 Members will recall that officers advised in November 2024 of additional temporary funding from DfC through the Integrated Advice Partnership Fund for activity in 2024/26. The objective of**

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 8th April, 2025**

the fund is to 'Improve the uptake of free, independent regulated debt advice through a collaborative partnership approach'.

- 3.2** Following committee approval, members sought proposals from existing Lead partners within each advice consortia for projects that would meet the aims of the scheme. Advice Space (formerly Citizens Advice), submitted a project proposal and was awarded funding of £82,497 for delivery of a citywide project in January 2025, which will include delivery in central and east Belfast.
- 3.3** Members agreed that council would invite further applications from all BCC funded advice organisations to allocate the remaining budget of £165,756.62. The deadline for submission of applications was 12th March 2025. The table below shows bids that were received by that date;

Organisation	Amount Requested	Debt Service Provision	DEA
Upper Springfield Development Trust	£45,923	The project will deliver a range of additional debt advice to 640 beneficiaries, including; Income Maximisation , e.g. Benefit Checks Crisis Intervention to ensure those facing immediate hardship have access to basic necessities - Bryson House Emergency Relief, Warm and Well project, Social Supermarket and Food Parcels Referral to other organisations providing access to the most appropriate organisations. Debt Advice via money and debt services Cost of Living Workshops - how to navigate the complexities of managing finances and developing appropriate skills and resources. The provision of a Financial Wellbeing Booklet to 500 families.	Black Mountain, Court
The Vine Centre	£48,867	The project will provide a range of centre based and outreach activities to 365 beneficiaries. Augmenting the capacity of existing debt services to meet an increased level of demand. Increasing service hours	Castle, Oldpark, Court

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 8th April, 2025**

		<p>offering specific debt advice available on an outreach basis.</p> <p>Developing an extended and enhanced referral network across north Belfast- increasing capacity of organisations to meet the needs of clients in relation to debt management and alleviation.</p> <p>20 workshops - focusing on debt and financial management</p> <p>Developing in partnership with the Science Shop at the University of Ulster, a website with accessible information and guidance on debt, money and financial management, and direct contact to services.</p>	
South City Resource and Development Centre	£24,864	<p>Provision of services to 468 beneficiaries.</p> <p>The recruitment and training of Trainee Debt Advisors- Increase the capacity of the organisations to offer specific debt related services within local areas.</p> <p>Provision of additional service hours- increasing access to debt advice in a range of local facilities.</p> <p>Enhanced information services- provision of a debt advice and financial management handbook- 20,000 copies.</p> <p>Increase the number of organisations and their capacity to provide access to debt advice- including the development of a referral system</p>	Lisnasharragh, Balmoral, Botanic

Officers have assessed these proposals and recommend that each is awarded funding as they meet the aims of the fund and scored highly against each of the agreed success criteria.

- 3.4 The total allocation for these projects is £119,652.87. This leaves an amount of £46,103.75 that has not been allocated. All partners within each advice consortia have had the opportunity to present**

proposals and there is no indication that any further proposals will be submitted if a further call was to be opened.

Members may recall that council undertook an independent Review of BCC funded Advice Services which completed in December 2024. One of the key recommendations was that council should explore ways to enhance the current consortia model including efforts to increase co-ordination amongst existing delivery partners.

- 3.5 Members are asked to consider and agree if the remaining unallocated budget from IAPF can be used to recruit a dedicated staff member (who would be employed by one of the Lead Partners) whose role would be to co-ordinate the services offered by all BCC funded advice services. This would meet the key aim of the Integrated Advice Partnership Fund, which is: 'to test proposals which focus on enabling better integration of funding/services, collaboration for early intervention and prevention to increase the reach of debt advice. This approach is grounded in collaborative advice partnerships; connecting services to improve the uptake of debt advice reach via an integrated approach.'
- 3.6 At the time of writing, officers have not concluded consultation with all lead partners and consortia to identify the organisation best placed to employ this staff member, a verbal update on this process can be provided at committee. Funds are currently only available to fund this post until 31st March 2026; if approved it would be introduced on a pilot basis and its effectiveness evaluated with a view to being funded on an ongoing basis through available advice funding if the post proves to be effective.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.7 The administration of this fund will be conducted by existing staff, there is no financial impact for council as 100% funding is being provided by DfC. The allocation for Belfast is as listed below.

2024/25	2005/26	Total
£160,804.82	£87,448.66	£248,253.48

Members will know that advice funding is allocated on an area basis and members agreed in January that they would use the agreed allocation model for each consortia. The table below shows the percentage of the remaining budget that should be allocated to each area. However, given that no bids from central and east were received and that the entire budget has not been used, it is recommended that members provide the full requested

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 8th April, 2025**

allocation to each of the bids received. It is also worth noting that the Advice Space proposal which has already been funded covers all areas of the city; the north bid will also cover the Court DEA (Shankill) and that the South bid will also include Lisnasharragh.

Area	% Allocation Model	% To Each Area
Central	£10,768.76	
East	£17,349.67	
North	£31,109.75	£48,867
South	£18,546.19	£24,864
West	£41,878.50	£45,923
Total	£119,652.87	

The Committee noted the contents of the report and approved the funding of the bids received from the organisations within the existing advice consortia; and agreed, in principle, that any in-year underspend be redistributed equally across the four providers identified within the report, subject to officers ascertaining that capacity existed within the aforesaid organisations to deliver the proposed service in 2025/26.

It was noted that an update report in the above-mentioned matter would be submitted for consideration.

Partnership Agreements

(Ms. N. Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Neighbourhood Services Manager reminded the Committee that the Council had worked for several years in partnership with local organisations to help achieve common strategic objectives. In this regard, support was provided to the organisations to enable them to achieve such objectives, which were measured against an outcomes-based framework. It was reported that a review had been conducted on the Council's existing agreements which had concluded that they provided value for money and were in alignment with the Council's strategic objectives. Accordingly, it was recommended that the Committee approve the payments for 2025/26, as set out below:

Keep NI Beautiful	£55,000
Mary Peters Trust	£5,000
Bryson Energy	£31,209
Total	£91,209

The Committee adopted the recommendation and noted that an additional inflationary-linked amount would not be awarded in 2025/26, since there existed no identifiable in-year budget.

Requests to Host Events in Parks and Open Spaces

The Committee considered two requests which had been received for the hosting of events within parks and open spaces. The first had been submitted by the Legacy Network for a Victory in Europe (VE Day) celebration in the CS Lewis Square on Thursday, 8th May. The second request had been received from the charity 'Mary's Meals', seeking permission to host a sponsored walk to highlight world hunger in the Falls Park on Saturday, 14th June.

The Committee granted authority to the applicants to host the events in the parks/open spaces and agreed to delegate authority to the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services to ensure that the organisers met with all of the stipulations as set out within the report regarding operational issues, community engagement, terms and conditions and statutory requirements.

Lower Shankill Park

The Committee was reminded that officers had been working with the Denmark Street Community Association since the opening of the Lower Shankill Park and had developed a mutually beneficial key-holding agreement to enable access to the park outside normal operating hours. It was reported that the association had requested that the existing arrangement be formalised to enable additional duties to be undertaken. Such duties would support community programming and enhance accessible to the amenity.

It was pointed out that, at its meeting 10th October, 2023, the Committee, in seeking to promote and enhance the usage of newly-established or refurbished parks properties, had agreed to earmark a sum of £15,000 within annual budgets for the purpose outlined. Accordingly, it was recommended that the Committee approve a contribution of £5,000 to the Denmark Street Community Association for overseeing key-holding duties and to enhance and enable further community usage of the park.

That Committee agreed that the Council would enter into a formalised agreement with the Denmark Community Street Association for the undertaking of the duties outlined and that a contribution of £5,000 be approved to enable additional work to promote and enhance community usage of the park.

Applications for Dual Language Street Signs

The Committee agreed to the erection of a second street nameplate, in Irish, at Grace Street, Sussex Place, Russell Street, Russell Place, Lavinia Mews and Eliza Street Close.

Dual Language Street Signs – Potential Adverse Impacts

The Director of Planning and Building Control outlined the principal aspects of a report which provided details on several applications which had been received for the erection of second street signs, in Irish, at Mount Merrion Avenue, Isoline Street, Onslow Gardens, Lismain Street, Kimberley Street and Loopland Drive. In accordance with the Council's Dual Language Street Sign Policy, the Committee was informed that the

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 8th April, 2025**

applications had been submitted for its consideration since it had been deemed that there could be an adverse impact on equality and good relations giving rise to community tensions should surveying of residents be conducted.

It was noted that applications for both Mount Merrion Avenue and Isoline Street had been the subject of written objections by Elected Members

The Director pointed out that, within the context outlined, the Committee could consider two options, in that it could either agree that surveys of the occupiers of the streets be conducted, or rather that no surveys be conducted on the grounds of the potential adverse impacts identified and that the applications be closed.

Proposal

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

That the Committee agrees that no surveys be undertaken of residents in Mount Merrion Avenue and Isoline Street and the applications for a second street sign, in Irish, be closed.

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

Following discussion, the Committee agreed that surveys be conducted on the residents in Mount Merrion Avenue, Isoline Street, Onslow Gardens, Lismain Street, Kimberley Street and Loopland Drive regarding the erection of a second street sign, in Irish.

Dual Language Street Signs
Raphael Street and McClure Street

The Director of Planning and Building Control presented a report which sought the Committee's views in respect of proposals to erect a second street sign, in Irish, in Raphael Street and McClure Street.

Raphael Street

The Director explained that, in relation to Raphael Street, there existed no properties therein, thus a residents' survey could not be conducted in accordance with the policy. She reminded the Committee that, since Raphael Street was located within the city centre boundary, the agreed consultation process had been to place advertisements within local papers seeking views on the proposal.

Proposal

Moved Councillor McKeown,
Seconded by Councillor Garrett,

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 8th April, 2025**

That the Committee agrees, in the absence of a residents' survey for Raphael Street and taking into consideration the presence of dual language street signs, in Irish, within the adjacent streets and the local area, that the Committee agrees to the erection of a second street sign in Irish.

Amendment

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

That the Committee agrees that advertisements be placed in local newspapers seeking views on the proposals to erect a second street sign, in Irish, in Raphael Street.

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

Following discussion, the Committee adopted the proposal as moved by Councillor McKeown and seconded by Councillor Garrett.

McClure Street

The Director explained that, in respect of McClure Street, 22 properties had recently been constructed. It was noted that the new residents had not, as yet, been registered on the electoral register, thus there was no information available to undertake a residents' survey. It was anticipated that a revised electoral register would be published in December, 2025, at which point a survey would be conducted.

The Committee agreed that the application and survey for a second street nameplate, in Irish, in McClure Street be deferred to allow sufficient time for the publication of an updated electoral register in December, 2025, thus enabling the normal survey process to be undertaken.

Issues Raised in Advance

Council Dog Warden Service - (Councillor Brooks)

The Committee agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting which would outline the work of the dog warden service and would provide also information on its activity and volume of work. The report would include details on the current staffing levels and an overview of the fines currently levied (including previous decisions in this regard). In addition, information would also be provided on the Council's bye-laws and their effectiveness, across the city and in parks and dog runs; together with an outline of the opportunities for a multi-agency approach being adopted to address the issue of dog fouling; and consideration of several options at a resourcing level.

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 8th April, 2025**

One Million Trees Initiative - (Councillor Maghie)

The Committee noted that, in accordance with its decision of 4th February, a report would be submitted regarding the 'Vital Role of Trees'. It was noted further that the Community and Neighbourhood Services Department would consult with the Council's Climate Unit, in its role as the Council's lead on the 'One Million Trees Initiative', and the report in this regard would include an update on this initiative. It was noted further that the report would include figures relating to the number (and types) of trees planted (and their mortality rates), their sourcing/origin, the feasibility of a cross agency/departmental approach being adopted in the delivery of the initiative and the feasibility of regular updates being provided to the Committee.

**Returning of Black Bins to Properties
- (Councillor McKeown)**

The Committee agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting that would outline the Council's options in addressing concerns arising from the practice of bins not being returned promptly by their owners to properties after they had been collected. The report would include an outline of the Council's powers to enforce the practice and an overview of the community engagement options that could be used in addressing the matter.

Chairperson