

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

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

Members present: The Lord Mayor, Councillor Murray (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCormick);
The High Sherriff (Councillor McAteer);
Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCoubrey,
McCullough and Rodgers; and Councillors
Abernethy, Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower, Bradley,
Brennan, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Bunting,
Canavan, Carson, Collins, de Faoite,
Doherty, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R-M Donnelly,
Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson,
Flynn, Garrett, Groogan, Harvey, Kelly, Long,
Lyons, Magee, Maskey, McCabe, McCallin,
McCann, McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKay,
McKeown, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Murphy,
Nelson, O'Neill, Smyth, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Cobain, Maghie and McCusker.

Declarations of Interest

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Alderman Copeland and Councillors Carson, R-M Donnelly, Duffy and Groogan declared interests in the 'Shared City Partnership' item in that they worked for, or were associated with, organisations which had applied for PEACEPLUS funding. Since the item did not become the subject of debate, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor Groogan declared an interest in the item 'Update on Hardship Fund' in that she worked for an organisation which had applied for funding under the terms of the fund. As the item did not become the subject of debate, she was not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor Long declared an interest in the item 'Support for Businesses Affected by the August Riots' in that his wife was the Justice Minister. He was not required to leave the meeting as the item did not become the subject of debate.

Councillor Brennan declared an interest in the item 'Summer Community Diversionary Programme Assessments and Asset Management' in that she worked for

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an organisation that was in receipt of funding under the project. In addition, regarding the item 'St. John Vianney Youth Club: Lease Arrangement' she reported that she worked for an organisation that was involved in the leasing of the property. She was not required to leave the meeting for either item since they did not become the subject of debate.

Councillors Beattie, Carson and Duffy declared interests in the 'Social Supermarket Fund' item in that they were associated with organisations which had applied for support under the fund. Since the item did not become the subject of debate, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

People and Communities Committee

Regarding the item 'Integrated Advice Partnership Fund', Councillors M. Donnelly and Bradley declared interests in that they worked for organisations which had been referenced within the report. In respect of the item 'Denmark Street Community Centre' Councillor I. McLaughlin declared an interest in that he was a member of the associated management committee which had been referenced within the report. Since the aforementioned items did not become the subject of debate, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor McKeown reported an interest in the item 'Installation of Sharps Bin' in that his employer was referenced within the report. Since the item did not become the subject of debate, the Member was not required to leave the meeting.

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Councillor Maskey declared an interest in the item 'Go Succeed Enterprise Support Service Update', in that he had received support through the service. Since the item did not become the subject of debate, Councillor Maskey was not required to leave the meeting.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murray),
Seconded by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCormick) and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly meeting of the Council of 1st April, 2025, and the special meeting of the Council of 24th April, 2025, be taken as read and signed as correct

Official Announcements

The Lord Mayor and members representing each of the political parties on the Council conveyed congratulations to Councillor Jenna Maghie on the birth of a daughter on Tuesday, 29th April. The Lord Mayor agreed to write to Councillor Maghie to extend congratulations on behalf of the Council.

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The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Council, expressed condolences to staff member Mr. Christopher Hackett on the sudden passing of his son Diolain on 4th April 2025. The Lord Mayor agreed to write to the Hackett family to convey the Council's condolences.

The Lord Mayor welcomed Ms. Sinead Grimes, Director of Property and Projects, to her first meeting of the Council since the passing of her mother.

The Deputy Lord Mayor on behalf of the Council conveyed congratulations to Mr. Rory McIlroy on his winning of the U.S. Masters in Augusta and paid tribute to him for making history by achieving the 'grand slam' in world golf. In addition, the Deputy Lord Mayor congratulated Bangor Football Club on winning the Northern Ireland Football League Championship and referred specifically the role played by Councillor Bradley Ferguson as a key member of the team's backroom staff.

Councillor Groogan congratulated the Golden Thread Gallery in Queen Street on being shortlisted as one of the five finalists in the 2025 Art Fund Museum of the Year and wished them well in the final.

Councillor Long congratulated Mr. Mark Carney on his victory in the recent Canadian general election and requested that the Lord Mayor write to Mr. Carney to congratulate him and invite him to visit the City of Belfast during his time in office. The Lord Mayor acceded to the request.

The High Sheriff (Councillor McAteer) congratulated the Council on being awarded 'Ambassador Status' under the Belfast Business Promise initiative and thanked Members and officers for the work which had been undertaken in achieving the award.

Councillor T. Brooks congratulated Councillor Bower on passing her PhD '*with minor corrections*' with a thesis on the subject of '*Friendships for young people with a learning disability and/or who are autistic: a participatory action research project*'.

Alderman Lawlor referred to the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day, which would occur on 8th May. He paid tribute and expressed gratitude to all those who had served in the armed forces for their dedication and sacrifice during World War II. Councillor McDowell echoed the sentiments expressed by Alderman Lawlor and paid tribute to those former members of the services who were part of the 'Golden Generation'.

Councillor Ferguson thanked the Deputy Lord Mayor for hosting an event for the Simon Community the previous evening. He congratulated Cregagh Wanderers Football Club on winning the Cochrane Corry Cup when they defeated Clonduff in the final. In addition, Councillor Ferguson referred to the recent retirement of Mr. Terry Hayes, who had completed 50 years' service with Linfield Football Club, as both a player and medical staff team member. In response to a request by Councillor Ferguson, the Lord Mayor agreed to write to both Cregagh Wanderers and Mr. Hayes to congratulate them on their achievements.

Councillor Abernethy, in the absence of Councillor Maghie, congratulated CIYMS Ladies' Hockey Team on their recent victory in the Irish Challenge Cup and on their achievement in bringing the cup back to Belfast for the first time in 22 years.

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Councillor McCallin reminded the Council that the date of the meeting coincided with the '12 Days of M.E.' campaign, which ran concurrently with M.E. Awareness Week, observed annually in May. She thanked those officers and Members who had assisted in promoting the campaign prior to the meeting. Councillor R. Brooks concurred with the comments of Councillor McCallin.

Alderman Rodgers wished good luck to both Dungannon Swifts F.C. and, in particular, to Cliftonville F.C., who were representing Belfast, in the Irish Cup Final at Windsor Park on Saturday, 4th May.

Councillor S. Douglas congratulated Bloomfield Football Club's Under-9's team in their recent league and cup double success and paid tribute to the team's promising young goalkeeper, Thomas Douglas esquire.

Councillor R. Brooks pointed out that Saturday, 10th May, was Cornelia de Lange Syndrome Awareness Day. She outlined how the day sought to increase understanding and promote early diagnosis of the rare condition. She referred particularly to her constituent, Ms. Andrea Poxon, who lived with the condition, and paid tribute to both Andrea and her family for their strength and resilience.

Alderman D. McCullough, on behalf of the Council, expressed best wishes for a speedy recovery to Mr. Jay Millar of Jay's Barber Club in Seaview Street, who had been taken ill over the previous weekend. The Council concurred with the sentiments expressed.

Requests to Address the Council

Cairde Palestine (Friends of Palestine)

The Chief Executive reported that a request to address the Council had been received from Cairde Palestine regarding the motion on the agenda entitled, 'U.S. War Planes Out of Belfast'. The Council acceded to the request and Ms. C. Ferrari was admitted to the meeting.

Ms. Ferrari informed the Council that Cairde Palestine was a diverse community of activists which was opposed the use of Belfast International Airport and RAF Aldergrove by the United States military for operations linked to the conflict between Israel and Hamas-led Palestinian militant groups in the Gaza Strip. She informed the Council that Cairde Palestine had monitored U.S. military aircraft and cargo at both airports and had identified over 60 military flights, a dozen of which had travelled to the Al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar, which was a transfer point for large-scale munitions. She indicated that support by the Council for the motion would be a small but public shift of support by a local institution.

Ms. Ferrari concluded by urging Members to support the motion to be moved by Councillor Collins and thanked the Council for receiving her.

Stranmillis Neighbourhood Association

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The Council acceded to a request which had been received from Mr. J. Harris on behalf of the Stranmillis Neighbourhood Association to address the meeting regarding the decision of the People and Communities Committee of 8th April under the heading 'Requests for the Use of Botanic Gardens'.

Mr. Harris advised the Council that the neighbourhood association had been 'surprised' and 'dismayed' that the applications had been approved by the Committee. He referred to the Victorian amenity of the Botanic Gardens and the vital open space it provided within south Belfast. He stated that the open green in the gardens was not primarily an events' venue, nor a commercial facility. He pointed out that green spaces were valued by both families and local communities and to close off such an area for exclusive commercial use would impact across the local community.

Mr. Harris thanked the Council for receiving him.

Retail NI and USDAW

The Council acceded to a request which had been received from Mr. G. Roberts, representing Retail NI, together with Mr. L. English, representing the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW), who wished to address the meeting regarding the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 18th April under the heading 'Pilot Sunday City Animation Project'.

Mr. English informed the Council that his trade union was opposed to any extension to the current Sunday trading hours, which, he added, would have a negative impact on retail workers and their families. He suggested that longer Sunday trading hours would take a heavy toll on staff, who might feel obliged to work additional hours, rather than spend time with their families or engage in leisure activities.

Mr. Roberts suggested that 'new thinking' was required to transform the Sunday morning offering in Belfast for both shoppers and visitors. The proposal, if carried, he suggested, would provide larger multinational stores with additional trading time, which would impact directly on smaller and independent retailers who relied on Sunday mornings to sustain their businesses.

The deputation thanked the Council for receiving them.

Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 18th and 28th April, 2025, omitting the decision of the Committee of 18th April under the heading 'IFA DCMS Grassroots Funding Applications' which had been called-in, be approved and adopted.

Pilot Sunday City Animation Project

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Amendment

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Alderman McCullough,

That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 18th April under the heading 'Pilot Sunday City Animation Project' be referred back to the Committee for further consideration with a view that a letter be forwarded to the Minister for Communities seeking his opinion on the proposed pilot project and also to engage with the stakeholders as set out in the minute.

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

Assets Report

Amendment

At the request of Councillor Brennan, the Council agreed that the minute of the meeting of 18th April, under the heading 'Assets Report', specifically in relation to The Lighthouse Building, be amended to reflect that a masterplan of the Gasworks Estate be undertaken.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the above-mentioned amendment and the omission of the item which had been called-in, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 18th and 28th April, 2025, were approved and adopted.

Minutes of the People and Communities Committee

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

That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 8th April, 2025, be approved and adopted.

Requests for the Use of Botanic Gardens

Amendment

Moved by Councillor McKeown,
Seconded by Councillor Groogan and

Resolved - that the decision of the People and Communities Committee of 8th April, 2025, under the heading 'Requests for the Use of Botanic Gardens' be rejected and, accordingly, permission not be granted to the applicants for the hosting of the events.

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Closed Bin Lid Policy/Removal of Bin Liners

Amendment

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

Resolved - that the decision of the People and Communities Committee of 8th April, 2025, under the heading 'Closed Bin Lid Policy/Removal of Bin Liners' be referred back to the Committee for further consideration.

**Dual Language Street Signs
Potential Adverse Impacts**

Amendment

Moved by Councillor D. Douglas,
Seconded by Alderman McCullough,

That the decision of the People and Communities Committee of 8th April, 2025, under the heading 'Dual Language Street Signs – Potential Adverse Impacts' be amended to provide that no surveys be undertaken of residents in Mount Merrion Avenue, Loopland Drive and Isoline Street and the applications for a second street sign, in Irish, be closed.

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

**Requests to Host Events
in Parks and Open Spaces**

Amendment

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

That the decision of the People and Communities Committee of 8th April under the heading 'Requests to Host Events in Parks and Open Spaces' be amended to provide that, once the legal opinion be received in respect of the issues raised regarding the line-up for the proposed event at the Boucher Road Playing Fields in August, 2025, that a special meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee be convened to consider the matter.

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

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Further Amendment

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Lyons,

That the Council agrees that the decision under the heading 'Requests to Host Events in Parks and Open Spaces' be amended to reflect the addition of the following wording to end of the decision:

"That this Council condemns sectarianism in all its forms and is committed to create and develop a shared, peaceful and reconciled City; condemns all threats and acts of violence against political and elected representatives, who should be free to participate in the democratic process without fear of interference; rejects support of proscribed organisations promoting violence or hate; and believes that no one should be prevented from speaking out in defence of human rights, or against human rights abuses occurring during the ongoing genocide in Gaza and all other conflicts across the globe".

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

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 8th April, 2025, were approved and adopted.

Minutes of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Nelson,
Seconded by Alderman Lawlor and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 9th April, 2025, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of the Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor Alderman Rodgers,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 16th April, 2025, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of the Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Carson,

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Seconded by Alderman Lawlor and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 15th April, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of the Climate and City Resilience Committee

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

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 10th April, 2025, be approved and adopted

Minutes of the Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Alderman Lawlor,
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 25th April, 2025, be approved and adopted.

Notice of Motion

U.S. War Planes Out of Belfast

In accordance with notice on the agenda, it was

Moved by Councillor Collins,
Seconded by Councillor Flynn,

“That this Council notes its alarm that Belfast Aldergrove Airport has been used as a transit point for US military aircraft and cargo en route to Europe and the Middle East. As reported by the Irish News, over 60 military flights have been detected using Aldergrove airport as a transit point during the 18 months of Israel's assault on Gaza. Over a dozen of these flights were found to have travelled to Al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar: a key transfer point for large-scale munitions between the US and Israel.

“The Council notes its grave concern that these flights were, therefore, likely carrying weapons and munitions which were used in the Israeli genocide in Gaza. This will cause considerable distress to the Palestine community living here in Belfast, as well as the many thousands of people in the city who have publicly demonstrated to demand an end to Israeli occupation and apartheid. Allowing this to continue without a robust challenge from our political institutions would signify a complicity on the part of our own devolved government with Israel's genocide, and the wider US imperial project.

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“The Council resolves to write to the Stormont Executive, the Westminster Government, and management of Aldergrove Airport to express its disgust at this complicity. The Council reiterates its opposition to war and demands that Irish soil, be it Shannon or Aldergrove, refuses to handle US military cargo in solidarity with the millions of people killed or displaced as a result of US imperialism.”

Amendment

Moved by Councillor McDonough-Brown,
Seconded by Councillor Long,

“That the motion standing in the name of Councillor Collins and seconded by Councillor Flynn be amended to provide that - in the second paragraph, sixth line down - delete everything after “...‘apartheid’ ...” and insert the following: *This Council recognises that defence is a reserved matter and resolves to write to the Westminster Government to seek clarity on the use of Belfast Aldergrove Airport by U.S. military aircraft. This Council reiterates its concern about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and calls for an end to the conflict and for both Israel and Hamas to be held accountable for breaches of international law.*”

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

The original motion was thereupon put to the meeting.

On a vote, forty Members voted for the motion and sixteen against and it was declared carried.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson