

Council

ANNUAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall,
on Monday, 2nd June, 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, Cobain, Collins, de Faoite,
Doherty, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R-M Donnelly,
Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson,
Flynn, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey, Kelly, Long,
Lyons, Magee, Maghie, Maskey, McCabe, McCallin,
McCann, McCusker, 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

No apologies were reported.

Declarations of Interest

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Councillors R-M Donnelly, Duffy, Groogan, McCabe and Verner 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.

Councillors Beattie, Canavan, Carson, M. Donnelly, Duffy and Groogan 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.

Standards and Business Committee

The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCormick) declared an interest in the item 'Stranded Dreams Report launched by Anaka Women's Collective' in that he worked for an organisation which provided funding to the collective. Since the item did not become the subject of debate, the Member was not required to leave the meeting.

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People and Communities Committee

Councillor Bradley declared an interest in the item “Belfast City Tribunal Service”, in that her employer was the current contract holder and she left the room when the item was under discussion.

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 May, be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

Councillor R. Brooks congratulated the Bloomfield Community Association on the recent announcement that it was to receive Capital Investment for a full rebuild.

Councillor I. McLaughlin congratulated Woodvale Youth Academy Girls Football Team who had won their first competitive tournament, the Seaview Bank Holiday Soccer Tournament, less than ten weeks after coming together as a team.

Councillor McKeown thanked Ms. Bríd Ruddy and all the residents who had worked so hard to create the new Wildflower Alley in the south of the City.

Councillor McCabe paid tribute to Anthony Cacace, who had recently won the IBO Super Featherweight World Title and requested that the Lord Mayor would send a letter of congratulations.

Alderman Copeland paid tribute to Mr S. Smyth and Mr. G. Stevens, both of whom had lost a child to cancer, who had both worked tirelessly to encourage young people to sign up and donate stem cells.

The Lord Mayor congratulated Ms. L. Cameron, Business Relationship Manager, on the recent birth of her daughter.

Request to Film Proceedings

The Chief Executive advised the Council that a request to film parts of the Council meeting had been received from a number of media outlets.

The Council acceded to the request.

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Appointment of Positions of Responsibility 2025/2026

The Chief Executive drew the Council's attention to a report which identified the persons who had been selected by the Nominating Officer of each Political Party to hold the following Positions of Responsibility in year three of the current Council term:

Internal Positions of Responsibility	Councillor
Lord Mayor	Councillor Tracy Kelly
Deputy Lord Mayor	Councillor Paul Doherty

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Chairperson	Councillor Natasha Brennan
Deputy Chairperson	Councillor Emmet McDonough-Brown

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Chairperson	Councillor Ian McLaughlin
Deputy Chairperson	Councillor Joseph Duffy

People and Communities Committee

Chairperson	Councillor Ruth Brooks
Deputy Chairperson	Councillor Fred Cobain

Licensing Committee

Chairperson	Councillor Jordan Doran
Deputy Chairperson	Councillor Arder Carson

Planning Committee

Chairperson	Councillor Ryan Murphy
Deputy Chairperson	Councillor Sammy Douglas

Climate and City Resilience Committee

Chairperson	Councillor Micheal Donnelly
Deputy Chairperson	Alderman Frank McCoubrey

Standards and Business Committee

Chairperson	Councillor Anthony Flynn
Deputy Chairperson	Councillor Davy Douglas

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Chairperson	Councillor Eric Hanvey
Deputy Chairperson	Councillor Bradley Ferguson

Policing and Community Safety Partnership Political Members

Chairs

PCSP	Councillor Ian McLaughlin
North DPCSP	Alderman Dean McCullough

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South DPCSP	Councillor Gary McKeown
East DPCSP	Councillor Pádraig Donnelly
West DPCSP	Councillor Claire Canavan

Other Changes to Memberships of DPCSPs

	Outgoing	Incoming
South DPCSP	Councillor Tracy Kelly	Councillor Sarah Bunting
West DPCSP	Councillor Nicola Verner	Alderman Frank McCoubrey

The Council agreed to appoint the Members to the positions of responsibility as set out above.

Expressions of Thanks

The Lord Mayor reviewed his year in office, which he stated had been an incredible honour. He outlined that he had been privileged to be the first openly gay Lord Mayor of the City and that he had been proud to represent his community through his work. He thanked the Deputy Lord Mayor, the two High Sheriffs which he had worked alongside, Council staff, his Political Party and his partner, family and friends for all of their support and wished the incoming Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor every success for the year ahead.

The Deputy Lord Mayor reflected on his year in office and paid tribute to the Lord Mayor, the two High Sheriffs, his Political Party, his family and Council staff for the valuable assistance which they had provided. He paid tribute to his wife and his two young daughters and stated that he was looking forward to spending more time with them again. He stated that he had been grateful to have worked with a number of important charities during his time in office, including the Alzheimer's Society, the Mary Peters Trust, Women's Aid and Friends of the Cancer Centre. He wished the incoming Lord Mayor and Deputy Mayor well in their forthcoming term of office.

Tributes

Representatives of all the Political Parties paid tribute to the Lord Mayor and the Deputy Lord for the manner in which they had fulfilled their duties during their year in office.

Installation of Lord Mayor

The Chief Executive reminded the Council that it had, earlier in the meeting, approved the Positions of Responsibility for 2025/2026 and that Councillor Kelly had been nominated to serve as Lord Mayor.

Accordingly, Councillor Kelly was installed in Office for the period to end on the date of the annual meeting of the Council in 2026.

Councillor Kelly thanked her Political Party for nominating her to serve as Lord Mayor. She stated that she was honoured to be the first female Democratic Unionist the second ever female Unionist Lord Mayor of Belfast. She paid a special tribute to the

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late Christopher Stalford MLA, who had not only been her political mentor, but also a close friend. She paid tribute to the previous Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor for the manner in which they had carried out their duties. She stated that she was looking forward to the year ahead and to working with the Deputy Lord Mayor and the High Sheriff.

(The Lord Mayor, Councillor Kelly, in the Chair.)

Installation of Deputy Lord Mayor

The Council was again reminded that earlier in the meeting Councillor Doherty had, under the Positions of Responsibility for 2025/2026, been nominated to serve as Deputy Lord Mayor.

Accordingly, Councillor Doherty was installed in Office for the period to end on the date of the annual meeting of the Council in 2026.

He paid tribute to the previous Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor, thanked his Political Party for nominating him, thanked his family and friends for their support, and outlined his main objectives for his term in office. He stated that he was looking forward to the year ahead, to listening and learning, and to working with the Lord Mayor and the High Sheriff.

(The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Doherty, in the Chair.)

Appointment of Members to Committees 2025/2026

The Chief Executive drew the Council's attention to a report which identified the following persons who had been nominated by the Nominating Officer of each Political Party to the Council's Standing Committees and to the (District) Policing and Community Safety Partnerships for 2025/2026:

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

1	Chairperson (Sinn Féin)	Councillor Natasha Brennan
2	Deputy Chairperson (Alliance)	Councillor Emmet McDonough-Brown
3	Sinn Féin	Councillor Ciaran Beattie
4	Sinn Féin	Councillor Christina Black
5	Sinn Féin	Councillor Róis-Máire Donnelly
6	Sinn Féin	Councillor Matt Garrett
7	Sinn Féin	Councillor Ronan McLaughlin
8	Sinn Féin	Councillor Ryan Murphy
9	Sinn Féin	Councillor Tomás Ó Néill
10	Democratic Unionist Party	Alderman Frank McCoubrey
11	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Sarah Bunting
12	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Fred Cobain
13	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Bradley Ferguson
14	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Ian McLaughlin
15	Alliance	Councillor Michael Long
16	Alliance	Councillor Jenna Maghie
17	Alliance	Councillor Sam Nelson

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18	Social Democratic and Labour Party	Councillor Séamas de Faoite
19	Social Democratic and Labour Party	Councillor Carl Whyte
20	Green Party	Councillor Brian Smyth

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

1	Chairperson (Democratic Unionist Party)	Councillor Ian McLaughlin
2	Deputy Chairperson (Sinn Féin)	Councillor Joe Duffy
3	Sinn Féin	Councillor Christina Black
4	Sinn Féin	Councillor Conor Maskey
5	Sinn Féin	Councillor Áine McCabe
6	Sinn Féin	Councillor Siobhán McCallin
7	Sinn Féin	Councillor Conor McKay
8	Sinn Féin	Councillor Ronan McLaughlin
9	Sinn Féin	Councillor Tomás Ó Néill
10	Democratic Unionist Party	Alderman James Lawlor
11	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Sarah Bunting
12	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Sammy Douglas
13	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Andrew McCormick
14	Alliance	Councillor Eric Hanvey
15	Alliance	Councillor Fiona McAteer
16	Alliance	Councillor Micky Murray
17	Alliance	Councillor Sam Nelson
18	Social Democratic and Labour Party	Councillor Séamas de Faoite
19	Social Democratic and Labour Party	Councillor Dónal Lyons
20	Green Party	Councillor Áine Groogan

People and Communities Committee

1	Chairperson (Democratic Unionist Party)	Councillor Ruth Brooks
2	Deputy Chairperson (Democratic Unionist Party)	Councillor Fred Cobain
3	Sinn Féin	Councillor Christina Black
4	Sinn Féin	Councillor Nichola Bradley
5	Sinn Féin	Councillor Claire Canavan
6	Sinn Féin	Councillor Micheal Donnelly
7	Sinn Féin	Councillor Róis-Máire Donnelly
8	Sinn Féin	Councillor Matt Garrett
9	Sinn Féin	Councillor JJ Magee
10	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Sarah Bunting
11	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Jordan Doran
12	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Nicola Verner
13	Alliance	Councillor Hedley Abernethy
14	Alliance	Councillor Micky Murray

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15	Alliance	Councillor Christine Bower
16	Alliance	Councillor Jenna Maghie
17	Social Democratic and Labour Party	Councillor Gary McKeown
18	Green Party	Councillor Anthony Flynn
19	Ulster Unionist Party	Alderman Sonia Copeland
20	People Before Profit Alliance	Councillor Michael Collins

Licensing Committee

1	Chairperson (Democratic Unionist Party)	Councillor Jordan Doran
2	Deputy Chairperson (Sinn Féin)	Councillor Arder Carson
3	Sinn Féin	Councillor Brónach Anglin
4	Sinn Féin	Councillor Nichola Bradley
5	Sinn Féin	Councillor Micheal Donnelly
6	Sinn Féin	Councillor Pádraig Donnelly
7	Sinn Féin	Councillor Caoimhín McCann
8	Sinn Féin	Councillor Conor McKay
9	Democratic Unionist Party	Alderman McCullough
10	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Davy Douglas
11	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Sarah Bunting
12	Alliance	Councillor Hedley Abernethy
13	Alliance	Councillor Tara Brooks
14	Alliance	Councillor Fiona McAteer
15	Social Democratic and Labour Party	Councillor Gary McKeown
16	Social Democratic and Labour Party	Councillor Carl Whyte
17	Green Party	Councillor Brian Smyth
18	Ulster Unionist Party	Alderman Jim Rodgers
19	Traditional Unionist Voice	Councillor Ron McDowell
20	Independent	Councillor Paul McCusker

Planning Committee

1	Chairperson (Sinn Féin)	Councillor Ryan Murphy
2	Deputy Chairperson (Democratic Unionist Party)	Councillor Sammy Douglas
3	Sinn Féin	Councillor Brónach Anglin
4	Sinn Féin	Councillor Natasha Brennan
5	Sinn Féin	Councillor Arder Carson
6	Sinn Féin	Councillor Matt Garrett
7	Sinn Féin	Councillor JJ Magee
8	Sinn Féin	Councillor Áine McCabe
9	Sinn Féin	Councillor Caoimhín McCann
10	Democratic Unionist Party	Alderman James Lawlor
11	Democratic Unionist Party	Alderman Dean McCullough
12	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Jordan Doran
13	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Davy Douglas

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14	Alliance	Councillor Hedley Abernethy
15	Alliance	Councillor Tara Brooks
16	Alliance	Councillor David Bell
17	Alliance	Councillor Eric Hanvey
18	Social Democratic and Labour Party	Councillor Carl Whyte
19	Green Party	Councillor Áine Groogan
20	Ulster Unionist Party	Alderman Jim Rodgers

Climate and City Resilience Committee

1	Chairperson (Sinn Féin)	Councillor Micheal Donnelly
2	Deputy Chairperson (Democratic Unionist Party)	Alderman Frank McCoubrey
3	Sinn Féin	Councillor Brónach Anglin
4	Sinn Féin	Councillor Pádraig Donnelly
5	Sinn Féin	Councillor JJ Magee
6	Sinn Féin	Councillor Conor Maskey
7	Sinn Féin	Councillor Caoimhín McCann
8	Sinn Féin	Councillor Séanna Walsh
9	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Ruth Brooks
10	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Sammy Douglas
11	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Bradley Ferguson
12	Alliance	Councillor Micky Murray
13	Alliance	Councillor Tara Brooks
14	Alliance	Councillor David Bell
15	Social Democratic and Labour Party	Councillor Paul Doherty
16	Social Democratic and Labour Party	Councillor Dónal Lyons
17	Green Party	Councillor Áine Groogan
18	Ulster Unionist Party	Alderman Sonia Copeland
19	People Before Profit Alliance	Councillor Michael Collins
20	Independent	Councillor Paul McCusker

Standards and Business Committee

1	Chairperson (Green Party)	Councillor Anthony Flynn
2	Deputy Chairperson (Democratic Unionist Party)	Councillor Davy Douglas
3	Sinn Féin	Councillor Nichola Bradley
4	Sinn Féin	Councillor Arder Carson
5	Sinn Féin	Councillor Pádraig Donnelly
6	Sinn Féin	Councillor Siobhán McCallin
7	Sinn Féin	Councillor JJ Magee
8	Sinn Féin	Councillor Ronan McLaughlin
9	Sinn Féin	Councillor Ryan Murphy
10	Democratic Unionist Party	Alderman James Lawlor
11	Democratic Unionist Party	Alderman Dean McCullough
12	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Andrew McCormick

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13	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Ian McLaughlin
14	Alliance	Councillor Fiona McAteer
15	Alliance	Councillor Christine Bower
16	Alliance	Councillor Emmet McDonough-Brown
17	Alliance	Councillor Michael Long
18	Social Democratic and Labour Party	Councillor Séamas de Faoite
19	Social Democratic and Labour Party	Councillor Dónal Lyons
20	Traditional Unionist Voice	Councillor Ron McDowell

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

1	Chairperson Alliance	Councillor Eric Hanvey
2	Deputy Chairperson (Democratic Unionist Party)	Councillor Bradley Ferguson
3	Sinn Féin	Councillor Natasha Brennan
4	Sinn Féin	Councillor Claire Canavan
5	Sinn Féin	Councillor Áine McCabe
6	Sinn Féin	Councillor Caoimhín McCann
7	Sinn Féin	Councillor Conor McKay
8	Sinn Féin	Councillor Tomás Ó Néill
9	Sinn Féin	Councillor Séanna Walsh
10	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Ruth Brooks
11	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Andrew McCormick
12	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Nicola Verner
13	Alliance	Councillor Christine Bower
14	Alliance	Councillor David Bell
15	Social Democratic and Labour Party	Councillor Séamas de Faoite
16	Green Party	Councillor Anthony Flynn
17	Ulster Unionist Party	Alderman Sonia Copeland
18	People Before Profit Alliance	Councillor Michael Collins
19	Traditional Unionist Voice	Councillor Ron McDowell
20	Independent	Councillor Paul McCusker

The Council agreed to appoint the Members to the Council's Standing Committees for 2025/2026, as set out above.

Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Brennan,
Seconded by Councillor Murphy,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd and 30th May, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

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Amendment

City Hall Income Generation Project

Moved by Councillor Collins,
Seconded by Councillor McDowell,

That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd May under the heading 'City Hall Income Generation Project' be rejected.

On a vote, two Members voted for the amendment and fifty-three against and it was accordingly declared lost.

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd and 30th May, 2025, were approved and adopted.

Minutes of 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 6th May, be approved and adopted.

Amendment

Play Service Rental Agreement

Moved by Councillor Doran,
Seconded by Councillor Bunting,

That the decision of the People and Communities Committee of 6th May under the heading 'Play Service Rental Agreement' be rejected and accordingly the Council agrees to extend the current play service rental agreement with the Benview Residents Association for a further period of five years.

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

Amendment

Belfast City Tribunal Service

Moved by Councillor Collins,
Seconded by Councillor Groogan,

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That the decision of the People and Communities Committee of 6th May under the heading 'Belfast City Tribunal Service' be referred back to Committee for further consideration, with the Tribunal Service to be invited in.

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

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 6th May, 2025, were approved and adopted.

Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor I. McLaughlin,
Seconded by Councillor Duffy and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 7th and 28th May, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor Doran,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 21st May, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Murphy
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 13th May, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee

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

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 8th May, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

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Council Climate Action Plan

At the request of a Member, the Council agreed that a section be added to the Action Plan, including key recommendations and findings, to examine the environmental impact of segregation in the City.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 8th May, 2025, were approved and adopted.

Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 22nd May, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Ad Hoc Committee

Moved by Alderman Rodgers,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 22nd May, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**To reconsider the motion on
the Armed Forces Covenant**

Moved by Alderman Lawlor,
Seconded by Alderman McCullough,

“That this Council recognises the unique skills that are held by Armed Forces services leavers; recognises that many veterans can face disadvantages compared to the general population, arising from military life, when accessing services and as such, this Council commits to signing up to the Armed Forces Covenant immediately.”

On a vote, twenty-eight Members voted for the motion, twenty-nine against and with three no votes, it was accordingly declared lost.

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Notice of Motion

**Voting Rights for the Election of
the President of Ireland**

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor R-M. Donnelly proposed the following motion:

“That this Council notes that the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement recognises the birth right of all the people of the north to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both; recalls that, in November 2013, the Fifth Report of the Convention on the Constitution recommended to give citizens residing outside the 26 counties the right to vote in presidential elections; further notes that Irish citizens living in the north can stand for, and be elected as, President of Ireland but cannot vote in presidential elections; and calls on this Council to write to the Irish Government and ask that they implement the recommendation of the Convention on the constitution with regards to voting rights in presidential elections, thereby extending the right to vote in elections for President of Ireland to all Irish citizens on the island of Ireland.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Brennan.

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

Lord Mayor
Chairperson