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| Subject:           | OLDER PEOPLE'S REFERENCE GROUP   |
| Date:              | 7 <sup>th</sup> September 2025   |
| Reporting Officer: | Jim Girvan – Director of Neighbourhood Services  |
| Contact Officer:   | Nicola Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager<br>Joanna Holland, Age Friendly Co-ordinator |

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| <b>Restricted Reports</b>   |   |
| Is this report restricted?  | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</b>  |   |
| Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>  |   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Information relating to any individual</li><li>2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual</li><li>3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)</li><li>4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter</li><li>5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained</li><li>6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction</li><li>7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime</li></ol> |   |
| <b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>  |   |
| After Committee Decision  | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| After Council Decision  | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| Sometime in the future  | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| Never   | <input type="checkbox"/>  |

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| <b>Call-in</b>   |
| Is the decision eligible for Call-in? <span style="float: right;">           Yes   <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/>   No         </span> |

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| 1.0 | <b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>   |
| 1.1 | The purpose of this report is to update committee on the key issues discussed at the Reference Group on Older People Meeting held on 10th June 2025.   |
| 2.0 | <b>Recommendations</b>   |
| 2.1 | Members are asked to note the contents of the paper and consider the recommendation from the OPRG to invite the Alzheimer's Society to a future P&C committee meeting to learn more about the work of the organisation.  |
| 3.0 | <b>Main report</b>   |
| 3.1 | <u>Key Issues</u><br>The Reference Group on Older People is a working group of the People and Communities Committee which meets on a quarterly basis and consists of an elected member from each of the political parties. The minutes from the Reference Group on Older People are brought before the Committee for approval. |
| 3.2 | The meeting was held on 10 <sup>th</sup> June 2025 in the City Hall. Members may wish to note the following update on the main items discussed.  |
| 3.3 | <b>Age Friendly Belfast Update</b><br>The Age Friendly Coordinator provided the Members with updates on key actions that have been delivered in relation to the Age Friendly Belfast Plan 2023-2027. Further detail is provided in Appendix 1.<br>Alzheimer's Society Overview   |
| 3.4 | <b>Alzheimer's Society – Overview of services</b><br>Ms. Hanna from the Alzhiermers Society provided the Reference Group with a presentation on the work of the Alzheimer's Society and outlined available local services.   |
| 3.5 | The Chair of the Reference Group thanked Ms Hanna for the information provided and it was agreed that members of P&C should be asked to consider hearing a presentation from Alzheimer's Society at a future committee meeting.  |
| 3.6 | <u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u><br>All work outlined in this report will be carried out within existing budgets and staff resources of Age Friendly Belfast and the partners involved.  |
| 3.7 | <u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u><br>This work is part of The Age Friendly Belfast Plan which has been equality and rural needs screened in line with the Council's agreed processes.  |

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| <b>4.0</b> | <b>Appendices - Documents Attached</b>                             |
| 4.1        | Appendix 1 – Minutes of the Older Person’s Reference Group 10.6.25 |

# Reference Group on Older People

Tuesday, 10th December, 2024

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE REFERENCE GROUP ON OLDER PEOPLE

Members present: Alderman Copeland; and  
Councillors McCabe and Smyth.

In attendance: Ms. J. Holland, Age Friendly Coordinator;  
Ms. M. Higgins, Lead Officer - Community Provision; and  
Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

### **Election of Chairperson**

Moved by Councillor Smyth,  
Seconded by Alderman Copeland and

Resolved – that Alderman Copeland be elected to serve as Chairperson of the  
Reference Group on Older People until the Annual meeting of Council in June 2025.

### **Apologies**

No apologies were reported.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 19th March, 2024 were taken as read and signed as  
correct.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were recorded.

### **Update on Age Friendly Belfast Plan and other activities**

The Age Friendly Coordinator presented the undernoted report to the Working  
Group:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

1.1 To update members on the Age Friendly Belfast plan and Age Friendly  
Belfast activities.

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

- 2,1 **Members are asked to note the updates provided on the Age Friendly Belfast Plan and activities.**

3.0 **Main report**

3.1 **Key Issues**

**Age Friendly Belfast Plan 2023 – 2027**

**Members will recall that the plan focuses on the following key themes;**

- 1. Infrastructure/getting out and about.**
- 2. Social connections**
- 3. Health and wellbeing**
- 4. Financial security/cost of living**

3.2 **Infrastructure**

**Age Friendly Design Principles**

**The Age Friendly Coordinator in partnership with the Age Friendly Coordinator in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council arranged a webinar for Thursday 24th October from Dr Mark Hammond -to explore how the needs and aspirations of older people can be better addressed by architects, planners and developers creating new residential developments.**

**Forty-six people from a wide range of occupations attended the webinar and there was positive feedback.**

**The next steps are to identify through focus groups with older people some of the housing issues and then establish a housing subgroup. This piece of work is being done in collaboration with the Age Friendly Network NI.**

3.3 **Social Connections /health and wellbeing**

**Connection Hub update**

**The numbers of older people dropping in to the Grapevine session in 2 Royal Avenue continues to increase. The times have reduced by one hour, so now people can call in between 11am-1pm- this was done based on volunteer feedback. Responding to a request for some information about the BT digital Switchover due to concerns about the upcoming changes to landlines, Colin from Supporting Communities came along to answer queries and offer advice on 19th November.**

**The steering group of the Grapevine met on 21st November and have agreed that the remaining budget is used to provide activities within the drop-in times. Volunteers will ask participants about some of the activities they would like, and the Age Friendly Coordinator will organise these for the New Year. An evaluation of the project will take place in the New Year using case studies from participants and volunteers.**

### **Health and well-being booklets**

Belfast Trust has recently updated the health and well-being booklets- which provide a fantastic resource to older people, carers and people working with older people. Copies will be put in members pigeonholes, please get in touch with the Age Friendly Coordinator if you would like more copies.

### **Isolation and Loneliness Training**

The Older, Active & Connected Programme Co-ordinator from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust organised more sessions of the isolation and loneliness sessions- these took place between October and November. More sessions are planned for Jan- March 2025. Four volunteers from the Grapevine connection hub participated in the training sessions during October.

### **Physical Activity kit bags for older People**

As part of the Active Ageing partnership there have been discussions with colleagues to establish suitable training for ACDO's and possibly CDO's in Community centres. This would ensure the delivery of a physical activity programme using the kit bags. The result being an enhanced level of physical activity for older people in a community setting and therefore reducing risks of falls.

### **Positive Ageing Month**

The 35-page Positive Ageing Month booklet highlighted more than 100 different activities on offer to older people across Belfast delivered by a range of partners. These were circulated via email through various distribution lists, as well as hard copies in different venues across Belfast.

### **Below is a summary of the BCC direct delivery during Positive Ageing Month**

#### **Tuesday 1st October bocchia taster session**

A bocchia taster session was facilitated by Sport changes Lives and ran alongside the Grapevine session. Ten participants attended, older men/women, and people with disabilities. Some observations from the session were that people who were quieter in the normal drop-in sessions became very animated during the bocchia session. The Heart Project were also in attendance to provide health checks and were able to offer referrals and advise people on follow up particularly in the case of high blood pressure readings.

#### **Friday 4th October Age Convention Event-**

70 people attended the age convention event, which was used to launch Positive Ageing Month and the new health and wellbeing booklet from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. From the evaluation forms 20 people had never attended the Age Convention Event before. Comments in forms included 'brings lots of strangers and pensioners together in a

friendly atmosphere' and 'it's great to see so many events for Age Positive Month'.

#### Tuesday 8th October

Due to high demand two tea dances were organised a morning and afternoon session in Belfast Castle to coincide with their 90th celebrations. In total there were 110 people. Once the music started there was lots of dancing and feedback from talking to people included memories of family weddings in the castle,

#### Tuesday 15th October flags to bags workshop

In conjunction with the BCC outreach waste education officer - participants were able to make bags from recycled advertising flags. Learning new skills whilst meeting new people.

#### Two movie afternoons

(15th & 22nd Oct)

There were nearly 100 people at each film. The first film was Calamity Jane, and the other was Arsenic and Old Lace both shown in the in the City Hall. Feedback included 'bringing back memories of watching the film when younger with parents/ siblings' and there were requests to show more films.

One lady emailed us 'I'd like to say thank you for a wonderful afternoon's entertainment with Cary Grant in Arsenic and Old Lace several people told me they had never seen it before and enjoyed it immensely. I think you could rerun it in 2 years- I loved it'.

#### Wednesday 16th October- walking tour of Friars Bush Graveyard

Inundated with requests for this, 27 people attended and will look at the possibility of doing another tour in the New Year.

#### Tea dance

Age Friendly Christmas Tea dance took place on Tuesday 3rd December in 2 Royal Avenue. The tea dances attract great numbers and many people attending by themselves to enjoy the company.

#### The Volunteer Celebration Event

Taking place on Tuesday 10th December 2024 4.30pm- 6.00pm. This year's event will showcase examples of volunteering across Belfast, but more importantly thank the amazing volunteers for their contribution to older people in Belfast!

#### 2025 Age Friendly calendars

A box of these will be left in the Members room in case any constituents would like some. Deliveries will also be made to organisations who support older people and posted out to individuals. Feedback from

residents is that the calendars are a good size to be able to put in health appointments, so they aren't missed.

### **3.4 Financial Security/ cost of living**

#### **Winter Planning**

The Seasonal Planning subgroup and Citywide Loneliness subgroups met in November to share information about the support for older people in terms of practical support for keeping warm, but also to ensure connection and well-being over the winter/ Christmas period.

An updated list of services of support, including opening hours available to older people over the Christmas period is currently being updated by organisations. Once completed this will be emailed to all members of the All-Party Reference Group on Older People for reference.

#### **Winter Warm Packs**

Volunteer Now, Engage with Age and North Belfast Seniors Forum have received winter warm packs via the Public Health Agency and will be distributing to older people based on need.

Belfast City Council have only a few winter warm packs at this point. If winter warmth packs are requested contact 08001422865 or email [handyman@brysonpathways.org](mailto:handyman@brysonpathways.org) and a home safety check will also be provided.

#### **Fuel Stamps**

Council co-ordinates and promotes these stamps. Information is on the Council website – Heating Your Home section. [Heating your home \(belfastcity.gov.uk\)](https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/heating-your-home)

#### **Affordable Warmth Scheme**

This is overseen by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. It is an application-based scheme and people are assigned with a case officer to support with the application, if required. The advice line number for this scheme is: 0800 111 44 55.

#### **Cost of Living Booklet**

This will be distributed to organisations who support older people and the Greater Belfast Seniors Forum as well as advice providers and libraries. Further information will also be available here [Cost of living support \(belfastcity.gov.uk\)](https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support)

Pat Colton from Advice Space joins the meeting today to provide an overview of advice services.

#### **Financial & Resource Implications**

All work outlined in this report will be carried out within existing budgets and staff resources of Age Friendly Belfast and the partners involved.



### **Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment**

**This work is part of The Age Friendly Belfast Plan which has been equality and rural needs screened in line with the Council's agreed processes."**

The Working Group noted the update and thanked the staff which had been involved.

### **Update on Seasonal Planning Approach**

The Age Friendly Coordinator and the Lead Officer - Community Provision provided the Working Group with an overview of the meetings which had been held in respect of the Council's seasonal planning approach.

The Members were reminded about the Winter Warm packs and the Affordable Warmth Scheme. The Lead Officer advised the Members that the Council had made £30,000 available through the Hardship Programme to supplement the PHA Winter Warm packs and that it was going through the procurement process.

The Working Group was reminded that there were key contacts and signposting to a range of services in the Cost of Living Guide which had been circulated to all Members.

It was agreed that leaflets with further details would be left in the Members' Room for those who wanted to distribute them to older people within their constituency.

Noted.

### **Update on Warm and Well Project (National Energy Action NI)**

The Working Group was advised that Mr. H. McVeigh, NEA NI, had unfortunately been unable to attend the meeting at short notice but that he would be invited to attend the next meeting.

### **Update on Advice Space Support & Services**

Mr. P. Colton, Service Manager at Advice Space (formerly known as Citizens Advice), was welcomed to the meeting. He provided the Working Group with an overview of the range of services that Advice Space provided. He highlighted that it provided free, impartial and confidential advice to all ages, on a wide variety of topics including housing and access to benefits. He outlined that their advice services were funded and used by a number of charities including Chest, Heart and Stroke, Cystic Fibrosis, the Cedar Foundation and Macmillan Cancer. The Members were advised that the service had received over 23,700 calls since January 2024.

He highlighted that 75% of their work was benefits-related and encouraged the Members to check whether their elderly constituents might be eligible for Attendance Allowance, which was a non-means tested benefit. He pointed out that, quite often, claiming

Attendance Allowance could lead to other benefits for which they were also eligible being highlighted, such as Pension Credit.

The Working Group thanked Mr. Colton for his detailed update and it was agreed that information regarding the Advice Space service would be made available in the Members' Room.

Noted.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

The Working Group noted that the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, 11th March 2025.

In terms of future agenda items, it was agreed that Mr. E. Quinn (Engage with Age) as well as the Commissioner for Older People NI be invited to attend a future meeting. It was noted that the current Commissioner would soon be leaving his post but that the new Commissioner, if in post, would be invited.

Chairperson

