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Democratic Services Section
Legal and Civic Services Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet both online and in-person, in the Lavery Room, City Hall on Friday, 24th October, 2025 at 9.30 am, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. **Routine Matters**

   (a) Apologies

   (b) Minutes

   (c) Declarations of Interest

   (d) Request to Present - Northern Ireland Water (Pages 1 - 2)

2. **Restricted Items**

   (a) Revenue Estimates 2026/27 and Medium-Term Financial Planning (Pages 3 - 8)

   (b) Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann (Report to Follow)

   (c) Update on Hardship Programme (Pages 9 - 34)

   (d) City Centre Regeneration Scheme (Assembly Rooms) (Report to Follow)

(e) Update on Employees on Temporary Contracts and Agency Workers - Quarter Two (Pages 35 - 52)

(f) Organisational Reviews and Change Programme

(g) Belfast Stories Update (Pages 53 - 114)

(h) Supporting Area-based Community Planning and Community Wealth Building (Pages 115 - 150)

(i) FIFA Women's World Cup (Report to Follow)

(j) EV Update - EV Charging Network on Council sites and Depot Charging Scheme

(k) North Foreshore - Giant's Park Belfast Limited: Leisure Led Development Update

3. **Matters referred back from Council/Motions**

(a) Motion Update - National Famine Commemoration Day

(b) Correspondence - Translink - Belfast Grand Central Station Update

4. **Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**

(a) Belfast Agenda Statement of Progress (Pages 151 - 210)

(b) Additional Budget Social Supermarket Fund 25/26

(c) Site Visit to an Operational Heat Network - Leeds City Council (Pages 211 - 214)

(d) Paternity Pay Provisions (Pages 215 - 220)

(e) Apprenticeship Programme Update (Pages 221 - 224)

(f) Planning Information (Pages 225 - 242)

(g) Renewal of the Scheme of Delegation for Planning (Pages 243 - 256)

5. **Physical Programme and Asset Management**

(a) Physical Programme Update (Pages 257 - 288)

(b) Asset Management

6. **Finance, Procurement and Performance**

(a) Contracts Update (Report to Follow)

(b) Requests for Funding (Pages 289 - 296)

7. **Equality and Good Relations**

(a) Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting, 6th October (Pages 297 - 364)

8. **Operational Issues**

(a) Minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum, 16th October (Pages 365 - 370)

(b) Requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality (Pages 371 - 376)

(c) Human Rights Day 2025 - Flag Requests (Pages 377 - 378)

(d) Minutes of the Cost of Living Working Group, 14th October (Pages 379 - 382)

9. **Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

(a) Levels of criminality and violence in the City Centre (Cllr Beattie to raise)

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Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES

Subject:	Request to Present – Northern Ireland Water
Date:	24th October, 2025
Reporting Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Property and Projects
Contact Officer:	Eilish McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance Coordinator

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**	☐	**No**	✓
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision		☐		
After Council Decision		☐		
Some time in the future		☐		
Never		☐		

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	✓	**No**	☐

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
	To request that the Members of the Committee receive a presentation from Northern Ireland Water at its meeting in November.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • Consider the request to receive a presentation from Northern Ireland Water at its meeting on 21st November.
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	Correspondence has been received from Norther Ireland Water to present an update on its work to support public health, protect the environment, and boost the economy.

	This presentation will include: • Local investment updates, including the impact of capital funding reductions during the current PC21 period (2021/22–2026/28); • Planning for PC28 (2028/29–2032/33)—an overview of NIW's next business planning cycle and key milestones; and • Wastewater capacity constraints—how these affect development in Belfast and NIW's ongoing collaboration with developers to support planning. In the past, Northern Ireland Water has presented to both the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and the City Growth and Regeneration Committee. Therefore, the Committee may wish to consider if the invitation to this presentation is widened to include the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, or if a separate presentation is necessary. Officers will request that the presentation is shared with Members in advance of the meeting.
4.0	**Finance & Resource Implications**
	There are no finance or resource implications associated with this report
5.0	**Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment**
	There are no Equality or Good Relation Implications/Rural Needs Assessment requirements associated with this report
6.0	**Appendices**
	None

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of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTE

Subject:	Belfast Agenda Statement of Progress (Nov 2023-Nov 2025)
Date:	24th October 2025
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy Kevin Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth & Anti-Poverty
Contact Officer:	Brian Carr, Portfolio Manager Naomi Doak, Portfolio & Programme Co-ordinator

Is this report restricted? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number ☐

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
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
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	☐
After Council Decision	☐
Sometime in the future	☐
Never	☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? **Yes** ☒ **No** ☐

1.0	**Purpose of the Report**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the Community Planning Partnership's (CPP) development and forthcoming publication of a Belfast Agenda Statement of Progress and accompanying Data Insights Report for the period November 2023-November 2025, which is a legislative requirement for the Council and its community planning partners.

2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to: i. note the statutory requirement for the Community Planning Partnership to publish a Statement of Progress (SoP) for the period November 2023- November 2025 ii. note the engagement undertaken with and input from community planning partners in developing the draft SoP (attached at Appendix 1) iii. note the inclusion and content of the Population Indicator Data Insight Report and the intention to include this with the SoP and all Statements going forward (available via CLICK HERE) iv. agree that the final SoP, taking account of feedback received from Members and community planning partners, be submitted to the Department of Communities
3.0	**Main Report**
	Background
3.1	Members will be aware that The Local Government Act (NI) 2014 requires the Council and its community planning partners to make arrangements to monitor progress against meeting the objectives of the Belfast Agenda and the effectiveness of the actions taken in aiming to achieve these objectives. The legislation also requires the Council to publish a report (Statement of Progress) assessing progress towards the outcomes and actions taken every two years.
3.2	The fourth Statement of Progress is due to be published covering the period November 2023 to November 2025 and provides an opportunity for partners, including Council, to update the public on actions that have been undertaken that are aligned with the long-term ambitions and outcomes of the Belfast Agenda (2035) and delivery against our 4-year action plans (2024-28).
3.3	The draft SoP, attached at Appendix 1, has been developed in association with and input from community planning partners and internal council officers and highlights a number of case studies and noteworthy achievements showcasing the work of partners over the last 24 months. In addition, it demonstrates the impact of such actions on communities and local people as well as their contribution to the achievement of the ambitions and outcomes outlined in the Belfast Agenda.
3.4	Where the previous Statement had been light touch due to the significant pressure facing community planning partners recovering from the global pandemic, this Statement is accompanied by an in-depth **Data Insight Report,** which tracks the progress towards meeting our 5 bold ambitions and outcomes through 53 population indicators agreed by the partnership (available via CLICK HERE). It is intended that officers will monitor and update the Data Insight Report when relevant data becomes available and that this will allow partners to a) monitor the delivery of agreed Belfast Agenda outcomes for people in a robust evidence-based fashion and b) enable the partnership to reflect and prioritise areas for future action and partnership delivery. Members are

	also asked to note that the Partnership will continue to advance its Data Development agenda following publication.
3.5	While this statement of progress showcases many of the positive partnership achievements, it also importantly acknowledges those strategic issues and challenges facing the city, including for example, access to social and affordable housing, increasing vulnerabilities and widening health inequalities and the impact of the poverty on people's health and wellbeing. The SoP is a call to action for continued and intensified collaborative leadership across government and with communities to bring forward new innovative solutions to addressing these most pressing challenges.
3.6	**Next Steps** The intention is that the final SoP, taking account of any feedback received from Members and community planning partners, will be finalised and submitted to the Department for Communities in November.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.7	There are no financial or human resource implications contained in this report.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.8	There are no equality implications contained in this report.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1: Draft Belfast Agenda Statement of Progress (November 2023 – November 2025) **Appendix 2:** Population Indicator Data Insights Report (link in main report)

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The Belfast Agenda

Statement of Progress

Nov 2023 – Nov 2025

WORKING DRAFT

V.1 September 2025

The Belfast Agenda
Statement of Progress

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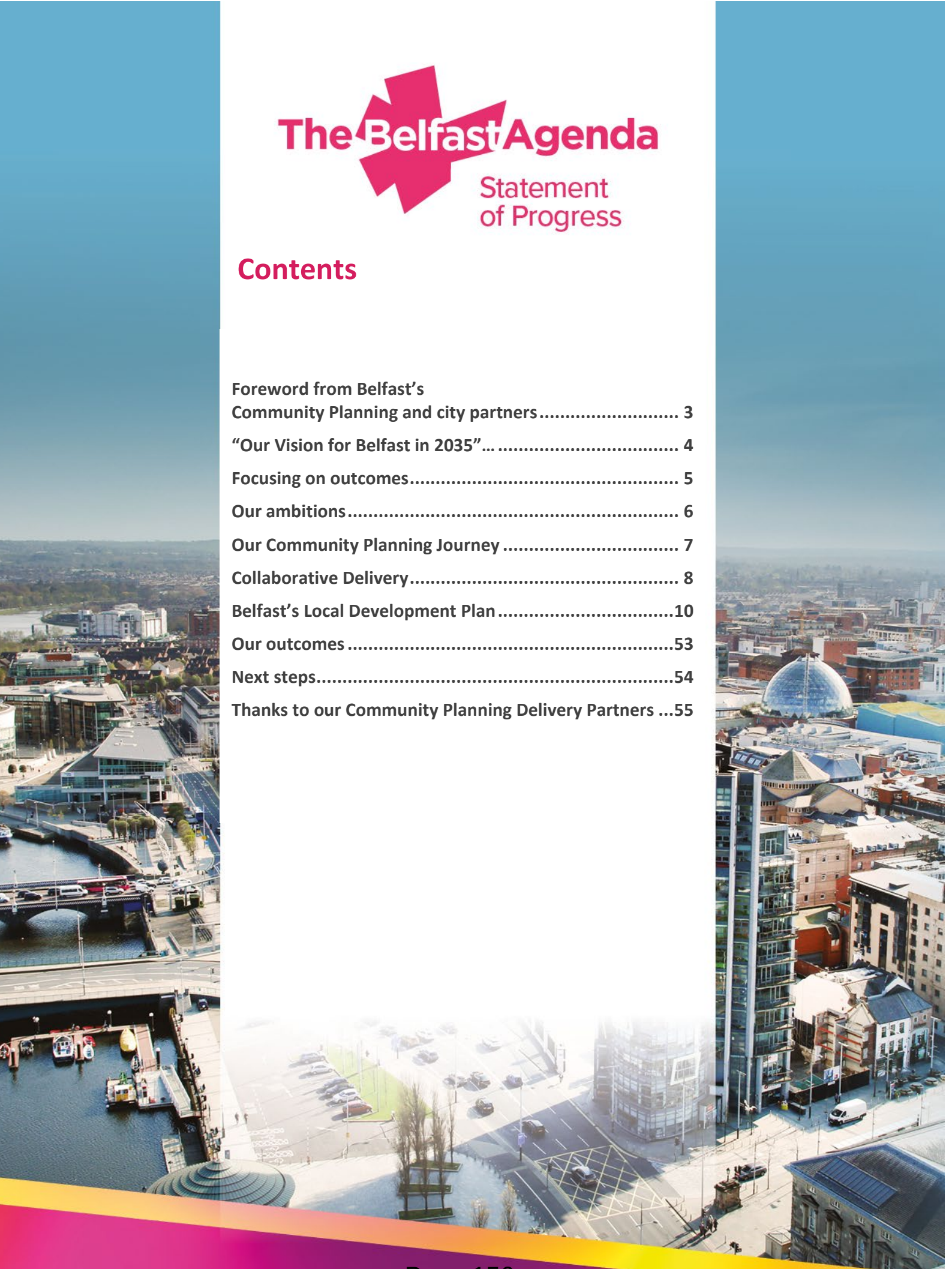


Foreword from Belfast's Community Planning and city partners

"Belfast will be a city re-imagined and resurgent. A great place to live and work for everyone."

First published in 2017 and refreshed in 2024, our community plan "The Belfast Agenda" sets out our shared vision for the city we hope to see in 2035.

This fourth Statement of Progress covers November 2023 to November 2025 and reports on our collective progress towards realising the long-term ambitions, outcomes and actions we have agreed in partnership with our residents and statutory and non-statutory partners in Belfast.

It's a hugely ambitious body of work which requires the active and coordinated participation of many diverse organisations and individuals across many sectors to deliver, the efforts of which are demonstrated here.

Supported by the Belfast Community Planning Partnership (CPP) comprised of public, community and voluntary and business sector partners, we've navigated through challenging circumstances to deliver real improvements for our all our citizens, particularly those who are most vulnerable. This has required new thinking in terms of collaborative planning, financing, data collection, performance management and delivery at a city and neighbourhood level, all of which we continue to develop to deliver better outcomes for people who live, work or invest here.

This Statement of Progress highlights significant partnership successes, such as tackling homelessness, vulnerability and poverty, delivering over 850 new social homes, establishing a Bolder Vision for city revitalisation, and the Belfast Business Promise engaging 68 organisations committed to adopting ethical practices such as the living wage. These efforts are underpinned by our commitment to a compassionate city: welcoming, caring, fair, and inclusive, where no one is left behind.

We are proud of our collective achievements, such as securing £230m for innovation centres of excellence through Belfast Region City Deal, launching Go Succeed for enterprise support, and completing landmark projects like Belfast Grand Central Station, but recognise much remains to be done to realise the full scale of our ambition.

As we focus on achieving our bold ambitions, outcomes and strategic priorities this Statement of Progress, alongside the supplementary data insights report, charts our journey and will help inform future priorities. Together, we'll continue building a confident, inclusive and prosperous Belfast for everyone.

Community planning and city partners

The Belfast Agenda and the community planning process is a significant catalyst for the city, bringing together partner organisations, regional government departments and agencies, the council and local communities to work collaboratively to deliver our shared vision. It's about creating real, sustainable improvements in people's wellbeing and quality of life in our city.

"Our Vision for Belfast in 2035...

Belfast will be a city re-imagined and resurgent.

A great place to live and work for everyone.

Beautiful, well connected and culturally vibrant, it will be a sustainable city shared and loved by all its citizens, free from the legacy of conflict.

A compassionate city offering opportunities for everyone.

A confident and successful city energising a dynamic and prosperous city region.

A magnet for talent and business and admired around the world.

A city people dream to visit.

Focusing on outcomes

As a Partnership we are committed to our vision for the city. To help us achieve this vision, the Belfast Agenda has outlined:

- Five **bold ambitions**, which include key targets to be achieved by 2035 to make our vision a reality.

- Five **strategic outcomes,** which contain a range of population indicators to monitor the progress of the plan. Belfast is a city:
  - where everyone benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy.
  - that is welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive for all.
  - that is vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable.
  - where everyone experiences good health and wellbeing.
  - where everyone fulfils their potential.

- Five **strategic themes** across the plan**,** which include:
  - Our people and communities
  - Our economy
  - Our place
  - Our planet
  - Compassionate city

Within the 5 themes partners have identified over 15 priorities and 100 strategic intents and collaborative actions for delivery between 2024-28. This Statement of Progress outlines our journey so far in delivering against these ambitious commitments and should be read in conjunction with the supplementary Data Insight Report.

Our ambitions

There are many things that we need to do to make our vision a reality. We've set ourselves five very bold ambitions to be achieved by 2035 - our progress against these longer-term targets is detailed below and has been benchmarked against agreed baselines. Further information on the data behind the ambitions is located in the supplementary Data Insight Report.

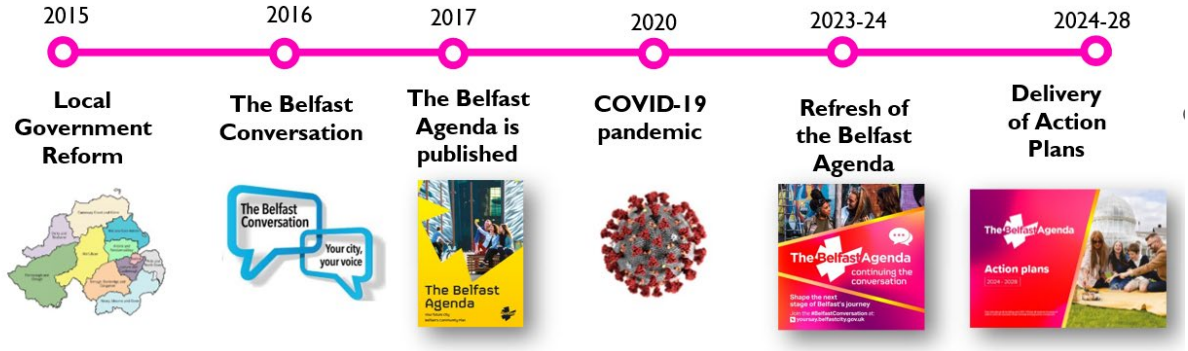
Our economy supports. **46,000** additional jobs.	Our city is home to an additional **66,000** people.	There will be a **33 per cent** reduction in the life expectancy gap between the most and least deprived neighbourhoods.	**Every young person leaving** school has a destination that fulfils their potential.	**Carbon emissions** will be reduced by 80%
The number of jobs in the city has grown by 7 per cent, creating an additional 16,286 jobs. This equals a third of 2035 target of 46,000 additional jobs.	The city's population has increased by 3 per cent, equalling around 10,339 people. The increase accounts for 16 per cent of the 2035 target of 66,000 additional people.	The life expectancy gap between the most and least deprived neighbourhoods has widened for both men (10.8 years) and females (7.7 years) from the baseline year.	94.6 per cent of school leavers entered further or higher education, employment, or training, which is marginally higher than the 94.5 value of the baseline year.	Carbon emissions have fallen by 46% since baseline year (2005), which equates to 1,347 ktC02e.

KEY: **Change from baseline position** — Improving; No significant change; Worsening; No Update

Our Community Planning Journey

Our first formal review of Belfast's 2017 community plan found us in challenging circumstances. However, it proved a timely opportunity to check in with partners as we picked up "The Belfast Conversation," engaging residents, statutory and non-statutory partners and the voluntary and community sector to sense check the city's vision, priorities and outcomes still provided the right focus for Belfast.

Apart from recognising the climate crisis needed as a clear priority, our vision and long-term outcomes remained largely unchanged. In the second phase of engagement, we worked closely with stakeholders to create strategic intents, stretch goals and detailed action plans outlining partners' contributions to achieving the city's ambitions. The third phase included a full public consultation on the refreshed strategy and action plans, incorporating valuable feedback into our refreshed Belfast Agenda 2024-2028. The Community Planning Partnership would like to thank every person who attended our workshops, contributed online or submitted a survey.



Call to action: Addressing challenges through deeper collaboration

No one could have predicted how much the world would have changed since the publication of our first Statement of Progress in November 2019. From emerging from a global pandemic, responding to an on-going climate emergency, and a cost-of-living crisis adversely impacting upon the health and wellbeing of our citizens and widening existing inequalities across the city. We've been through a lot!

Throughout these difficult times, the strength of Community Planning partners has been central to helping us act quickly and effectively in a crisis, creating a 'sense of can do' and innovating how we work together. The call to action created by these circumstances has forged new innovative approaches to critical city challenges and delivered proof of concept interventions which informed wider whole system changes to how we support vulnerable people affected by homelessness, addiction or poor mental health. Through initiatives such as 'Complex Lives' we have established a multi-agency model and provided coordinated support for vulnerable people.

While this Statement of Progress showcases many positive partnership outcomes, we acknowledge the need for sustained, deeper cross-sector collaboration to address the city's most pressing challenges.

For instance, insufficient capacity in critical infrastructure, such as water and wastewater, hinders new developments for housing and businesses and impacts growth ambitions. Substantial investment is required to upgrade infrastructure and support our vision for a sustainable, connected urban future.

Linked to infrastructure but influenced by shifting household patterns, we face a growing gap between housing supply and demand, straining social and private sectors. While the Housing Supply

Strategy and action plans are positive steps, a whole-systems approach is needed, examining policy changes, new funding models, and innovative land use to deliver mixed-tenure developments at scale and pace.

Significant health challenges persist, with widening inequalities, lower life expectancy, and higher rates of chronic disease and mental health issues varying by location. We will continue promoting collaborative efforts, with a stronger focus on helping the most vulnerable live healthier, happier lives.

The cost-of-living crisis has highlighted poverty's scale and impacts, with increasing numbers struggling to cover essentials. Despite anti-poverty & employability initiatives, child and in-work poverty remain persistent. We must collaborate more effectively to improve outcomes for these groups.

Together, we are committed to continuing to strengthen our networks and partnerships across the city, bringing a greater focus on developing place-based solutions and understanding how resources and future commissioning of services can support these. We will create an environment which encourages innovation and new collaborative approaches.

No single sector or intervention can achieve lasting change alone. A 'whole-system approach' has emerged as a key theme. Through community planning we will continue to facilitate and advocate for this to deliver meaningful benefits for everyone.

Collaborative Delivery

The Belfast Community Planning Partnership (CPP) was established in February 2018 with the shared aim to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of our communities. The partnership continues to lead and provide collective oversight on delivery of the Belfast Agenda. This work is supported by four thematic delivery boards, a number of operational delivery groups and a refreshed voluntary, community and social enterprise panel who drive work on actions and seek to problem solve and innovate.

Connecting with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE)

In Spring 2020 a **VCSE Sectoral Advisory Panel** was established to recognise Belfast's vibrant and active voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector, and to further strengthen the sector's involvement in the community planning process. During its first term the VCSE Panel has helped to drive forward the Belfast Agenda.

Recognising the unique role of our VCSE organisations within community planning and in supporting effective community engagement members of the VCSE Panel were actively involved in a cross-sectoral Steering Group to oversee the development of a **Co-design Framework**. The process of developing the co-design framework highlighted the importance of adopting a broader approach to civic participation and community engagement. The CPP and VCSE Panel is committed to enhancing how we listen, engage and work collaboratively with our residents, communities and our partners. It is anticipated that the practical framework will become just one element in a more joined up approach to involving people and communities in community planning. The framework is already being tested in relation to developing a 'Whole Systems Approach' to Healthy Weight.

Membership of the VCSE Sectoral Advisory Panel was refreshed in April2025 through an independent nomination and selection process led by NICVA.

As the Panel enters a second four-year term (2025-2029) membership has doubled from 15 to 30 representatives to better reflect Belfast's large and diverse voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors. Panel members reflect a balance from across areas of the city, neighbourhood renewal partnership areas, Belfast agenda themes and priorities, Section 75 and minoritised voices and large and small organisations.

The VCSE Panel aims:

- to ensure that the diverse voices of the sector are represented in the community planning process
- to develop and improve cross sectoral relationships and partnership working
- to promote ongoing and effective community engagement.

Belfast's Local Development Plan

As we continue to work together to shape a thriving, inclusive city, the Local Development Plan (LDP) provides a vital framework to help realise the ambitions in the Belfast Agenda

The first part of the LDP, the Plan Strategy, was adopted in May 2023 and sets out the growth strategy of the city and the spatial framework for that growth, including the operational policies against which planning applications are assessed. The second part of the Plan is the Local Policies Plan which focuses more on the allocation of lands necessary to enable the city to grow and develop in a sustainable way. It contains local policies and site-specific proposals in relation to the development and use of land and opportunities consistent with the Plan Strategy.

Overall, the LDP will seek to support the development of sustainable neighbourhoods, places which are well designed and provide a sufficient supply and choice of homes that will meet the city's growing and more diverse population. The plan also supports an integrated transport network offering travel choice that minimises congestion and pollution; it encourages the expansion of green infrastructure networks for walking and cycling to encourage active travel and improve air quality and promote increased use of public transport whilst retaining appropriate provision for cars.

The LDP will also seek to develop an integrated and multi-functional green infrastructure network of high-quality open spaces, parks, and corridors to support biodiversity, encourage physical activity and improve links between the neighbourhoods, facilities, services, employment and the city centre.

Once published, the Local Policies Plan should be read in combination with the Plan Strategy and considered as a whole. These together form the basis for decision making on planning applications and unless otherwise stated all the criteria used in each policy will apply to relevant proposals and should be considered holistically.

The Belfast Agenda

Theme 1

DELIVERING TOGETHER

Our people and communities

Making life better for all our residents

188

Supported 188 people through multi-agency partnership approach to deal with **chronic homelessness** in the city.

Established a **Vulnerability Leadership Group** bringing together regional statutory agencies with the delivery responsibilities, levers and resources to **support vulnerable children and adults** providing collective leadership for vulnerability at a city level.

Take5 steps to wellbeing

Secured resources for a co-ordinator to drive forward delivery of the **Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing Programme** over the next two years, with **£15k** supporting citywide projects in 23/24

78 **Participatory Budgeting process** taken forward for the Take Five theme, funding 78 organisations and increasing citywide profile.

Progressed collaborative efforts to develop a whole system approach to **healthy weight**

25,149

Supported 25,149 individuals through the **Social Supermarket Programme,** providing over £1.35 million to 27 projects.

Provided funding of **£2.07 million** to advice services in the city who supported over 50,000 individuals with access to free, independent advice.

£2.9m Provided £1.8m to support Community & Voluntary sector through capacity grants and £1.4m in annual revenue grants. In 25/26 the amount of **funding awarded to revenue groups** was increased to £2.9 million through an additional one-off award from Council.

An **Area Based Community Plan has been developed in North Belfast,** which can inform how similar processes could be delivered elsewhere.

Completion of two transformational Peace IV projects – **£7.8m Shankill Shared Women's Centre and £7m Black Mountain Shared Space.**

Completion of **2 community asset transfers** at Clarendon & Ulidia Playing Fields.

Installation of **two statues in City Hall** Grounds celebrating the role of women in the city – Mary Ann McCracken and Winifred Carney.

In total, some **50 projects** have been completed from November 23 to present, with a total capital investment of approximately £48m. **£48m**

Funding has been allocated to a range of projects across the city under the **£10.28 million Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF).** **£10m+**

A number of **awards were won** for the transformation of St. Comgall's building (RICS National Award and RICS Regional Award); the transformation of Templemore Avenue Baths (CEF Excellence Award and RICS Regional Award) and the creation of a new Shankill Shared Women's Centre (CEF Social/Community Construction Project of the year).

Health Inequalities

Partners are focussed on addressing health inequalities and improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all people in the city. We have been working collaboratively on physical and mental health, social cohesion, isolation and community vulnerability and are committed to continue working together to narrow inequality gaps across Belfast.

Supporting vulnerable people with complex lives

The Complex Lives initiative supports some of Belfast's most vulnerable people who are experiencing a cycle of rough sleeping, addiction, poor mental and physical health, and offending behaviour. The initiative provides a multi-disciplinary 'whole system' statutory and community and voluntary partnership delivery model, pooling expertise, skills and resources focused on improving outcomes for individuals who are chronically homeless in Belfast.

Highlights and progress include:

- Established a robust operational partnership with strong governance at strategic, tactical and operational levels
- The partners are developing an outcomes framework and a shared case management system to track impact
- Identified 260 people meeting NIHE's Chronic Homelessness definition
- Actively supporting 80-90 people at any given time, including 30 in their own tenancies
- Secured funding for 6 intensive support workers, enhancing existing partner services support offering
- The Multi-Disciplinary Team has supported 188 individuals to date, with a high engagement rate of 80-88%
- A working and signed data sharing agreement - a critical step to enable effective working of a whole systems approach
- Collaborated with prison healthcare and Northern Ireland Prison Service to improve release planning and provision of wrap-around support (Pilot at Hydebank Wood)
- Alignment with City Centre Tasking – this helps outreach services better coordinate and manage both people and place

Multi-Agency Support Hub (MASH)

MASH is the development of a partnership delivery model that enables organisations, including police, health and councils to work at local level to support vulnerable people who do not meet thresholds for acute support, but whose situations are at risk of escalation and causing high demand for a range of services. This collaborative network helps to coordinate services, assess hidden needs and improve access to services and support.

MASH has 2 key areas of focus

1) Expand the cohort of vulnerable individuals for support
2) Expand the agencies involved

Vulnerability Leadership Group

Through community planning, we have established a Vulnerability Leadership Group which brings together regional statutory agencies with the delivery responsibilities, levers and resources to support vulnerable children and adults. This group involves the NIHE, PSNI, PBNI, PHA, NIAS, BHSCT & BCC, and provides collective leadership for vulnerability at a city level.

Through this group we will continue to explore opportunities to develop transformative, place based, preventative and integrated approaches to supporting people who are vulnerable to traumatic experiences and poor outcomes throughout their lives.

Improving positive mental health and emotional wellbeing

Celebration Event in City-Hall

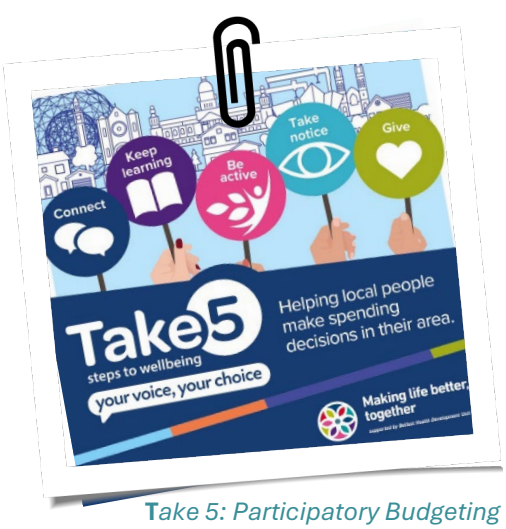
Take Five Steps to Wellbeing

This initiative promotes positive mental health and emotional wellbeing through five simple steps: connect, be active, take notice, keep learning and give. It encourages individuals and organisations to integrate these actions into daily life for better outcomes.

Highlights and progress include:

- £15k funding supported citywide projects in 2023/24, with additional funding secured from NHS Charities Together for staffing, resourcing, and procurement until October 2026, including a 2-year BHSCT Take 5 Co-ordinator recruited in Oct. 2024
- Promoted the Take Five steps initiative across 4 settings: community, schools, youth and workplaces
- Supporting 11 post-primary schools; 8 primary schools recruited for 2025/26 academic year
- 35 youth organisations attended Belfast Health & Development Unit facilitated workshops, with 10 completed over a year-long accreditation programme
- Celebration event held at Belfast City Hall in November 2025 to acknowledge achievements in Take Five Schools and Youth Organisations programmes
- Formed Take Five Community Working Group (10 members from community, voluntary and statutory sectors) to launch Belfast Take 5 Charter; 72 Organisations signed up to expand training and initiatives. The launch of a Take Five steps to Wellbeing Charter was held in June 2025 at Belfast Castle attended by 62 community, voluntary and statutory organisations
- A Participatory Budgeting initiative facilitated through the Belfast Health Development Unit, incorporated the Take Five theme in 2024/25, increasing citywide profile and funding 78 organisations; a celebration event held in City Hall in November 2025 showcasing project impacts

Take 5 Charter Launch



Take 5: Participatory Budgeting

Improving physical health

Partners are committed to promoting physical activity and nutrition to enhance health and wellbeing, reduce obesity, and encourage active lifestyles across Belfast. Initiatives like Active Belfast and the Whole System Approach to healthy weight engage communities through targeted programmes, training and partnerships.

Active Belfast Partnership

This partnership delivers physical activity and nutrition sessions in 26 community centres, focusing on children, young people, adults, families, and older people to build skills, improve inclusion, and foster social connections.

Highlights and progress include:

- Delivery of 589 sessions from January to February 2025, engaging 1,460 participants in 4–10-week programmes combining exercise, nutrition education and cookery
- Upskilled Community Development Officers in December 2024 and January 2025 with physical activity and nutrition training, plus signposting to further opportunities.
- Supported ongoing Jog Belfast programmes citywide, with 844 participants over 2 years
- Delivered Participatory Budgeting Phase 2 (September 2023–October 2024) under "Move More, Eat Well – Feel Better," and "Your Voice, Your Choice" (August 2024–October 2025) for emotional wellbeing via Take Five steps.
- Implemented Physical Activity Referral Care Pathway to connect individuals to tailored support, with 3,589 people completing the referral programme.

Cycling for health

We have delivered programmes promoting cycling for health through accessible, inclusive activities in outdoor spaces and community hubs.

Highlights and progress include:

- Co-ordinated minimum 8 programmes via Whiterock Active Travel Hub in locations like Falls Park and Comber Greenway; purchased and serviced 1 e-bike and 1 e-bike tandem (April 2025 onwards)
- Supported groups to June 2025: St Galls Men's Shed (4 weeks), USDT HLC (4 weeks), and USDT Addiction Support Group (4 weeks)
- Commissioned citywide: 16 balance and bike skills programmes (8 each, max 16 participants per group), plus 8 family community bike rides and inclusive bikes awareness at Ormeau Park
- Engaged 155 participants in 2024/25: 30 in inclusive bikes sessions (April–June 2025)

Whole system approach to healthy weight

This collaborative effort unites statutory, voluntary, and community agencies to address obesity causes and drive system changes, targeting higher rates in deprived areas (20% of P1 children, 27% of Year 8 children, and 65% of adults in NI).

Highlights and progress include:

- Completed Phases 1 (setup) and 2 (local picture): Secured senior support, established governance via Active Belfast Partnership, created statistical profiles, asset/hazard maps, and action overviews
- Initiated Phase 3 (system mapping): Appointed mapper, trained in co-design, integrated lived experience representatives, and procured an animated video for stakeholder engagement
- Presented to Belfast Community Planning Partnership and People & Communities Board; managed by Belfast Health Development Unit as part of NI WSA Shared Learning Network
- Phases 4–6 (action planning and implementation) progressing in 2025

Investing in our communities and local assets

Community & Neighbourhood Regeneration

Partners have been working towards developing a joined-up approach to neighbourhood regeneration, connecting people, places and services at a local level through partnership. We are committed to helping our people and places achieve their full potential and working collaboratively to meet the needs of each area of the city.

Community Support Plan

In June 2025, following extensive consultation and engagement Belfast City Council ratified a new Community Support Plan. This plan includes as one of its underpinning principles a commitment to 'contribute to tackling poverty through community support services through proactive measures / activity which seek to positively change the life experiences of local communities and their residents'.

The Community Support Plan is the delivery plan for a number of different initiatives that provide services that support those in poverty such as Advice Services and Social Supermarkets.

From April 2023 to 31st March 2025, we have supported 25,149 individuals through the Social Supermarket Programme, providing £1,350,439 to 27 projects.

These community-led models offer affordable food alongside wrap-around support, such as benefit checks, debt advice, training, employment guidance and childcare. Delivery models are tailored to meet local needs, from shop-style setups in community organisations to specialised support for groups like domestic violence survivors or people with disabilities.

From April 2023 to 31st March 2025, Belfast City Council provided funding of £2.07 million to advice services in the city who supported over 50,000 individuals with access to free, independent advice.

Investing in our communities and local assets

Partners are committed to enhancing community infrastructure through investments in local assets, delivering sustainable benefits for residents across Belfast. We work with community groups, organisations and funding agencies in the delivery of the Council's Physical Programme, encompassing streams such as the Belfast Investment Fund, Local Investment Fund, Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund, Social Outcomes Fund, Urban Villages Programme and others. These initiatives support a diverse range of capital projects citywide, boosting health, wellbeing, connectivity and other economic opportunities.

Highlights and progress include:

- Progressed the £10.28m Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund to deliver neighbourhood tourism, social economy and environmental sustainability projects across the city; one project on site in West Belfast – The Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre
- Secured Shared Prosperity Funding in 2024/25 for pitch and playground improvements, the Vacant to Vibrant scheme and feasibility studies for key sites and assets.
- Completed Local Investment Fund projects including Mercy Primary School, Star Neighbourhood Centre, Women's Tec and Mercy Primary School.
- Completed Urban Village projects at Pitt Park and Hosford Community Homes; on-site works ongoing for Sandy Row Arts & Digital Hub, ABC Trust Phase 2, and Titanic People Exhibition Centre; additional starts planned for Ballysillan Playing Fields, Coffee Culture, and the Lockhouse
- Delivered multi-million-pound improvements to parks and open spaces for better health and wellbeing, including progressing Cathedral Gardens (state of the art city centre open space), major park upgrades like the £6.9m Urban Villages Ballysillan Playing Fields, and ongoing Greenways development for enhanced connectivity
- Continued engagement to help shape the next phase of leisure transformation

Creating safe and shared spaces

Partners are dedicated to fostering safe, inclusive, and shared spaces across Belfast through the Good Relations Strategy and collaborative actions via the Shared City Partnership. By securing investments from the now-closed Peace IV Programme and the new PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan, we are building vibrant, connected places that promote community cohesion.

PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan

This initiative has secured £15.1m to support revenue and capital projects that enhance peaceful, thriving communities, cultural diversity, and shared spaces.

Highlights and progress include:

- 16 revenue projects comprising 22 elements across three themes (Thriving and Peaceful Communities, Celebrating Culture and Diversity, and Building Positive Relations).
- Contracted delivery partners for 8 elements in the Thriving and Peaceful Community theme, with community-level implementation underway.
- Contracted partners for 5 elements in the Celebrating Culture and Diversity theme; two additional projects under assessment.
- Funded five new capital projects: LGBTQIA+ Hub at 2 Royal Avenue, Annadale Open Space (south Belfast), Distillery Street Redevelopment (west Belfast), Access to the Hills (north Belfast), and Sanctuary Theatre (east Belfast).
- Additional funding for Reconnected Belfast – Waterworks and Alexandra Park [details on project deliverables pending]. Launched in April 2025, with five design information sessions held, design team procurement underway, and planning application in progress.

Peace IV Programme

In 2024, we completed two landmark projects under the EU's Peace IV Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), with support from the Department for Communities, the Department of Rural and Community Development in Ireland, and Belfast City Council. These developments promote community cohesion, inclusivity, and sustainable spaces.

Highlights and progress include:

- Shankill Shared Women's Centre (£7.8m): A vibrant hub providing tailored services for women and families from diverse backgrounds, in partnership with Clonard Women's Group, creating an inclusive environment for connection and growth.
- Black Mountain Shared Space (£7m): Removed over 30 metres of peace wall at the former Finlay's factory site on Ballygomartin Road, establishing a welcoming space with essential services and activities to bridge divides and foster social cohesion.

Case Study: Shankill Shared Women's Centre – Empowering Women and Families

This £7.8m centre serves as a supportive hub for women and families from varied backgrounds. Partnering with Clonard Women's Group, it offers vital programmes and networks in a warm, shared space designed to help women from different communities connect, thrive, and build stronger futures.

Case Study: Black Mountain Shared Space – Bridging Divides and Building Futures

This £7m project marks a reconciliation milestone by removing over 30 metres of peace wall, transforming the former Finlay's factory site into a safe, interactive space. It provides essential services and activities to encourage dialogue among diverse groups, promoting unity and long-term community bonds.

Area Based Community Plans

Through the Belfast Agenda we are committed to collaborating with government departments and community partners to develop area-based community plans. These plans reflect local needs and priorities, enabling targeted actions to drive meaningful change at a neighbourhood level and are developed by engaging communities to identify local needs, challenges and opportunities.

Supported by the Executive Office and Department for Communities, Neighbourhood Renewal Partners in North Belfast conducted extensive engagement and action planning, resulting in a comprehensive Area Plan for North Belfast. We are committed to exploring opportunities to deliver the North Belfast plan and to support similar processes in other parts of Belfast.

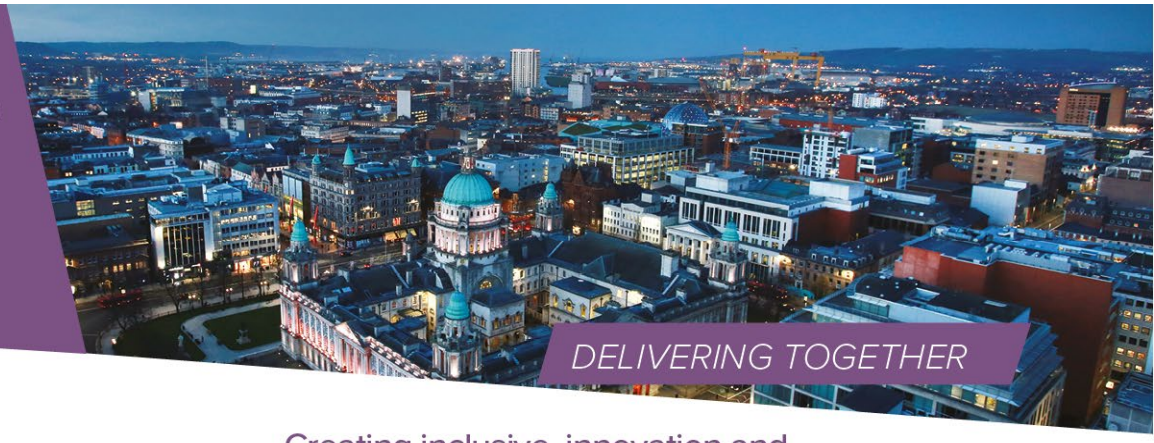
Wider University & Lower Ormeau (WULO)

In the Wider University & Lower Ormeau area, partners have collaborated to tackle systemic societal challenges, tailoring resources, projects or interventions to improve outcomes for residents.

Following extensive engagement, a multi-Agency action plan was created to address crime, community cohesion and well-being. Funded by the Public Health Authority, South District Policing and Community Safety Partnership and Belfast City Council, an Area Intervention Manager has been appointed to lead on the delivery of the action plan and serve as a community champion on behalf of partners.

The Belfast Agenda

Theme 2



Our economy

Creating inclusive, innovation and sustainable growth, learning and opportunity

£20m £20m has been allocated to the Department of Education RAISE Programme and two associated programmes, **Creative Connections and T-Rex,** over the next 2 years to address educational disadvantage and increase attainment.

4,885 4,885 people accessed **Belfast Employment Academies** via Belfast Met and Belfast City Council.

2,100 people have accessed apprenticeships and 1,815 individuals have been supported through **English for speakers of other languages programmes (ESOL)** via Belfast Met.

27,113 RSA **Cities of Learning Digital Badging** programme has increased from 3,753 to 27,113 issued digital badges and skills passports.

Supported over 120 Social Enterprises through Social Enterprise Fund, allocating **£150,000.**

£250k Digital Transformation Flexible Fund supported 17 businesses, with over **£250,000** awarded

G2C

1,913 Supported over 1,913 people through **Gateway to Choices**, a triage service directing individuals to tailored employability and skills provisions.

Go Succeed NI Business Support

2,600 Launched **Go Succeed in November 2023,** supporting **2,600 new start** and existing businesses with support, mentoring and advice. **300 new businesses established**, and **400 jobs** created.

£94m Secured £94m in investment for Belfast's SME's through Invest NI's access to finance schemes.

75 Through Invest NI's export support services 75 Belfast based companies were **assisted to sell outside Northern Ireland** for the first time with a further 161 assisted to sell into New Markets.

£1billion Continued delivery of **Belfast Region City Deal projects** which aim to deliver **£400m** GVA, **£1billion** of private sector leverage and **20,000 jobs.** Key progress made at Studio Ulster's advanced virtual production facility at Giant's Park, Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre, iReach Health, Momentum One Zero, Augment the City, Belfast Stories, Lagan Bridge and BRT2.

70 organisations have signed up to the Belfast Business Promise and **172** pledges awarded, with **23** progressing to Member status and **11** achieving ambassador status.

Belfast BUSINESS PROMISE

Educational inequalities

Partners recognise the fundamental contribution of education to improving the wellbeing and life opportunities of children, as well as the wider benefits to our communities and economy. We're committed to working to ensure that every child and young person is supported in their wellbeing and learning so that they develop the skills and capabilities to fulfil their potential and progress into a positive destination, such as employment or further and higher education.

RAISE:
'A whole community and place-based approach to tackling educational disadvantage'

Announced in May 2024 by the Minister of Education, the RAISE Programme (Raising Achievement to Reduce Educational Disadvantage) is a whole community and place-based approach to tackling educational disadvantage in 18 localities across Northern Ireland including four in Belfast, supporting the Department of Education's vision that "every child is happy learning and succeeding." It focusses on two objectives:

- Raising aspirations through a whole community approach to education; and
- Raising achievement and addressing educational disadvantage

Highlights and progress include:

- Established four Locality Reference Groups across Belfast, involving schools, community groups, statutory bodies and other stakeholders to help inform and to shape strategic area plans
- Submitted plans to the Department for review, with the first call for locality-led projects advertised in September 2025

Whole community approaches to education

Collaborative programmes build connections between schools, families and communities to support attainment and transitions. We are committed to enhancing the scale of the impact of our work and identifying opportunities for partnership delivery with community partners.

EastSide Partnership

Eastside Partnership have delivered a number of whole community approaches to education, supported with funding received from Department of Education's WRAP Programme & The Executive Programme on Paramilitarism & Organised Crime (EPPOC).

Highlights and progress include:

- EastSide Early Learning Community in partnership with Save the Children has a community of 93 partners including the statutory, community and voluntary sectors. The partnership aims to create a long-term impact on outcomes for children aged 0-8 from.
- STEM Camp including a visit to Ulster University Engineering Department for P5-P7 pupils.
- Between 2023-2025, ESL hosted 5 ABC Clubs in partnership with local primary schools, with 113 pupils (P5-P6) participating
- Reading Fair held in March to support Reading and Literacy for children and adults.
- An Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance Programme was delivered to improve school attendance
- Summer learning programmes with local community summer schools were hosted
- Count on Dad's programme to encourage learning and sharing with fathers and children.

Seamless Transition Through Education (STEP)

STEP is a bespoke early intervention programme developed with funding received from the Department of Education's WRAP Programme & EPPOC. STEP seeks to build a positive whole community approach to education in South Belfast and works to develop the education infrastructure by connecting schools and five community-based partners.

The consortium of community and voluntary sector organisations working on STEP is led and co-ordinated by Forward South Partnership and consists of community partners- South Belfast Sure Start, Barnardo's, Sólás and Belfast South Community Resources.

Together the partners deliver a holistic, place-based early intervention programme specifically designed to provide support to families and children, helping them get the best start in life. The underlying ethos is that children will fail to thrive if the wider family unit of which they are a part of is not thriving. Through focusing on community connectedness, STEP contributes to peace building and tackling paramilitarism, raising aspirations, improvements to emotional wellbeing, and empowerment.

There are seven key strands to this work:

- Perinatal support
- 2/3-year-old loving learning programme
- Transition programmes for nursery to P1 and P7 to post primary
- Family support and parenting programmes
- SEN family support & reach programmes for post-primary
- Emotional wellbeing & resilience interventions in schools and community settings
- CPD for teachers and those working with young people across South Belfast

Each year, around 2,300 children and 800 parents are engaged in STEP in South Belfast. It works with a core network of 7 primary schools and 6 nurseries, but programmes can work across a larger number of schools. The project has resulted in improved emotional wellbeing, increased confidence and a stronger sense of community connectedness. A strong collaboration has been built between the partners, and the programme has helped build community capacity in the area.

Greater Shankill Partnership

Greater Shankill Partnership have developed a whole child, whole family, whole community a whole system approach to transforming the lives of children and young under the umbrella of the Greater Shankill Children & Young People Zone. This work has been supported from DE funding. Working in partnership with Queen's University, 8 local Primary and 3 post-Primary schools, a bespoke Teacher Professional Learning guide-sharing best practice has been co-designed and delivered to cohorts at leadership level, senior management and at induction of new teachers.

This approach led to the 8 Primary schools forming the first Area Learning Community (ALC) at Primary school level in Northern Ireland. In February 2024, Queen's University and Greater Shankill Partnership signed a Memorandum of Understanding to continue this and other work.

Belfast City Council Funded Programmes

In a partnership between West Belfast Partnership Board and other Area Partnerships, we've delivered a GCSE Support Programme, providing targeted tuition in Maths and English for students predicted low grades, supporting 680 students over two years and increasing the percentage of school leavers progressing into a positive destination.

We have also supported an accelerated reader programme for 1,055 pupils as an early intervention, conducting over 3,216 assessments to improve comprehension and encourage independent reading

Addressing severe to chronic pupil absence.

Addressing chronic pupil absence is recognised in our community plan as essential action in the journey towards helping reduce educational inequalities. In 2023, the Education Authority's (EA) School Development Service launched a post-primary attendance programme in the Belfast area, aimed at supporting schools to improve pupil attendance. Attendance in all participating schools improved and the pilot programme left schools with tools and approaches to sustain this improvement. Key learning from this initiative has been incorporated into the joint attendance guidance from the Department of Education and Education Authority.

Supporting children with Special Educational Needs

As a compassionate city, partners are committed to maximising access, opportunities and choices for children with special educational needs and disabilities, both at school and in their communities.

Highlights and progress include:

- Established 69 new specialist provision classes in mainstream schools, catering for 604 nursery, primary and secondary school pupils, enabling inclusive learning for children with SEN within mainstream settings
- Opened Deanby Centre Special School as part of a £1m refurbishment, which offers educational opportunities for 72 nursery/primary school children with SEN, including classrooms, sensory, therapy and hygiene facilities
- Opened Fleming Fulton School Hydrotherapy Pool in June 2025 for ages 3-19, benefitting pupils and neighbouring schools by aiding movement, relaxation, flexibility, confidence and emotional wellbeing

Fleming Fulton Principal, Karen Hancock has commented:

"Hydrotherapy offers incredible benefits for all children including those with disabilities. The buoyancy of the water allows for movements that may not be possible on land, reducing pressure on joints and muscles while encouraging strength, promoting muscle relaxation, flexibility and coordination. The benefits of hydrotherapy go far beyond the physical – it builds confidence, fosters independence and provides moments of fun and freedom that are essential to a child's emotional wellbeing.

...The hydrotherapy pool is more than just a facility, it represents a step forward in our commitment to ensuring every child, regardless of ability, has the opportunity to thrive, grow and experience the joys of learning and development in an environment that supports their unique needs."

- Launched an immersive classroom at W5 in 2025 developed in partnership between the Education Authority, BT and W5. This 5G-enabled space offers sensory and visual interactions, to stimulate learning using cameras and HD projectors to bring content to life with lights, sounds and smells. The classroom is prioritised for Special Schools and specialist provisions are available free of charge, supporting learners with additional needs.

- Piloted Deaf Classroom Assistant and upskilling academies via the Labour Market Partnership to provide additional support to children with SEN in school settings. The Academy has supported 10 people who are deaf and who sign BSL/ISL up to Level 6 to complete Level 3 Classroom Assistant. This Academy is unique in Northern Ireland.

Supporting learners in Irish Medium schools

In 2024/25 the Education Authority facilitated the first bespoke programme for Early Career Teachers in Irish with 10 Irish-medium schools in Belfast participating. In August 2024, the Education Authority, in partnership with St. Mary's University College, Belfast, facilitated a professional learning programme for Irish Medium educators on the use of Digital Technology to support immersive pedagogy. 17 educators in Belfast availed of this capacity building opportunity.

The Labour Market Partnership have funded upskilling Irish medium Academies in partnership with GaelChúrsaí for 115 people to become Level 3 or Level 5 qualified Classroom Assistants.

Supporting people into employment

Partners have been working to drive enhanced productivity and create better jobs through investment in innovation and skills. Within the work of the Economy theme, developing inclusive pathways to good employment has been identified by partners as a key area of focus

Belfast Labour Market Partnership

The Belfast Labour Market Partnership (LMP) focuses on improving Belfast's employability outcomes and labour market conditions by working with a range of partners, helping connect employers and employees and being responsive to meet local need. Convened and developed by Belfast City Council with funding from the Department for Communities and Department for the Economy, the following key achievements are a snapshot of what's been delivered throughout the reporting period:

- Issued 27,113 digital badges as an RSA City of Learning since November providing credentials and skills passports matched to real time job vacancies
- Convened a Belfast Health & Work Steering Group to design a joined-up employability and skills ecosystem, promoting a more inclusive labour market
- Supported over 1,913 people through Gateway to Choices, a triage service directing individuals to tailored employability and skills provisions
- Built a provider network with over 450 members from more than 200 organisations, including community groups and Jobs & Benefit Offices staff
- Placed 1,695 people in Belfast employment academies from November 2023 to August 2025 with 896 completing so far and 699 still participating on an academy. Of those successfully completing, 745 (83%) have secured a new or better job
- Delivered Irish Medium Employment Academies for 154 people and Upskilling Academies for 115 people working as Classroom Assistants to gain the Level 3 or Level 5 qualification were developed and delivered
- Supported 1,380 people through the "Multiply" numeracy programme (UKSPF – funded by Department for the Economy), targeting those with no Maths GCSE, across 17 projects worth approximately £420,000

Belfast Metropolitan College

Belfast Met supports learners through diverse programmes, fostering skills development, apprenticeships and pathways to employment. Over the past two years the college has supported 12,098 individual learners across 20,554 enrolments, with 92% reporting satisfaction and 88% of both FE/HE leavers progressing to further learning or employment. An impressive 2,100 learners have undertaken an apprenticeship (Level2/3) or a Higher level apprenticeship (Level 4/5).

Highlights and progress include:

- **Step-up programme -** aimed increasing access and participation from under-represented individuals supported 609 participants, with 76% progressing into further training or employment
- **Skills fund programmes –** Funded by the Department for the Economy, these four 2025 initiatives helped reduce barriers to returning to employment:

  i) **Back to Business:** 12 women returners completed 14 weeks of Level 2 Business Administration training plus 4 weeks' placement at Falls Women's Centre, focusing on digital tools, communication, project management, and employability

  ii) **Digital Marketing:** In partnership with Shankill Women's Centre, 10 women completed 8 weeks to achieve OCN Level 2, covering core principles, confidence-building workshops, and industry insights for workplace readiness

  iii) **Career Reboot:** In partnership with Women in Business NI, 28 women (not in paid work or working under 16 hours a week, often with caring duties) completed 5 weeks of blended learning on CV development, interviews, confidence, resilience, and OCN Level 2 Customer Service

  iv) **Breaking Barriers:** In partnership with Ulster Supported Employment Ltd and Belfast Met's inclusive learning team, 20 participants completed 10 weeks on soft skills (communication, teamwork, job-seeking), with themes in IT, digital literacy, employability, graphic design, digital creativity and employment regulations

Back to business participant quote:

"After a career break due to family responsibilities, found it challenging to re-enter the workforce. Completing the course significantly boosted my self-esteem. I not only gained a qualification but also improved my digital literacy, communication, and time management skills."

Breaking barriers participant quote:

"It has been a great stepping stone to getting the confidence to start back to employment, and with the ever-changing computer systems, it has definitely helped me feel less overwhelmed."

Belfast Digital Skills & Employability Programme

Supported by Bank of America, this delivers 30 Digital Skills Academies over 3 years for targeted groups like women returners, adult learners, those with disabilities (including neurodivergent) and newcomers.

Highlights and progress include:

- Launched in October 2023 at Springvale Campus; 235 participants enrolled in 13 academies to date
- The participant retention rate is 86% and overall positive progression rate is 93% with learners progressing onto further training, apprenticeships or employment
- Participants have progressed into work with employers such as EE, Citi, Concentrix, Health Service, CCEA and NI Civil Service

Skill Up Programme

The programme has successfully supported over 2,048 learners and provides upskilling/reskilling through accredited qualifications in priority areas like Health & Social Care, Childcare, IT, Green Skills, Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering, Hospitality, Tourism and transversal skills (leadership, management, business, marketing).

Through the Skill Up Programme, Belfast Metropolitan College has tailored its course offerings to meet the diverse needs of its learners. This included Cybersecurity Skills courses designed specifically for neurodiverse learners and a Level 2 Coaching and Mentoring programme aimed at women in the Renewables sector. The college also continued its commitment to supporting the Hospitality and Tourism sector by collaborating with industry partners to develop targeted courses that address existing skills gaps, particularly through its Get into Hospitality initiative.

Assured Skills Academies

The college delivered15 Assured Skills Academies to 235 participants delivering qualifications and employment in key growth sectors such as data analytics, software development, professional business services and childcare.

Highlights and progress include:

- First Early Learning and Childcare Collaborative Assured Skills Academy (Nov 24): 13 learners completed 12 weeks of training and hands-on experience, with 10 securing jobs with 4 childcare employers
- Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Skills Academy (September 2024): As part of a collaboration to support workforce development in the civil service, the programme provided full-time and part-time pre-employment training in civil engineering, with 29 participants securing roles in the Department for Infrastructure

Supporting local business and enterprise

Over the past two years, we have worked with our city and regional partners across the public and private sectors to understand the issues facing businesses and to develop support interventions to address key areas of concern.

In November 2023, delivery began on "Go Succeed," a new approach to business start-up and growth support available across Northern Ireland.

In Belfast, significant numbers of budding entrepreneurs and existing businesses have engaged with the service since its inception.

Highlights and progress include:

- Almost 1700 early stage and new start businesses are accessing business advice, guidance and mentoring support to help establish their business or move it forward with a focus on growth
- Almost 900 existing businesses are accessing support to develop new markets, introduce new processes and grow their workforce to meet the demand for their products or services
- More than 300 new business have been established
- More than 400 new jobs have been created

Given the importance of the social enterprise sector in Belfast, we have put in place targeted support to help place these businesses on a more sustainable financial footing, including increasing the value of earned income outside of public sector investment. Over the last two years, we have supported more than 120 social enterprises by providing specialist mentoring, advice and guidance. We have also supported 24 social enterprises through our Social Enterprise Investment Fund – allocating almost £150,000over that period.

Digital Transformation Flexible Fund

The Digital Transformation Flexible Fund aimed at supporting micro and small businesses with digital transformation projects supported 17 Belfast businesses with over £250,000 awarded in March 2025. A peer support network and wraparound support was established through Go Succeed to support businesses with their application and to help them apply the technologies within their business once successful.

Invest NI Support

Invest NI promotes innovation, exports and funding to help local businesses grow competitively on a global scale.

Highlights and progress include:

- Supported 203 Belfast based companies through Innovate NI, to complete the Innovation Recognition Assessment, guiding them through a structured process to test, develop and commercialise ideas for value creation
- Supported 75 Belfast companies to export outside of Northern Ireland for the first time and 161 to enter new markets via export services
- Hosted ongoing business breakfasts and drop-in clinics with partners to foster collaboration
- Secured approximately £94m in investments for Belfast companies from April 2023 to March 2025 through access to finance schemes. These target SMEs, which are the backbone of our economy providing three-quarters of all private sector jobs and turnover
- Invest NI's commitment of £100m across three funds is expected to unlock at least £150m in private investment, managed by independent FCA approved fund managers who provide decisions, guidance and mentoring. Funds include NI Small Business Loan Fund, Techstart and Co FundLoan & Equity funds.

Securing Investment & Creating Jobs & Opportunities

Belfast Region City Deal

The signing of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) in December 2021 was a key milestone for the city and wider region as it secured a financial commitment of the UK Government, NI Executive and BRCD partners, to work with industry to deliver a £1bn programme of investment that offers a 'once in a generation' opportunity to accelerate inclusive economic growth for the region.

- Over the lifetime of the deal, the following benefits are anticipated:
- Support the creation of 20,000 new jobs.
- Connect local people to new and better jobs.
- Place the region at the top table of digital innovation.
- Deliver £400 million in GVA directly on-site and within the region.
- Target delivery of almost £1 billion of private sector leverage
- Create compelling world class visitor attractions.
- Help to regenerate major towns and cities.

Over the past two years we have made significant strides forward in progressing the BRCD.

Highlights and progress include:

- Studio Ulster launched at the Belfast's Giants Park
- The Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre is well into construction and anticipated completion by Jan 2026
- Construction has commenced at the clinical health focused iREACH Health

- Construction has commenced at the AI & Data focused Momentum One Zero located at the Titanic Quarter. The connected health focused CDHT project has an Outline Business Case approved, has now signed its funding agreement and commenced demolition works on site
- **Four skills assessments have been completed** in the following sectors: construction, advanced manufacturing, creative industries and digital. The Life and Health Sciences is currently underway and anticipated to be completed by the year end.
- The **UK Digital Twin Centre** is being delivered by Digital catapult and was officially launched in May 2025.
- The Innovation Challenge Fund pilot project, **Augment the City**, is now successfully progressing into its final phase and three companies have been awarded £100k each to develop prototypes for innovation tourism experiences and over the next six months will turn their concepts into prototypes to be trialled in real-world settings.
- The Outline Business Case for Belfast Stories, a £100m visitor destination, public space and creative hub close to Cathedral Gardens, has been developed and following Departmental review and approval, the Contract for Funding will be signed in early 2026.
- The **Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle bridge** is progressing towards appointment of a design and build contractor in Autumn 2025, with construction anticipated to commence in Spring 2026. Once completed the bridge will offer a quicker and safer route for pedestrians and cyclists between Belfast City centre and the south and east of the city and encourage a shift towards sustainable transport modes.
- The infrastructure minister has announced the next steps for Phase 2 of the Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT2) project in February 2025, which will see the Glider service extend to north and south Belfast, with an additional £13 million allocated from the Department for Infrastructure to deliver a park and ride on the O'Neill Road. The OBC is being finalised and following approval, work is expected to begin on this first phase in 2026.

Belfast Business Promise

Belfast Business Promise is our new membership and accreditation initiative for employers committed to inclusive growth and improving best-practice standards in Belfast. Built around eight pledges, such as providing fair wages and supporting the local and social economy, the scheme sets aspirations for excellence and its flexibility makes sure all employers can take part, regardless of size and sector.

To date, 70 organisations have signed up to the Belfast Business Promise and 228 pledges awarded across our business community; 23 organisations have progressed to Member status, and 11 have achieved Ambassador status.

Belfast BUSINESS PROMISE
Making a better city

Belfast is the first council to become Living Wage accredited in the region, Belfast Business Promise is a lever in addressing this issue with 20 organisations becoming LW accredited.

Highlights and progress include:

- 9 Promise Learning Days have been hosted, with 80% attendance rates
- 4 Peer Support Networks / workshops convened
- 45 businesses supported with implementation of an 'Outreach Action Plan'
- 33 businesses supported with the development of a 'Climate Action Plan' and access to resources supporting carbon reduction goals whilst embedding a culture of sustainability across the community of organisations.
- 40 organisations have achieved 'JAM Card Friendly' status.

The Belfast Agenda

Theme 3

DELIVERING TOGETHER

Our place

Creating a liveable and connected, vibrant and competitive city

Since 2020-21 (baseline year), a total of

2,657

homes have been completed in Belfast

with 586 completed in 2023-24

(Source: Belfast HousingMonitor)

854

new social homes were started over the reporting period until March 2025, exceeding the annual target of 400.737 social homes were completed.

Public sector strategic site assessment of Belfast City Council, Housing Executive and DfC lands has been completed with **initial opportunities for collaborative placemaking** projects at agreed sites.

Construction is underway on the landmark Dargan House scheme at Loftlines, the first major Build-to-Rent led development of its kind in Northern Ireland, delivering **778** homes, including **151** affordable housing units.

Belfast Grand Central Station opened to the public for train and bus services in September 2024.

Sustrans continue to deliver the Active School Travel programme, with **25 new schools** recruited to join in Belfast for the 2025/26 academic year.

Translink are now operating an hourly cross-border Enterprise service and reporting an uplift of **31% in passengers** compared to 2023.

31%

Belfast made a successful bid to host the **Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann** in 2026.

As part of the **Leading the Way project**, delivered by Sustrans and funded by Translink, DfI and the Public Health Agency, Belfast Active Travel Challenge programme ran in 2024 and 2025, encouraging people to try walking, wheeling or public transport as a cleaner, healthier option for their everyday journeys.

The city centre saw an increase in footfall of

182,221

(33%) from baseline of 553,939 (2021)

OPEN

Council invested £1million in the city centre **Vacant to Vibrant scheme,** supporting 48 capital projects.

Housing- led Regeneration

Addressing housing pressures remains a priority for the city and supports our ambition to grow the population. Since November 2023, progress has been made across a range of areas, both at a strategic and delivery level.

In December 2024, the NI Executive published a 15-year Housing Supply Strategy (2024-39). Developed by the Department for Communities (DfC), it focuses on delivering the right homes in suitable locations to meet future and current needs, ensuring everyone has access to good quality, affordable and sustainable housing in thriving and inclusive communities.

Guided by the Local Development Plan, Housing-Led Regeneration Group partners, including the Housing Executive, DfC and City Council, continue to work together to remove development barriers and increase supply across all types of housing (social, intermediate, owner-occupied and private rental).

Social housing is delivered in a tri-partite arrangement between DfC, the Housing Executive and participating Housing Associations, with grant funding from DfC. This model continues to underpin delivery across Belfast, supporting both new build and rehabilitation of existing properties.

Highlights and progress include:

- Public sector strategic site assessment of Council, Housing Executive and DfC lands has been completed by the Housing-Led Regeneration group to identify opportunities for mixed tenure housing on public sector lands. Initial opportunities for collaborative placemaking projects have been identified at agreed at sites. This work has been supported by detailed feasibility studies to inform inclusive, sustainable development and act as catalysts for wider regeneration.
- Partners have exceeded their target to deliver a minimum of two placemaking projects; Additional potential pilots are now being developed across multiple locations, with further opportunities expected to emerge from a growing pipeline of public sector land.
- As part of the on-going LDP Local Policies Plan, a 'Call for Sites' consultation exercise was undertaken between December 2023 –March 2024 to provide an early opportunity for individuals, landowners and developers to suggest sites within the Council area for new development up to 2035.
- A Place-Based Growth Proposition is being strategically presented to both the UK Government in Westminster and the NI Executive advocating for parity in regeneration funding and powers for Belfast in line with other UK cities.
- Inputting into Shaping Sustainable Places consultation which proposes a regional fund to drive inclusive, resilient regeneration across Northern Ireland.
- Over £187million of investment in social housing new build.
- £63.5million investment in Housing Executive homes is supporting essential upgrades, modernisation and energy efficiency improvements across the existing stock, helping to enhance living standards and extend the lifespan of vital social housing assets.
- 745 social homes retrofitted by the Housing Executive, saving on heating bills, reducing carbon and creating a healthier living environment.
- Affordable warmth installations into 983 properties have helped improve energy efficiency, reduce fuel poverty and enhance comfort for households across the city.
- On-going delivery of the Housing Executive's Ending Homelessness Together Strategy and Social Housing Development Plan
- Partners continue to work together to overcome systemic barriers to residential development in Belfast to unlock sites, accelerate delivery, and maximise collaborative gain in creating inclusive and sustainable communities.

Highlights of progress in the city centre include:

- Council has appointed GRAHAM as its private sector partner to deliver a £630 million residential-led programme across the city. The initial phase focuses on four housing-led regeneration catalyst sites on council owned land in the city centre with a development value of around £280 million.
- The Housing Executive have established Belfast's first City Centre waiting list for new build social housing to identify the specific needs and preferences of the growing city centre population demonstrating a strong need across all household types.
- Council and the Department for Communities have appointed Clanmil Housing to deliver a mixed-use, residential-focused development in Belfast's inner northwest; situated on jointly held land, the project aims to boost city centre living, rejuvenate the area and strengthen connections with surrounding communities.
- In addition, Council-owned assets have been utilised to support a development scheme at the Gasworks site which will be constructed by Radius Housing Association. The project aims to deliver a mixed-tenure residential scheme of 94 homes that promotes city centre living, enhances local connectivity and contributes to the on-going regeneration of the area.
- Council is exploring a Homes on Upper Space for Everyone (H.O.U.S.E) programme to repurpose upper floor spaces in the city centre for residential living.
- The ambition for a shared and inclusive community is recognised through commitments from the Housing for All Programme for Dargan House at Loft Lines which will see the first homes allocated in late 2025.

The Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations notes a high volume of on-site and programmed units in Belfast suggesting readiness for scale and delivery. Overall, significant progress has been made despite a challenging funding landscape.

Partners remain committed to delivering innovative solutions that address housing needs, ensuring inclusive and equitable outcomes citywide.

Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel

To thrive, cities must have transportation systems which allow the maximum volume of people to travel whilst doing the least possible harm to the environment, with active and sustainable choices bringing health benefits to all. Since November 2023, significant progress has been made on strategic initiatives, projects and programmes that support and encourage people to make more sustainable and active travel choices

Eastern Transport Plan

The Department for Infrastructure is continuing to progress the Eastern Transport Plan in an integrated manner with the Local Development Plan and other stakeholders.

Grand Central Station

Grand Central Station opened its doors to passengers in September 2024, offering seamless connections between bus, coach, rail, and active travel. This regional hub is the largest on the island of Ireland with the capacity for 20 million journeys per year. With eight rail platforms and twenty-six bus stands, it enhances opportunities for people to live, work and visit in Belfast and the wider region. Achieving 96% user satisfaction rating, indicating strong public approval and driving

increase in patronage compared to 2023, mostly notably an uplift of 12% in passenger numbers on local rail services and 31% increase on Cross border Rail Travel.

York Street Train Station

Opened in April 2024, this station provides modern, accessible facilities to support North Belfast regeneration and provides connectivity to the Ulster University and Cathedral Quarter.

Public Transport

In February 2025 the Minister announced the next steps for the Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT2) project, which will see the Glider service extended to north and south Belfast. Translink continue to work to improve public transport journey times and reliability. In financial year 24/25 Metro/Glider passengers have increased by 4% year on year carrying 30 million passengers.

Translink Future Ticketing System

Contactless “tap and go” payments are now available across all Translink services, boosting usage by simplifying fares, removing barriers to travel and providing passengers with best value fares through daily capping. Next steps include installing ticket vending machines across the city centre and introducing account-based ticketing (ABT) where users tap on/off with cards or smartcards for automatic daily fare calculation and capping.

Zero Emission Fleet

With 50% of the Metro fleet now zero emission, the commitment to achieve a net zero fleet by 2030 is well on target. New buses feature high-spec e-leather seating, USB charging, free Wi-Fi and dedicated wheelchair spaces ensuring comfort, accessibility and sustainability for all passengers.

Better On Board

Translink launched its Better on-Board Charter in November 2024 as part of a movement to encourage modal shift to buses, trains and active travel, reducing congestions, improving air quality and creating a more sustainable future for everyone. To date, 16 anchor organisations representing over 100,000 people have signed up across Belfast and Derry-Londonderry where the need is most urgent to tackle traffic congestion. Better on Board has recently aligned with the Belfast Business Promise as part of Pledge 3, Protecting Our Environment.

Walking, Wheeling and Cycling

Belfast Healthy Cities piloted a Key Stage 2 Teaching Resource called “Healthy Transport” which educates students on topics such as air pollution and active travel, and links in with the Northern Ireland Primary School Curriculum. The resource includes a 5-step toolkit, templates and worksheets to allow students to be directly involved in the design and delivery of a “Walking Bus” – a supervised group of children walking to school with designated ‘stops.’ Walking buses are a safe, social and environmentally sustainable way for children to travel, promoting exercise and road safety awareness.

The Healthy Transport Teaching Resource and Walking Bus Toolkit will be made available to all primary schools in Northern Ireland starting in the upcoming 2025-2026 school year.

Highlights and progress include:

- Expanded the number of Belfast Bikes to 400 available at 60 docking stations across the city. Council have appointed a new contractor and have introduced new pedal and e-bikes to the service
- Sustrans Active Travel Challenge programme (funded by Translink, DfI, PHA) ran in 2024/25 encouraging people to try walking wheeling or public transport as a cleaner, healthier option for their everyday journeys
- Sustrans Active School Travel Programme recruited 25 schools to join in Belfast for the 2025/26 academic year
- Finalised designs for phase two of the Lagan greenway (Lagan Lands East to Belvoir Forest Park) as part of DfI’s Belfast Cycling Network, with continued work progressing on Sydenham, West Belfast and Blackstaff greenways
- With support from the Department for Infrastructure, Council has improved public cycle parking; The Bike Yard in Castlecourt Shopping Centre can house 24 bikes and offers all-day on-site security. Schemes have also been completed at Finaghy Primary School, Queen’s University and Titanic Quarter. Covered cycle stands with green roofs to help improve air quality and encourage biodiversity are also available at nine sites.
- Council accredited as a Silver Cycle Friendly Employer
- Work is ow progressing to design and deliver the majority of schemes in the Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan’s short-term list

Future City Centre and wider regeneration and investment

Since November 2023, Belfast continues to make tangible progress towards our shared ambition of making our city centre a vibrant, attractive and welcoming place to live, work and visit with good connectivity to our surrounding neighbourhoods. Work continues on a number of strategic projects such as the delivery of the 'Bolder Vision' strategy, the refresh of our Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy and Place-Based Growth Proposition. Partners have continued to work together on a range of projects with multiple social, economic and sustainable benefits felt across the city and beyond.

A City Imagining

Evolving from Belfast's European Capital of Culture aspirations and delivered through the city's cultural strategy, "A City Imagining," Belfast hosted the city's largest year of creative and cultural celebration ever in 2024.

The ***Belfast 2024*** cultural programme recorded over 155,000 people participating in 1400+ events and other activities which were hosted across the city; 97% of attendees surveyed reported feeling proud that this was happening in Belfast, with 36% from outside the city.

In March 2025, it was announced that Belfast City Council in partnership with Ards Comhaltas Cheoil na hÉireann will deliver the **Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann** in 2026. It's estimated that this diverse celebration of music, dance and language will attract over 650,000 visitors and generate approximately £50 million in economic impact. This international exposure will help boost the city's reputation as a thriving global cultural capital which is welcoming, dynamic and inspirational.

A City Exploring

In January 2025, the Department for the Economy launched a Tourism Vision and Action Plan aiming to grow the tourism sector and increase tourism expenditure to over £2 billion by the end of our Belfast Agenda ten-year plan in 2035 from a baseline position of £1.2 billion recorded in 2023. Despite the severe impact of Covid-19 on the visitor economy, Belfast maintains its appeal as a fantastic city break destination with high levels of visitor satisfaction. We've attracted business events that have delivered demonstratable social and economic benefits for the City and wider region.

Highlights and progress include:

- An estimated £539 million spend on overnight trips in 2023, up from the 2019 baseline of £424 million; this represents almost 45% of tourism revenue for Northern Ireland in 2023 (Source: Visit Belfast)
- Total number of overnight trips to Belfast in 2024 was 1,452,849, with 51% of visitors taking a holiday, 31% visiting friends or relatives and 18% coming for business or other reason(Source: NISRA)
- Belfast had the highest number of overnight trips of any Local Government District during 2024 (1.5M or 31% of all NI overnight trips); The total spend during overnight trips was £469,643,365 in 2024 (Source: NISRA)
- City centre hotel occupancy achieved 79.2%, with 1.4million rooms sold (Source: Visit Belfast)

Visit Belfast industry sustainability survey (2024-25) was completed by 160 tourism businesses. Key findings include:

- £1.4 million raised for charitable and social causes
- 30% of respondents have a Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy
- 61% of respondents had sponsored a local community event
- 77% of respondents had supported a charitable or social initiative
- 96% of respondents have adopted sustainable practices
- 51% of respondents are measuring all or some of their carbon emissions

Visit Belfast also commissioned the city's first dedicated resident sentiment survey to measure attitudes towards tourism in 2024-5 which found that Belfast enjoys strong support for tourism amongst its residents. Key findings include:

- 92% agree that tourism is beneficial for Belfast
- 93% agree that tourism allows people to learn about Belfast's culture and history
- 91% agree that tourism supports local businesses
- 87% agree that tourism helps to create a more vibrant Belfast with more things to see and do
- 84% are interested in taking part in more tourism activities

Visit Belfast handled 14,555 enquiries for neighbourhoods in North, South, East and West of the city in 2024-25, an indicator of the increasing interest in tourism that benefits our communities.

The city ranked **9th out of 100 international destinations on the Global Sustainability Index in 2024; the city also received a number** a number of other accolades, including:

Waterfront Taskforce

The Belfast Waterfront Taskforce (2021) launched Belfast Waterfront Framework in 2023, an agreed vision for 10km stretch of connected waterfront promenade. Since launching, public and private sector partners have invested over £12million into public realm projects on the waterfront and a further £650,000 has been secured to undertake feasibility on transforming areas under the M3 Bridge into health and wellbeing opportunities, a new bridge from Titanic Quarter to Sailortown and Blueway accreditation for the River Lagan. New footfall counters installed along the promenade in March 2024, have recorded 6.4million trips up to July 2025.

Belfast Stories

Belfast Stories will be a unique destination that will unlock almost 100 years of heritage at the 1930 Art Deco Bank of Ireland and surrounding site on the corner of Royal Avenue and North Street. Set to open by 2030, Belfast Stories is the flagship project in the tourism and regeneration pillar of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) programme of investment which aims to drive inclusive economic growth, deliver more and better jobs, a positive impact on the most deprived communities and help balance the spread of benefits across the region. Belfast Stories threads together a public space where people can gather, a visitor attraction communicating the spirit of the city and a creative hub for writers, musicians, artists and filmmakers to collaborate

Highlights and progress include:

- In 2023, following an international design competition, Oslo-based architect Snøhetta, in partnership with Belfast-based Todd Architects, were appointed to lead the architectural design of Belfast Stories, working with Gillespies on landscape design.
- In early 2024, Ralph Applebaum Associates along with Barker Langham were appointed to develop the Interpretive masterplan and Experience Concept Design up to RIBA stage 2.
- The first public consultation took place in November 2022 to inform the project brief in advance of appointing design teams. The second public consultation (November 2024 to March 2025) aimed to raise awareness and gain buy-in; ensure Belfast Stories is for everyone; and gain feedback on concept designs and proposed facilities to inform the next phase of the project. The consultation reached over 4,900 people with 84% saying they would visit Belfast Stories and 82% likely to recommend Belfast Stories to family or friends
- Positive consumer testing took place with audiences across NI, RoI, GB, USA, France and Germany. 74% of survey respondents would consider visiting Belfast Stories and 83% felt Belfast Stories was exciting.
- The Outline Business Case (OBC) was approved at Council in May 2025 and subsequently submitted to the Department for the Economy (DfE) for BRCD funding.

Vacant to Vibrant – City Centre and Citywide

In 2022, Council allocated £1 million to the Vacant to Vibrant capital grant programme designed to incentivise property owners and potential occupiers to bring vacant premises in the city centre back into active use.

The fund was fully exhausted in 2025, having supported 48 projects across Belfast city centre to revitalise vacant properties and enable new and expanding local businesses, social enterprises, and cultural organisations to activate spaces and improve streetscapes. It has also supported investment in shop front improvements, signage, internal fit-outs, accessibility upgrades, and more, helping to bridge the viability gap of reactivating vacant space in the city centre. In addition to the capital grant, applicants were also offered a free matchmaking service helping those seeking the right vacant spaces to meet their needs and wraparound business support from Council's Economic Development Unit

It is anticipated that for every **£1 invested, at least £3.98** will be returned in rates income over the term of the leases due to the activation of vacant properties.

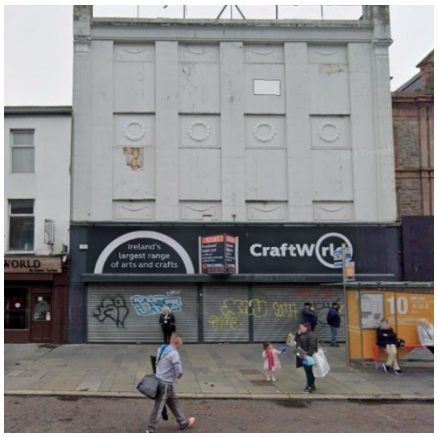
Council secured £500,000 of capital funding from the Department for Communities and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to extend the scheme beyond the city centre in November 2024.

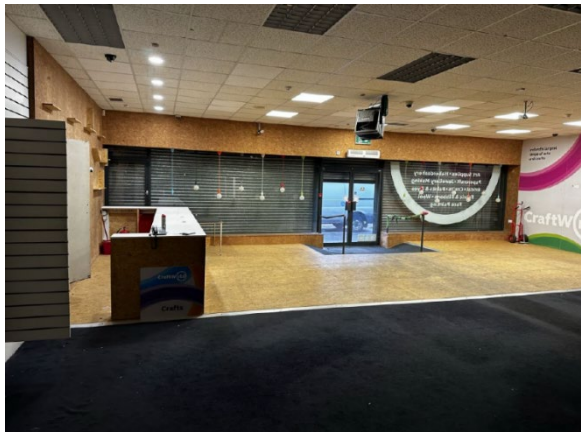
The Vacant to Vibrant scheme was recognised by the Institute of Place Management (IPM) as exemplary in terms of inception and design; it was promoted as a UK High Street Task Force Best Practice Case Study for the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The scheme has also has also received extensive coverage in the media, for example, High Society Cut Club were recognised for opening their unique business in a property that had been vacant for 20 years; Bodega Bagels were featured in BBC news coverage and 'Beau' a sister restaurant establishment of EDO, led by Great British Menu chef Lottie Noren, received acclaim in The Times.

Golden Thread Gallery

The owner of this once vacant unit on Queen Street availed of Vacant to Vibrant funding to restore the historic building, with a view to securing a long-term occupier. Works to the property included new metal framed 'Crittal' windows, installation of new lighting and flooring, internal fitout and redecoration internal and external of the building. These works helped the property owner to secure a tenant in the form of award-winning Golden Thread art gallery. Set across two floors, the venue includes large galleries, a projection room, a community participation and engagement hub, and NI's first visual art library and archive. The Gallery was shortlisted as a top five UK museum by The Art Fund Museum of the Year, 2025.

Before: LEJA Properties Ltd (Queen Street)





After:

The Entries Programme

The "Entries Programme" and reopening of the historic Sugarhouse Entry was completed in the city centre (manged by Council, funded by the Department for Communities), improving connectivity, attractiveness and preserving the historic heart of the city.

Clean, Green, Inclusive and Safe city centre

The Clean, Green, Inclusive and Safe (CGIS) City Centre strategy and action plan responded to the findings of a public consultation; benchmarking exercise; and Strategic Stakeholder Engagement Study, involving a wide range of stakeholders.

Key achievements include the procurement of new power washer to improve street washing and cleansing capabilities with plans in place to recruit new staff to create a power washing team; Council-led anti-litter campaigns in the city centre and beyond; on-going operation of 2 Royal Avenue as a curated, welcoming public civic space in the city centre.

The Department for Infrastructure have established a multi-agency task and finish group to continue the focus on city centre and functionality; Council have also established a Future City Centre Leadership Coordination Group Work to raise and expedite issues relating to place keeping, management and development in the city centre.

Work also continues on the delivery of a Cleanliness Charter for Belfast.

An Innovation Destination

Belfast continues to have a strong focus on innovation, with several key initiatives and partnerships driving its development as a leading innovation hub.

Highlights and progress include:

- Secured £3.8 million from Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, and leveraged a further £1.7 million of partner co-investment to deliver eleven 5G adoption projects across transport, logistics, creative industries, and advanced manufacturing.
- Delivered the Augment the City programme that provided £575,000 directly to ten creative SMEs to collaborate with Belfast Stories to develop augmented reality innovations to enhance the visitor experience.
- Opened and Augmented Reality (AR) Experience as part of the City Hall exhibition, attracting thousands of weekly visitors and making Belfast the first UK/Ireland city to host AR in a civic building. The project attracted £1 million of private sector R&D support.
- Established a global innovation partnership between Belfast and South Korea's smart city of Sejong to support business and university collaborations in areas such as cybersecurity and med tech.
- Delivered the Hubs of Innovation programme with Maritime Belfast Trust and provided over £100,000 to support grass-roots innovation projects in AI and Augmented Reality between creative entrepreneurs and local community organisations.

The Belfast Agenda

Theme 4

Our environment

Creating a net zero emissions and climate resilient city

Re-naturing the city and increasing resilience to climate change

148,173 trees and **3599m** of hedgerow planted and **6,285** people engaged in the programme across Belfast.

Achieved **bronze sustainable food award** through participation in the UK and NI Sustainable Food Places initiative.

Delivery of nature-based solutions via the **UPSURGE Community Garden** at Lower Botanic Gardens.

Developed a Sustainable Food Strategy for the City.

Held Belfast's first **'Living Lab'** project to help build climate resilience.

Completed the **£33m Belfast Tidal Flood Alleviation Scheme**, providing enhanced protection for over **3,000 homes** and businesses by constructing flood defences along **8.5km** of the River Lagan. **£33m**

Creating a sustainable circular economy

38.9% Achieved a **38.9% Recycling Rate for Belfast,** generating the lowest waste per capita in NI.

Commenced the expansion of the **kerbside glass collection scheme** to approximately 70,000 households which will result in city wide provision of kerbside glass collections by March 2027.

Since 2020 Belfast has **9/100** moved from 47th out of 48 destinations to 9th out of 100 destinations in the **Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS).** It is the highest-ranking destination in UK & Ireland.

Commenced work to develop a **low-carbon heat network** within central Belfast.

Established the **Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub** to help accelerate retrofit activity across public and private buildings, engaging 120 representatives from 66 organisations.

Innovating to Net Zero

Launched the **Belfast Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP),** to provide a roadmap for Belfast to achieve net-zero carbon emissions and transition to a sustainable, affordable energy system. It outlines pathways and steps for decarbonisation, supporting wider socio-economic goals like job creation and prosperity for residents.

£1m Delivery of **22 climate projects** costing almost £1m, including energy audits, installation of metering and monitoring in Belfast City Council buildings and the development of a digital twin for City Hall, recycling pilots, baselining of species rich grasslands and other initiatives.

Achieved an **'A' Rating** for the third year in a row in the **Carbon Disclosure Project.**

35% Belfast Harbour has witnessed a **35% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions** in 2024 and has electrified 30% of its fleet.

NIHE has been appointed the **HEARTH Advisory Board.** Led by Oxford Brookes University, this research project is examining the benefits to vulnerable populations of transitioning to net zero.

Re-Naturing the city and increasing resilience to climate change

We are committed to shaping a green, transformed and healthy city that is resilient to climate change, attractive for green investment and offers a high quality of urban life for residents.

Highlights and progress include:

- Planted 148,173 trees and 3599m of hedgerow planted, with 6,285 people engaged in the programme across Belfast
- Achieved bronze sustainable food award through participation in the UK and NI Sustainable Food Places initiative
- Delivered an urban agroecological garden, demonstrating sustainable agricultural practices and investing in sustainable soil management to promote benefits in terms of food security, nutrition, poverty reduction, provision of ecosystem services, climate change mitigation, habitat restoration and sustainable urban land development.
- Continued to coordinate the climate elements of the Belfast sustainable food partnership and establishment of two city-wide working groups dedicated to food access and community growing
- Worked with community groups to develop an urban growing and an urban greening project to demonstrate opportunities for biodiverse cities
- Completed the £33m Belfast Tidal Flood Alleviation Scheme constructing flood defences along 8.5km of the Lagan from Stranmillis Weir to Belfast Harbour

UPSURGE Project

A major highlight is the UPSURGE Community Garden at Lower Botanic Gardens, funded through the EU Horizon programme. This tests nature-based solutions (NBS) to mitigate air pollution and reduce the impact of climate change stressors. The project started in September 2021 and is due to be completed in February 2026. It promotes shared learning and good practice on the management of green spaces for pollution alleviation, supporting citizen health and climate resilience.

Delivered by Belfast City Council and Queen's University, working in partnership with 24 partners, the demonstrator site features research trials which measure the transmission of contaminates to food and plant matter, a community garden and a resilience garden. The installation of environmental sensors is also planned for the site which will measure temperature, humidity, pressure, ozone, Nitric Dioxide (NO), Sulphur Dioxide (SO2), Particle Matter (Dust) and noise levels. Other exciting additions have included the installation of solar panels on the roof of the shipping containers and an innovative water pump and compost toilet.

The project is intended to serve as a 'lighthouse' to accelerate, transfer and upscale the use of nature-based solutions and mainstream them into the urban agenda through co-design processes with citizens and stakeholders.

TALX2 Project

TALX2 establishes an innovative 'living lab' approach, engaging communities, government agencies, and stakeholders as equal partners to plan and adapt for an uncertain future. Belfast is one of three living labs across the island of Ireland (alongside Dublin and Mayo). Launched in March 2024, the TALX team has collaborated closely with local authorities in these locations.

Highlights and progress include:

- Held first Belfast Living Lab Workshop in June 2025, gathering cross-departmental Council officers to map current and planned projects building climate resilience.
- Conducted early-stage activities: literature review on successful partnership principles; development of an All-Island Climate Action Database; Community Collaboration workshop at Mary Robinson Climate and Nature Conference in May 2025.

Belfast Tidal Flood Alleviation Scheme (BTFAS)

Completed in December 2024, the BTFAS helps Belfast manage tidal flood risks from climate change, providing enhanced protection for over 3,000 homes and businesses. The flood defences account for climate projections to 2080 and are designed for further adaptability. Thoughtfully integrated with the landscape, the scheme preserves the River Lagan as a vibrant, welcoming space for communities, visitors, and investors. It includes earth embankments, brick-clad reinforced concrete walls, floodgates, glass defences, and demountable barriers that blend with existing streetscapes.

Key partners welcomed the project's completion, with the Minister for Infrastructure touring the works in early 2025 to emphasise its role in long-term resilience. This £33m investment by the

Department for Infrastructure better prepares the city for future tidal events, safeguarding people and infrastructure while promoting sustainability. The scheme features demountable and temporary defences to seal access points and roadways during alerts.

Post-completion, the Department is collaborating with multi-agency partners to update the Belfast Coastal Emergency Response Plan. Beyond flood protection, the scheme supports economic growth by securing homes, businesses, and infrastructure, attracting investment, and enhancing Belfast's reputation as a resilient city. It reduces economic and social impacts, with estimated flood damage avoidance benefits exceeding £168m over its design life (based on 2018 figures).

HEARTH Project

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has been appointed to the External Advisory Board of the HEARTH Project (The National Hub on the Net Zero, Health and Extreme Heat). This research project, led by Oxford Brookes University is examining how the transition to net zero emissions can benefit vulnerable populations by improving health outcomes, such as reducing heat-related illnesses and enhancing living conditions during extreme heat events over a five-year period from 2025-2030.

Met Office – Belfast Heat Packs

Belfast City Council collaborated with the Met Office to create Heat Packs for the city. This work addressed information gaps at city and sub-city levels, using high-resolution climate projections for urban heat hazard estimates.

Highlights and progress include:

- Conducted 'heat walks' citywide to identify vulnerabilities to rising temperatures and urban heat island effects
- Applied findings to the Belfast Tree Equity Study to guide future tree planting based on heat projections
- Integrated the Belfast Heat Vulnerability Index into the Climate Change Risk Assessment for Belfast City Council

Creating a Sustainable Circular Economy

It is our aspiration to transform our throwaway economy into one where waste is eliminated, resources are circulated, and nature is regenerated. We are committed to working with partners to deliver local solutions and bring together the right people to ensure a just transition.

Highlights and progress include:

- Achieved 38.9% Local Authority Collected Municipal Recycling Rate
- Generated the lowest household waste per capita in NI (399kg per annum compared to 458kg per annum NI average)
- Moving materials up the waste hierarchy through new and improved reuse initiatives; bikes, furniture, laptops and paint.
- Commenced expansion of kerbside glass collection scheme to 70,000 households, which will result in city wide provision of kerbside glass collections by March 2027.

- Completed a feasibility study, market readiness assessment and business model analysis, reviewed delivery models and developed a community opportunities assessment for a low carbon heat network.
- Supported the development of a neighbourhood retrofit pilot (led by social housing providers) through the Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub.
- Since 2020 Belfast has moved from 47th out of 48 destinations to 9th out of 100 destinations in the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS). It is the highest-ranking destination in UK & Ireland. Belfast is also one of the few cities to have completed a carbon baseline of its tourism sector.
- Completed the Horizon Europe funded UP2030 Horizon Europe funded UP2030
- project which aims to embed net zero in urban planning in Linen quarter BID, Sandy Row, Market, Donegall Pass and Barrack Street areas.
- Developed a draft city-wide Sustainable Food Strategy, with associated delivery and monitoring arrangements
- Commenced development of a sustainable food policy for the Council that addresses waste, sourcing, packaging, emissions measurement and an events protocol.
- Conducted a feasibility study with Dublin City Council on circular economy opportunities in the Dublin-Belfast economic corridor.
- Published "Segregation and the Environment; Breaking Down Barriers" report, highlighting the continued links between segregation within the city and the impact on our environment and Belfast's unique challenge in meeting climate targets.

Heat Network

The council have commissioned several work streams linked to developing a low-carbon heat network within central Belfast. The evidence presented within the Local Area Energy Plan demonstrates that heat networks are one of the key projects to help Belfast progress towards net zero emissions.

Highlights and progress include:

- Completing a technical feasibility study with Aecom for a low carbon heat network in the City centre.
- Developing innovative business models with the Energy Systems Catapult to help scale the deployment of rooftop solar.
- Working with Bird & Bird on legal and commercial considerations and developing a route to market.
- Working with AtkinsReális to assess opportunities for communities to engage and benefit from decarbonisation projects.
- Participating in knowledge sharing activities across UK & Ireland with local authorities at different stages of their heat network journey.
- Participating in a study trip to Bradford and Glasgow funded by SEAI for Irish Heat Network stakeholders, along with representatives from DfE, Invest NI, SIB and DGB Consulting.

Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub

Established in September 2022 following the Belfast Net Zero Carbon Roadmap, which identified buildings and transport as the city's top carbon-emitting sectors, the Hub adopts a consortium approach to accelerate retrofit activity across public and private buildings. It engages stakeholders from the construction supply chain, funders, academics, public bodies, housing providers, and consumer groups, informed by the Construction Leadership Council's National Retrofit Strategy.

Highlights and progress include:

- Engaging 120 representatives from 66 organisations, with core group of 12 lead agencies.
- Sharing best practice through site visits and case studies, drawing on established initiatives across the UK & Ireland.
- Undertaking a survey of typical Belfast properties to understand the costs of retrofitting these types of housing.

Innovating to Net Zero

Our aim is for Belfast to become an exemplar low carbon economy creating opportunities for training, employment and green growth. We will develop and implement city-wide testbeds for innovative solutions to decarbonisation leveraging on existing and planned assets and investment through place-based interventions.

Highlights and progress include:

- Launched the Belfast Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) in 2024, provides a roadmap to achieve net-zero carbon emissions and transition to a sustainable, affordable energy system. It outlines pathways for decarbonisation that support wider socio-economic goals like job creation and prosperity for residents. The LAEP prioritises energy and heat projects within the city to achieve the City's net zero targets including heat networks. Rooftop solar and building retrofit.
- Across our estate and operations, we developed a Climate Action Plan and delivered 22 internal climate projects including energy audits, installation of metering and monitoring in our buildings and the development of a digital twin for City Hall, recycling pilots, baselining of species rich grasslands and other initiatives.
- Achieved an 'A' rating for the third consecutive year in the Carbon Disclosure Project

Belfast Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP)

In September 2024 Belfast City Council launched the Local Area Energy Plan – the first to be developed in Northern Ireland. Recognised as the leading method for translating net zero targets into action, the LAEP marks a milestone moment in the city's transition towards a resilient, low-carbon economy for everyone. Developed using cutting-edge whole-system modelling and extensive stakeholder engagement, the comprehensive road map capitalises on the city's unique geographical characteristics and assets. Sitting on top of Sherwood Sandstone, the city has huge geothermal potential while an abundance of rooftops can generate solar energy. Led by Council and developed collaboratively with key stakeholders, the Belfast LAEP presents a pipeline of priority projects including a district heat network, large scale retrofit of buildings, transition of oil households to low carbon heating and the deployment of rooftop solar panels.

As a primer to collaboration and a catalyst for future investment across the sector and beyond, the transformational LAEP sits alongside other net zero investments such as Translink's net zero bus

fleet, Northern Ireland Housing Executive's retrofit programme and the Energising Belfast project. With electricity and gas network operators gearing up to decarbonise at scale, the plan charts a path to net zero that is affordable, and if properly resourced, will create new opportunities for jobs and businesses.

Belfast Harbour – green port

Belfast Harbors' integrated ESG strategy places human capital and sustainability at the heart of all activities and aligns with the Trust Port mandate to operate, maintain, and enhance the Belfast Harbour Estate. In 2024, the Harbour invested £325,000 in local communities and a further £3.6million was invested in City Quays Garden, a One Planet Living Public Space.

The Harbour has achieved a 35% reduction in GHG emissions in 2024 alone and has electrified 30% of it's fleet. All marine gas oil has now been fully replaced by Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO). The Harbour is committed to developing a stronger more sustainable future for everyone, driving economic growth, making positive contributions to our local communities, protecting the environment and inspiring positive change.

The Belfast Agenda

Theme 5

DELIVERING TOGETHER

Compassionate City

Leaving no one behind - making Belfast a welcoming, caring, fair and inclusive city.

Supported over **97,000** individuals and families through a **£2.2m** Hardship Programme, providing food and fuel vouchers and a range of anti-poverty projects to help vulnerable residents.

Hosted the first Anti-Poverty support services networking event held in City Hall in October 24, with over **100 anti-poverty organisations in attendance.**

Distributed over **30,000 cost-of-living support guides,** with support also available online

Just A Minute (JAM)

Card bursary established with NOW Group for micro, small and VCSE Belfast Business Promise supporters to achieve JAM Card Friendly status.

Developed the **'Belfast Child'** blueprint to create a seamless developmental journey for children aged 0-8, with the aim of creating a supported eco-system around each child and help them fulfil their potential.

Belfast Learning Festival

delivered 9 to 13 April 2025 - it brought together 65 partners to delivery 119 free learning events.

Joined the UK network of **UNESCO Learning Cities** in January 2025 and continued participation in the Irish Network.

Hosted Belfast UNESCO Learning Festival in April 2025 with **119 free events** promoting inclusive access to lifelong learning for all.

954

Visits to the Grapevine older people's hub between **April 2024 to July 2025.**

Volunteering Never Gets Old campaign

on adshels and buses to promote volunteering and its benefits for older people.

30

Young people are actively participating in the **Belfast City Youth Council.**

£15.1m investment

for the PEACE PLUS Local Action Plan received.

Delivery of a Good Relations Action Plan

and programmes for refugee integration, asylum dispersal and community recovery fund.

Embedding Inclusive Growth

We are acutely aware that inclusive growth challenges tend to present as inequalities across different geographies and/or communities of interest, and that turning the dial on inclusive growth requires analysis of the specific circumstances for Belfast and a bespoke approach to tracking inclusive growth which is mindful of local needs. This requires an evidence-based approach as well as proactively considering inclusive growth in the development, design and delivery of projects, programmes and plans.

In developing an **Inclusive Growth Index** we will have a mechanism to collectively understand and track our progress as a city and enable us to examine how we can deliver a more inclusive approach to opportunities and growth. Council has completed the pilot phase to test the **Inclusive Growth Toolkit**, with recommendations for implementation agreed. An implementation plan will be put in place to help embed inclusive growth in decision-making processes in Council, with further engagement with Community Planning partners planned for 25/26.

Addressing poverty and responding to the cost-of-living crisis

We are dedicated to supporting Belfast residents facing financial pressures from the cost-of-living crisis and experiencing poverty. Through collaborative efforts with inspiring anti-poverty organisations, we provide advice, resources and initiatives to help individuals and families in need, enhancing access to essential support and building community resilience.

Hardship Programme

Over the past two years we have provided over £2.2M to support over 97,000 individuals and families in need. The hardship programme has enhanced the capacity of organisations with expertise in the field of anti-poverty and working collaboratively with them we have delivered initiatives that have supported children and families, people in emergency need and older people.

Highlights and progress include:

- Engaged 139 schools in a Schools Hardship Programme, enabling support like breakfast clubs, free hot meals, food packs, uniforms, stationary and period poverty initiatives
- Provided 26,000 free hot meals to 2,236 children via Belfast Health & Social Care Trust's Sponsored Day Care, easing pressure on families
- Supported over 2,570 families through 11 Family Support Hubs with vouchers for food, gas, oil & electric and wrap around services
- Assisted 2,174 children and families via Save the Children with food, fuel and toy packs through their early years grant programme
- Helped over 2,600 families in emergency need (including 5,000 children) through St Vincent de Paul
- Provided food parcels to 4,508 individuals via Trussell Trust Foodbanks
- Delivered over 100 tonnes of free food to 42 community food member organisations via FareShare, supporting over 10,500 individuals and saving 173 tonnes of CO_2 emissions
- Aided over 1,884 households through National Energy Action's Warm & Well Programme with advice and energy vouchers
- Supported over 757 older people with fuel vouchers via Age NI
- Provided 1,500 winter warmth packs for vulnerable older people during colder months.
- Delivered tailored programmes for older people across 26 council community centres and 7 independent facilities

"This initiative has given us the opportunity to provide additional warm nutritious meals to the children that attend our afternoon sessions. Children who have access to a hot healthy meal every day can focus better, connect with their peers, and helps them reach their full potential. This funding also helps families who are struggling financially and in greatest need."

"This grant really helped me and my family as I was able to get food and other essentials from the supermarket which meant we had plenty to eat, and there was less pressure with paying oil and electric as less money had to be spent on groceries."

Raising awareness and networking

To raise awareness and signpost residents to essential support and advice services, we have developed an annual cost-of-living support guide. Over the past two years 30,000 copies have been distributed citywide, complemented by an online webpage for easy access.

To foster partnerships and collaboration within the anti-poverty ecosystem, we hosted an inaugural networking event at City Hall in October 2024, attended by over 100 organisations. This annual event aims to highlight available services, strengthen cross-sector relationships, amplify the voice of service users, create valuable networking opportunities and inspire collective action toward eradicating poverty in Belfast.

Develop Belfast's status as a learning city

Festival of Learning in Belfast

The Belfast Learning Festival was launched on 2nd April at City Hall (40+ organisations across multiple sectors attended). The festival ran from 9th – 13th April. The festival brought together 65 partners to deliver 119 free learning events to promote inclusive access to lifelong learning for people of all ages and backgrounds. £23,548 was awarded in small grant funding to assist not for profit organisations' involvement and participation in the festival week.

Summary of impact data (based on survey data among participants and event hosts) shows:

- 93% of event hosts agreed the festival helped them to reach new audiences
- 80% of event hosts agreed that the festival enabled their organisation to pilot a new idea or event
- 89% of participants agreed they felt inspired to access learning opportunities across the city following their attendance at a festival event
- 83% of participants agreed they felt more connected to other people or groups in their community following their attendance at a festival event
- 73% of participants agreed they felt more aware of the learning providers and opportunities across the city following their attendance at a festival event

Irish Network of Learning Cities

Belfast Learning City continues to liaise with the Irish Network of Learning Cities.

Belfast attended Cork's International Learning City Exchanges in April 2025 and shared learning on the city's Digital Badging approaches. Delegates from across the world were in attendance and the event was opened by Director of UNESCO Ms Isabel Kempf.

UK Network of Learning Cities

In January 2025, the city joined colleagues in Bristol, Birmingham, Derby, Kirklees, Manchester, Nottingham and Swansea to form a UK Network of Learning Cities, committed to improving lifelong learning opportunities.

Global Network of Learning Cities

The Learning City Coordinator along with Professor Mark Tully, Ulster University presented at the UNESCO webinar for global network of learning cities about how Belfast is embedding age friendly, lifelong learning initiatives across multiple settings in our city. There were 100 participants in attendance from across the world.

Good Relations and Shared Future

Partners continue to look at innovative approaches to build peaceful and thriving communities in Belfast. We are committed to building an inclusive city and delivering programmes such as PEACEPLUS to continue our journey of reconciliation.

Highlights and progress include:

- Secured £15.1M for Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan
- Continued delivery of a good relations action plan for refugee integration and asylum dispersal
- Established and commenced delivery of a Community Recovery Fund; a UK Government initiative providing £600,000 to local authorities to rebuild trust and cohesion between communities in the aftermath of public disorder events in July-August 2024
- Opened consultation on a draft Irish Language policy; A Language Strategy Action Plan has been agreed, and work is beginning on implementation

Delivery of Age-Friendly Belfast

Partners are committed to delivering an Age-Friendly Belfast, with our Age Friendly Plan in its third year of delivery. This plan focuses on supporting those specific groups of older people who are more vulnerable to losing social connections, or whose physical activity levels are below what is recommended for good health and wellbeing and who face additional challenges in keeping strong and active.

Highlights and progress include:

The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust's Older, Active programme works to increase physical activity levels in older people and address loneliness and isolation

- Developed and led by older people, the Connection Hub now known as "The Grapevine" has been established in the city centre in 2 Royal Avenue
- The Active Ageing Partnership has supported procurement of equipment to facilitate physical activity sessions aimed at later years to be distributed to 26 community centres and to support the new older people's hub, The Grapevine
- A tiered suite of Loneliness & Isolation training has been coordinated, promoted and delivered
- A video presentation to increase awareness of recommended physical activity levels in older people has been developed with partners from SEHSCT area

- 46 people attended an online housing webinar delivered by Dr Mark Hammond senior lecturer from Manchester School of Architecture to increase awareness of ageism in housing design and look at ways more age friendly housing designs can be utilised
- On-going development of dementia friendly cafes across city.
- Volunteering Campaign aimed at older people 'Volunteering Never gets old' was launched.
- Research to understand the landscape of interventions to support older people to live healthy and socially connected lives completed
- Currently in the process of submitting proposal to Older, Active and Connected Group for funding for pilot project aimed at changing the mindset of individuals who have become chronically lonely through psychological techniques.
- 700 winter warm packs were delivered to vulnerable older people's organisations across Belfast. These packs included items such as blankets, hats and scarves which help to keep older people warm in their homes and outside

The Grapevine

Launched in in April 2024, The Grapevine is an Older People's Connection Hub based in 2 Royal Avenue, The Grapevine is currently staffed by two Age Friendly Volunteers with supported from Age Friendly and Volunteer Now staff. The number of older people dropping in each week is approximately 15-20 and to date there have been approximately 954 visits recorded. Funding received from BHSCT Loneliness Network has enabled the continuation of the Grapevine and development of a toolkit, so that similar projects can be replicated across other areas.

Tea Dances

Tea Dances are held on a regular basis in venues across the city including Belfast Castle and 2 Royal Avenue with an average attendance of around100 people per event. A recent evaluation was completed and out of the 97 people who completed the questionnaire, 78 people said they attend them on a monthly basis. People were asked if they felt less lonely as result of attending the tea dances and 59 people strongly agreed and 18 agreed that they do feel less lonely. (79% in total). A sample of responses from the evaluation include comments that events are "Very enjoyable and very good for my mental health" and "so glad you have the Tea Dances- just great to meet and chat with different people- helps me get out from four walls" and "It has given me a lifeline."

Volunteering Never Gets Old

In partnership with Volunteer Now, Age Friendly Belfast developed a Volunteer Campaign called 'Volunteering never gets old' to encourage older people to volunteer in an effort to increase connections and wellbeing. Supported by funding from Public Health Agency a number of adverts with older volunteers were placed on ad shells, buses and radio and a volunteer Fair, attended by 120 people was held at 2 Royal Avenue on 25th March.

Children and Young People

Partners aim to create a seamless developmental pathway for children in their early years (8 and under) as well as increasing the resilience, empowerment of children and young people across all cohorts.

The Belfast Child

Produced by Belfast Area Outcomes Group partners, comprised of the city's early interventions and family support delivery bodies, "The Belfast Child" blueprint document presents a child-centred approach to aligning services and activity to ensure that every child in the city aged 0-8 can be supported to thrive. This provides a roadmap which aspires to deliver more equitable outcomes for all children.

We aim for this work to create a supported eco-system around each child, where the players at each stage of the journey know their part, families, communities and support services in one shared mission. This represents a shared commitment to a whole child, whole family, whole community and whole system way of working that aims to ensure all Belfast children can thrive and reach their full potential.

Youth Council

The Belfast City Youth Council (BCYC) continue to meet on a fortnightly basis since launching in January 2020. The Council welcomed new members April 2025 taking their membership to 30.

Highlights and progress include:

- Facilitated a presentation on lowering the voting age to 16 at a recent special People and Communities committee meeting; young people concluded in favour of lowering the age
- Participated in QUB's RADICAL programme residential in July 2025, exploring how children and young people experience dis/respect generally. Young people worked on research methodology such as critical dialogue and created literature through the medium of poetry to articulate their views and opinions. This innovative work aims to advocate on behalf of young people for the protection of the UN Convention rights for children and young people through the lens of respect and disrespect
- Developed the mental health ELPH campaign (Enjoy, Learning, Positive, Health)
- The Chair of the BCYC represented Belfast City Council at the One Young World Summit in Munich in November 2025
- Supported the Lord Mayor with civic engagements, including meeting with the Harvey Milk Foundation
- Engaged the Climate Commissioner to discuss climate change in Belfast

Our Outcomes

Understanding the City's populations indicators – our City Dashboard

To enable the Community Planning Partnership to understand Belfast's changing dynamics and identify where to bring shared focus, we have developed a Data Insight Report, published alongside this Statement of Progress. The report tracks our 5 bold ambitions for 2035 and 53 population indicators.

This comprehensive report helps us understand how we are delivering against the strategic outcomes for citizens, allowing the community planning partnership to reflect on the city's evolving conditions and pinpoint areas needing collective attention. Our population indicators reflect the conditions of the whole population within the city and take account of wider societal, environmental, or economic shocks.

While this Statement of Progress highlights where the work of community planning partners has advanced Belfast Agenda ambitions and priority action plans, we recognise that shifting population indicators requires more than community planning alone. It demands time, sustained commitment and collaboration across all levels of government and society to achieve lasting impact.

Further information on the data behind the table below can located in the supplementary Data Insight Report.

Next steps

Whilst this Statement of Progress highlights the key areas where Community Planning Partners have contributed and made strong progress, we acknowledge those areas where progress has been slower, requiring continued effort to achieve positive change. We will remain agile in delivering our action plans and will refresh and consolidate them early in 2026. This will enable concentration of effort on areas of greatest need and where we can have greatest impact.

This Statement of Progress serves as a shared focus and catalyst for future work. At its core will be an inclusive community planning approach that re-energises and mobilises communities, fostering deeper collaboration across sectors. By working together as city partners, we can tackle the city's challenges more effectively, prioritise high-impact initiatives, and drive meaningful outcomes for everyone in Belfast.

There is a strong leadership commitment and shared focus across the Community Planning Partnership to address the big challenges facing our city and shift the curves we wish to change. The Belfast Agenda provides the catalyst and call to action for all stakeholders on issues where more must be done. Our long-term vision, ambitions and outcomes aim to improve the lives of everyone in Belfast. Together, we have the opportunity to build a more resilient, inclusive and prosperous city. Let's take it!

Thanks to our Community Planning Delivery Partners

Strategy, Programmes and
Partnerships Team

City Hall

Belfast

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028 9027 0234

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Access to information

As part of our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations, we want to ensure that everyone is able to access the documents we produce. This document is available in alternative formats such as Braille, easy-read, audio, large print and also in other languages on request by contacting 028 9027 0234.

Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Site Visit to an Operational Heat Network – Leeds City Council
Date:	Friday 24th October 2025
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
Contact Officer:	Debbie Caldwell, Climate Commissioner

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number ☐

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
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
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	☐
After Council Decision	☐
Sometime in the future	☐
Never	☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? **Yes** ☒ **No** ☐

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To seek approval for an Elected Member site visit to an operational Heat Network in Leeds.
2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The Committee is asked to:

	I. Note the potential costs and outline itinerary. II. Approve travel for Elected Members to begin preparations for a site visit to Leeds City Council. III. Note that dates for a Q1 2026 visit will be confirmed subject to approval of this proposed visit.
3.0	**Main Report**
	Purpose of the visit
3.1	The purpose of the visit is to provide members with an opportunity to visit an operational heat network and learn about the development process, hurdles and benefits.
	Proposed Heat Network
3.2	BCC officers from the climate team have engaged many other Local Authorities in GB who have been through a similar development process for a Heat Network. Each heat network development is bespoke, as each council has different assets, geography, technology opportunities, financial landscape and city partnerships.
3.3	Leeds PIPES is a heat network led by Leeds City Council and is considered the most suitable for a Heat Network site visit at this time. The Heat network delivers heat from a Recycling and Energy Recovery Facility to both residential homes and public buildings via underground insulated pipes.
3.4	Leeds PIPES development began in 2018 and has progressed into its third phase beginning in 2022. So far 30km of network has been installed with 4,000 homes and public buildings connected, however it has been developed with future expansion in mind.
3.5	The project has been delivered by Leeds City Council in partnership with Vital Energi with support from central government grant funding. The anchor loads included Leeds Town Hall, Leeds Becket University and several other Council buildings.
	Belfast City centre heat network
3.6	The Belfast City Centre Heat Network project recently completed the initial high-level technical, legal and commercial feasibility stages. As part of the process, the Climate Team have been in contact with a number of local authorities to better understand the different delivery models for a heat network.
3.7	This visit will provide an opportunity for Elected Members and Directors to visit an operational heat network to better understand the land use policy context and support provided by the Council, the delivery model, the technology and operation of the network as well as to understand how it has affected local businesses and communities. Participants will also be able to speak to some of the users and operators of the heat network to develop an

	understanding of the challenges and benefits of delivering a heat network project. These insights will help to inform decision makers on whether the Belfast Heat Network is to progress to a more detailed stage of feasibility.
3.8	The Leeds PIPES heat network involved a physical retrofit of old historic buildings (similar to those in Belfast) and uses heat generated from an energy from waste plant. As there is currently no such plant in Belfast, other technology options have been considered in the feasibility.
3.9	The Leeds PIPES also took a long-term approach to securing a return on the initial capex investment and thus were able to set a lower tariff for heat. This also allowed Leeds to double their heat off-takers within 7 years, leading to more favourable financial returns. This is considered the most appropriate network to visit as the initial market engagement suggests that the price of heat will be a key determinant securing off-takers and hence the Leeds delivery model would be of interest to CMT and elected members.
	Proposed attendees
3.10	Proposed attendees would comprise: Party Group Leaders or their nominees, Committee Chairs, Directors and Senior officers. We would plan to have 12-15 confirmed attendees.
	Proposed date
3.11	BCC Officers will engage directly with Leeds City Council to develop an itinerary with a view to securing a date in Q1 2026.
	Financial and Resource Implications
3.12	Costs for the site visits will be met via the existing City and Organisational Strategy budget. It is estimated that the costs will be in the region of £250 per attendee.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.13	There are no equality or good relations / rural needs implications associated with this report
4.0	**Appendices - Documents Attached**
	None

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STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Paternity Pay Provisions
Date:	24 October 2025
Reporting Officer:	Christine Sheridan, Director of Human Resources
Contact Officer:	Eamonn Neeson, Principal HR Advisor (Employee Relations)

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
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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
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	
After Council Decision	
Sometime in the future	
Never	

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	At the SP&R committee on 20 June 2025, the Committee requested that a further report on the NJC terms and conditions (for maternity pay) and a benchmarking report on Paternity Pay provisions be submitted to a future meeting.

1.2	This report informs Committee of the Council's paternity pay provisions and comparisons with a selection of both private and public organisations as outlined at Appendix 1.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the content of this report.
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	**NJC Maternity Scheme** At SP&R committee on 20 June 2025 a report was presented detailing Belfast City Council's maternity leave and pay scheme. The report noted that the Council applies the maternity scheme as set out in Part 2 of the NJC National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service for Local Government Authorities (Green Book). Part 2 of the Green Book consists of the Key National Provisions applicable for all local authorities to all employees covered by NJC and are basic provisions which constitute a standard throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Part 3 of the Green Book meanwhile provides other national provisions which may be modified by local agreement. On seeking advice from the Northern Ireland Local Government Authority (NILGA), it was confirmed that the provisions provided in Part 2 of the Green Book should only be modified by national agreements. This would include the NJC pay spine, entitlement to sick pay, minimum leave entitlements, the standard working week, the maternity scheme (as reported) among other provisions. However, it should be noted that most local councils have reached local agreements to have a more generous minimum annual leave entitlement than the 23 days, as set out in Part 2 of the Green Book. NILGA aren't aware of any local authorities that have moved away from the GB maternity scheme.
3.2	**Paternity Leave and Pay** Unlike its Maternity Scheme, the NJC National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service (Green Book) does not provide for a contractual Paternity Leave Scheme. It does, however, provide an entitlement to Maternity Support leave as below: *Maternity support leave of 5 days with pay shall be granted to the child's father or the partner or nominated carer of an expectant mother at or around the time of birth. A nominated carer is the person nominated by the mother to assist in the care of the child and to provide support to the mother at or around the time of the birth.* Those organisations governed by Green Book terms and conditions will be contractually obliged to provide this to its employees and it has been found through the benchmarking that most will offset this against the statutory paternity leave entitlements and include this within the paternity leave entitlement.

3.3	**Statutory Paternity Leave and Pay** Paternity Leave and pay is a statutory entitlement which will apply to employees if they meet the following criteria: • they are biological fathers • the husband or partner of the mother who have or expect to have responsibility for the child's upbringing (this includes same sex partners) • the child's adopter • the intended parent (if having a baby through a surrogacy arrangement) • has, or expects to have, responsibility for the child's upbringing Employees are entitled to two weeks leave paid at the rate of Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP) provided that they have at least 26 weeks continuous service with the employer ending with the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth (EWC) - the qualifying week. The rate of SSP is set each year by government and is currently £187.18 per week or 90% of average weekly earnings (whichever is the lower).
3.4	**Belfast City Council Paternity Leave and Pay Provisions** Belfast City Council's Paternity Leave scheme provides for the statutory two weeks' leave, however the payments are enhanced above the rate of SSP as per below: • Week 1: Full Pay • Week 2: SPP or 90% of average weekly earnings (whichever is the lower). This will apply to those employees who meet the criteria as set out above in the statutory requirements, ie they must have 26 weeks continuous service by the end of the 15th week before the expected week of confinement (EWC) As referred to at 3.2 above the maternity support leave of five days on full pay is included in the paternity leave entitlement.
3.5	**Comparisons with Other Organisations** Benchmarking was undertaken against a number of other organisations' paternity leave and pay provisions to include public and private sector. A summary of these is included in Appendix 1. Many of the organisations benchmarked offer paternity leave and pay provisions which enhance the statutory entitlements. All other local council's that provided their paternity pay scheme offer the same amount of paternity leave pay entitlements as the Council and most

	of these provided the same enhanced rates of paternity pay. None of these provided greater enhancements than the Council. Of the other local government organisations the Education Authority, Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service and Translink provide the same entitlements as the Council. The Northern Ireland Civil Service provides two weeks paternity leave on full pay provided the employee meets the statutory qualifying criteria. The benchmarking showed that Queen's University Belfast offer enhanced leave and pay, providing employees with up to three weeks leave on full pay, while the Ulster University offer the same entitlement as Council (however it will only apply to employees who have a full year continuous service at the qualifying week, otherwise the statutory provisions apply). A number of private sector organisations were included as part of the benchmarking exercise. These were a selection of organisations that published their paternity leave and pay schemes. It was found that many provide enhanced paternity leave and pay provisions, over and above the statutory entitlement. There are also variations to the criteria required to be entitled to the leave and pay among the organisations benchmarked (see appendix 1). The benchmarking indicates that most private sector organisations provide an enhanced rate of paternity leave and pay above the statutory requirement, while local government organisations generally provide for the statutory two weeks leave with an enhancement to full pay for the first week. This generally incorporates the Maternity Support Leave provisions as set out in Part 2 of the Green Book.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.6	There are no additional finance or resource implications relating to this report.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.7	There are no equality or good relations implications relating to this report.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1: Paternity Pay Provisions Benchmarking Outcomes

Appendix 1: Paternity Leave and Pay Provisions – benchmarked organisations

ORGANISATION	PATERNITY LEAVE & PAY PROVISIONS
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council	• As per Belfast City Council
Mid & East Antrim City Council	• As per Belfast City Council
Fermanagh & Omagh District Council	• As per Belfast City Council
Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council	• As per Belfast City Council
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon City Council	• As per Belfast City Council
Antrim & Newtownabbey City Council	• As per Belfast City Council
Ards & North Down City Council	• As per Belfast City Council
Ulster University	• 2 weeks leave and pay is dependent on length of service • 12 months service - 5 days at full rate of pay and 5 days paid at statutory rate of pay • Less than 1 years' service – 10 days paid at SSP rate of payor 90% of average weekly earnings whichever is less
Queen's University	• 3 weeks leave at full pay • Must have 26 weeks continuous service leading into the 15th week before the child is due to be born
NI Civil Service	• 2 weeks leave at full rate of pay with at least 26 weeks continuous service by the end of the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth • Less than 26 weeks service by the end of the 15th week before the expected week of the childbirth employees can apply for 2 consecutive days paternity leave at full rate of pay
NI Fire Service	• As per Belfast City Council
Education Authority	• As per Belfast City Council
Translink	• 2 weeks leave at statutory rate of pay • Must have 26 weeks continuous service leading into the 15th week before the child is due to be born
Lloyds Banking Group	• Six weeks leave on full rate of pay • Employees are entitled to paternity leave and pay provisions from day one of employment
Royal Mail	• 2 weeks leave but pay is dependent on length of service • 26 weeks service entitled to SPP rate • 52 weeks service entitled to 2 weeks full rate of pay
Marks & Spencer	• 6 weeks full rate of pay

	• Must have 26 weeks continuous service leading into the 15th week before the child is due to be born
KPMG	• 4 weeks at full rate of pay (qualifying criteria not available)
PWC	• 4 weeks at full rate of pay (qualifying criteria not available)
Sainsbury's	• 2 weeks full rate of pay • Must have 26 weeks continuous service leading into the 15th week before the child is due to be born
Tesco	• 2 or 6 weeks full pay dependant on service • 26 weeks service entitled to 2 weeks full rate of pay • 52 weeks service entitled to 2 weeks full rate of pay
Almac	• As per Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Apprenticeship Programme Update
Date:	24 October 2025
Reporting Officer:	Christine Sheridan, Director of Human Resources
Contact Officer:	Catherine Christy, Corporate HR Manager - Development

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
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
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	
After Council Decision	
Sometime in the future	
Never	

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on a joint initiative with a number of councils to recruit a Higher-Level Apprentice.

2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	Through SOLACE, several councils agreed to develop a co-ordinated recruitment campaign for Planning Apprentices.
3.2	Engagement was undertaken with Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) institutes, and a Higher-Level Apprenticeship (HLA) course was identified as the best vehicle to provide opportunities for students to study a Planning related course while gaining valuable work experience in a Local Authority to better understand the role of a professional Planner and to experience how the entire planning system operates.
3.3	The HLA will involve an apprentice working within a Council planning team for 2.5 years while studying at Belfast Met, on day release for a Level 5 HLA in Property, Housing and Planning. The Course content has been reviewed by RTPI and Planning professionals and provides the essential skills for a planner while providing a pathway to study level 6 and above courses at university.
3.4	While there can be no commitment by Council to retain students beyond the HLA course duration, Local Government acknowledges there will be plenty of opportunities for full time jobs given the demand for planners in Local and Central Government.
3.5	The Committee is aware that funding for an annual apprenticeship programme was secured via the annual estimating process and ratified at the March 2025 meeting of the Council. The costs for the HLA Planning Apprentice will be met from the corporate budget and once appointed will bring the number of apprentices in the rolling programme to 9.
3.6	It is envisaged that the marketing of this opportunity will be carried out jointly between the participating councils and will commence in November with interviews in early December, with each council undertaking out their own recruitment as per their agreed procedures.
3.7	It is anticipated Apprentices would commence their employment in January with the course commencing in January at Belfast Met.
3.8	A full induction plan and programme of support is being developed to ensure that the HLA apprentice is properly inducted into their new role.

	2026/27 apprenticeship programme
3.9	Departments will be asked to submit their bids for the 2026/27 apprenticeship programme in Quarter 3. Departments must ensure that a relevant course is identified, and a commitment from line managers to provide the extra supervision and support required to make the apprenticeship a success. Directors, or their nominees will be required to engage with CHR, Development Team to identify suitable courses before a bid can be submitted.
3.10	Areas of the business already supported through the programme are unlikely to succeed in future bids whilst the current apprenticeship is ongoing. CMT will be required to make the final decision on which apprenticeship bids are successful for 2026/27.
	Financial and Resource Implications
3.11	To date funding of £256,000 has been agreed for this programme in the 2025/26 rate setting process and future investment will need to be considered to enhance the programme.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.12	Recruitment for apprenticeship programmes is carried out in accordance with the Local Government Staff Commission's Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	None

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Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	Planning Information
Date:	24 October 2025
Reporting Officer(s):	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control
Contact Officer(s):	Ed Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management)

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? **Yes** [ ] **No** [X]

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number [ ]

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
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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
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	[ ]
After Council Decision	[ ]
Sometime in the future	[ ]
Never	[ ]

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? **Yes** [X] **No**

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To provide an update on Major planning applications and applications that have been determined by the Planning Committee.

2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The report is for notation.
3.0	**Main Report**
	Background
3.1	The Committee received an update on Planning Performance at its meeting on the 27th August 2024. At that meeting and previously, the Committee sought a regular update on Major applications and applications that have been determined by the Planning Committee, especially those where a Decision Notice has yet to be issued.
3.2	All Major applications must be determined by the Planning Committee. The Key Performance Indicator (given in weeks) is calculated from when an application is considered to be valid to when the Decision Notice ("Green Form") is issued. This means that any delays either pre- or post- committee will impact on the KPI. The target for determining a Major application is 30 weeks.
	Major applications
3.3	Appendix 1 sets out the Major applications that are currently with the Council to determine. Details are given on the location, proposal, the validation date and target date for determination (using the 30 week target set out in the Key Performance Indicator) as well as a status update.
	Applications determined by Committee
3.4	Appendix 2 sets out the applications that have been determined by Committee since February 2022 which are yet to issue. For completeness information is also given on those applications determined by Committee which have had their Decision Notice issued. Details are given on the time taken (in weeks) to bring the applications before Committee and where decisions are yet to be issued, information is given relating to the main reason for the delay.
3.5	Following further discussion at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in May 2025, this table has now been amended to include a new non statutory target date and to give more detailed reasons for any delays in determination.
	Conclusion
3.6	This report will be brought to each Planning Committee and to each Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for information on an ongoing basis.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.7	There are no financial or resource implications associated with this report.

	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.8	There are no equality or good relations / rural needs implications associated with this report.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 – Major planning applications at October 2025 Appendix 2 – Applications determined by Committee at October 2025

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Live Major Applications not previously considered by Committee @ 06.10.25

Number	Application No.	Category	Location	Proposal	Date Valid	Target Date	Status
1	LA04/2022/0809/F	Major	Lands to the south and west of Woodland Grange to the north of Blacks Gate and to the east of Moor Park Mews Belfast.	Amendments to approved schemes ref. Z/2008/0993/F (erection of 53 No. dwellings) & ref. Z/2013/0120/F (erection of 46 No. dwellings); to reduce overall density from 99 No. dwellings to 94 No. dwellings and associated and ancillary works.	21-Apr-22	17-Nov-22	Under Consideration
2	LA04/2023/2633/F	Major	St Teresa's GAC, 2 Glen Road Heights, Belfast BT11 8ER	Proposed extension to existing clubhouse to provide indoor sports hall, changing rooms, reception, and fitness suite. Proposed relocation of grass pitch and new 4G training pitch with integrated ball walls. Proposed annex building with club store and matchday shop. Site works including increased parking, fencing, catch nets, floodlighting, dugouts, paths, and other associated amenities.	14-Mar-23	10-Oct-23	Under Consideration
3	LA04/2023/3799/F	Major	Vacant lands (partial site of the former Wolfhill Flax Spinning Mill) located to the south, of Wolfhill Manor, north of Wolfhill Grove and west of Mill Avenue, Ligoniel Road, Belfast, BT14 8NR	New single storey 10-class based primary school, separate nursery school accommodation and school meals accommodation to facilitate the relocation of St. Vincent De Paul Primary School and Nursery from existing site on Ligoniel Road, Belfast. Proposal includes new pedestrian and vehicular accesses onto Mill Avenue, car parking, covered cycle storage area and hard play areas. Hard and soft landscaping including wildlife walkway, fencing, retaining walls, underground drainage system to include the reinstatement of underground storm sewer and headwall into adjacent DFI River wayleave. Includes temporary contractors compound and all associated site works.	09-Oct-23	06-May-24	Under Consideration
4	LA04/2023/4181/F	Major	Lands comprising the existing Sydenham Wastewater Pumping Station west of Park Avenue, Connswater River and King George V Playing Fields, to the south of the Sydenham By-Pass, east of The Oval football stadium, north and east of Parkgate Gardens and north of Parkgate Crescent, Parkgate Parade and Mersey Street, Belfast	Demolition of existing Wastewater Pumping Station (WwPS) with reinstatement of site as a landscaped area. Construction of a replacement WwPS including associated control building and hardstanding, the raising of site levels, in-channel works, provision of new rising main, other ancillary buildings, the creation of an access road on lands within the King George V Playing Fields to serve the facility, landscaping and other ancillary works. Provision of a temporary working area on lands within the King George V Playing Fields, the creation of a temporary access road from Mersey Street to facilitate construction traffic on lands to the rear of 1-35 Parkgate Gardens, the creation of a temporary footway adjacent to 88 Park Avenue and other ancillary development and landscaping restoration works.	14-Nov-23	11-Jun-24	Under Consideration

5	LA04/2024/0015/F	Major	Lands at Cabin Hill, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast BT4	Erection of 53 residential units (including 43 dwellings and 10 apartments) including creation of access, internal roads, landscaping and associated works (amended description and plans).	22-Dec-23	19-Jul-24	Under Consideration
6	LA04/2024/0569/O	Major	Stormont Hotel, 587 Upper Newtownards Road BT4 3LP and adjacent properties at Castleview Road (nos. 2, 4, 6, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28 & 30), Summerhill Parade (nos. 18, 20 & 22), and Summerhill Park (nos. 37 & 39) and rear of 160 Barnetts Road, Belfast (amended address)	Outline planning permission with all matter reserved for independent living (Use Class C3) units and up to 62no. assisted living units (Use Class C1), associated internal access roads, communal open space, revised access from Castleview Road, associated car parking, servicing, amenity space and landscaping.	04-Apr-24	31-Oct-24	Under Consideration
7	LA04/2024/0570/F	Major	Stormont Hotel, 587 Upper Newtownards Road BT4 3LP and adjacent property 37-39 Summerhill Park, Belfast.	Change of use of from hotel, conference centre and offices (sui generis) to a 97-bed care home (Use Class C3(b) and 1,559sqm diagnostic medical facility (Use Class D1(a), associated access, car parking, landscaping and open space.	04-Apr-24	31-Oct-24	Under Consideration
8	LA04/2024/0910/F	Major	70 Whitewell Road, Newtownabbey, BT36 7ES Site at Hazelwood Integrated College	Redevelopment of Hazelwood Integrated College to include demolition of existing building and development of new school campus, new sports pitch, outdoor play areas, car parking, hard and soft landscaping and retention and refurbishment of the Listed Building (Graymount House) and other associated site works including a temporary mobile village during the construction process.	23-May-24	19-Dec-24	Under Consideration
9	LA04/2024/1836/F	Major	Lands between Ballygomartin Road and Upper Whiterock Road and to the west (rear) of Moyard Parade and New Barnsley Crescent, Belfast Co. Antrim BT13 3QZ	Proposed development of new walking trails linking Black Mountain Shared Space Project building (approved under LA04/2022/0853/F) on the Ballygomartin Road with the Upper Whiterock Road and Moyard Parade. Proposal to include gated accesses, stockproof fencing, seated areas, information signage, landscaping and associated site works.	25-Nov-24	23-Jun-25	Under Consideration
10	LA04/2024/2024/RM	Major	Royal Ulster Agricultural Society, the Kings Hall, 488-516 Lisburn Road, Belfast, BT9 6GW	41no. retirement living apartments at Plot 6, parking and landscaping in accordance with outline planning permission LA04/2020/0845/O, seeking approval of layout, scale, appearance and landscaping details	18-Dec-24	16-Jul-25	Under Consideration
11	LA04/2024/2134/F	Major	Site of the former Dunmurry Cricket Club, Ashley Park, Dunmurry, Belfast BT17 0QQ, located north of 1-10 Ashley Park and south of 1-20 Areema Grove and Areema Drive, Dunmurry.	Mixed use scheme for new community recreational facilities, including basketball court, parkland and residential development comprising 37no social/affordable housing units with landscaping and associated works.	21-Dec-24	19-Jul-25	Under Consideration

12	LA04/2024/2145/F	Major	Lands at North Foreshore / Giant's Park Dargan Road, Belfast, BT3 9LZ	Creation of a new Adventure Park comprising a community / visitor hub building including café, creche, flexible exhibition / community space, ancillary office space and maintenance yard. Development includes community gardens, bmx track, crazy golf, dog park, walking/running/cycle paths, outdoor amphitheatre, bio diversity zones,and recreational facilities. Associated landscaping and infrastructure (drainage, lighting, car / coach parking, WC block etc).	15-Jan-25	13-Aug-25	Under Consideration
13	LA04/2025/0012/F	Major	Lands at the Waterworks Park, located off the Cavehill Road; and lands at Alexandra Park, located between Castleton Gardens and Deacon Street; extending along Castleton Gardens and Camberwell Terrace to the road junction approximately 30 metres to the north west of 347 Antrim Road, Belfast, BT15 2HF	Refurbishment and safety work to the Waterworks upper and lower reservoirs, and Alexandra Park Lake reservoir, to be complemented with wider environmental, landscape and connectivity improvements. The reservoir works comprise of a new overflow structure with reinforcement and protection of the return embankment parallel to the by-wash channel at Waterworks Upper reservoir. Repairs to the upstream face of Waterworks Lower reservoir with the addition of wetland planting to reduce the overall capacity of the reservoir. Removal of an existing parapet wall and embankment reinforcement at the Alexandra Park Lake reservoir. Improvements at Waterworks Park comprise the demolition of the existing Waterworks Bothy and replacement with a new building to include public toilets, Changing facilities, multi-purpose community room and kitchenette. Extension to existing Cavehill Road gatehouse building. Entrance improvements, new events space including multipurpose decking; resurfacing of footways; new pedestrian lighting along key routes; a dog park; replacement platforms and viewing area. New 3-on-3 basketball court; replacement surface to existing small sided 3G pitch; and upgrades to existing Queen Mary's playground. Improvements at Alexandra Park include the resurfacing of footways; new pedestrian lighting along key routes; new reinforced grass event space; new lake viewing area; new public toilets and changing places; entrance improvements. 2no existing bridges replaced; new pedestrian entrance; reimagined peace wall; new multi-sport synthetic surface with cover; and upgrades to existing play parks. Streetscape improvements along Camberwell Terrace and Castleton Gardens include resurfacing of footways with new kerbs; resurfaced carriageways and new tactile paving at pedestrian crossings; and all associated works.	20-Dec-24	18-Jul-25	Under Consideration
14	LA04/2025/0088/F	Major	Lands adjacent and south west of Monagh By-pass, north west of Nos. 17, 19 and 22 Black Ridge Gardens and c.150 metres south east of Nos. 38 to 70 (evens) Black Ridge View (part of the wider Glenmona mixed-use development), Belfast	Proposed mixed use development (in lieu of the previously approved employment zone under LA04/2020/0804/F) comprising 36 no. Category 1 (over 55's) social housing apartments and 7 no. Class B1/B2 Business/Light Industrial Units. Development includes 2 no. access points, car parking, landscaping and all associated site works	17-Feb-25	15-Sep-25	Under Consideration

15	LA04/2025/0184/O	Major	38-52 Lisburn Road, Malone Lower, Belfast, BT9 6AA	Seven storey building (39.3m AOD) mixed use development comprising of Use Class B1 (c): Business, Research & Development and Use Class, D1: Community and Cultural Uses, including landscaping, parking, and servicing (Amended Description).	10-Feb-25	08-Sep-25	Under Consideration
16	LA04/2025/0574/F	Major	Surface level car park at lands to east of Lanyon Place Station Mays Meadow, Belfast, BT1 3NR	Erection of eight storey building comprising seven floors of grade A office accommodation, ground floor retail / business units together with car parking (15 no. spaces), cycle parking and plant areas: and public realm improvements including dedicated drop-off area to front of building	17-Apr-25	31-Jul-25	Under Consideration
17	LA04/2025/0974/F	Major	Site to the south of the former Knockbreda High School. Lands bounded by the A55 Upper Knockbreda Road to the south and south-east, Wynchurch Road to the north-east, Knockbreda Primary School to the north and Knockbreda Park to the west.	Development of a new primary school building for Forge Integrated Primary School. including development of a nursery unit, hard and soft play areas, landscaping, car parking, internal drop-off areas and new access arrangements onto the A55 Knockbreda Road via a new signalised junction; demolition of no. 138a Knockbreda Park and associated site works	04-Jun-25	31-Dec-25	Under Consideration
18	LA04/2025/1272/F	Major	Harberton North Special School 29a Fortwilliam Park, Belfast, BT15 4AP	Erection of temporary mobile classroom village to faciltate future refurbishment and extension of existing Harberton North Special School, comprising 3 no. 2-storey blocks of temporary classroom accommodation, temporary hard play areas, temporary staff and visitor parking areas, tree removal and landscpaing.	31-Jul-25	13-Nov-25	Under Consideration

Planning Applications Discussed at Committee Between 01 Apr 2019 and 06 Oct 2025

Decision Description	Totals
	27
Application Withdrawn	1
Consent Granted	
Consent Refused	
Permission Granted	3
Permission Refused	
Total	**31**

Application No.	Location	Proposal	Category	Date Valid	Statutory Target Date	Statutory Target Weeks	Current number of Weeks	Committee Date	Weeks between Valid date and Comm date	Weeks Since Committee	Previous New Non-statutory Target Date	New Non-statutory Target Date	Reason decision not issued
LA04/2022/2059/F	Lands south of 56 Highcairn Drive Belfast BT13 3RU Site located at junction between Highcairn Drive and Dunboyne Park Belfast.	Proposed Social Housing Development Comprising of 12 no. 3p/2b semi-detached dwelling houses with incurtilage parking and associated site works. (amended description and site location plan)	LOC	04-Nov-22	17-Feb-23	15	153	29/06/2023	33	118	31/08/2025	31/10/2025	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement - land ownership issues on the applicant's side
LA04/2021/2016/F	21-29 Corporation Street & 18-24 Tomb Street Belfast.	Demolition of existing multi-storey car park and the erection of 298no. build for rent apartments (19 storey) including ground floor commercial unit (A1/A2), car/cycle parking provision along with associated development. (Further information received).	MAJ	26-Aug-21	24-Mar-22	30	215	16/01/2024	124	89	31/08/2025	31/10/2025	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement - wording of clauses agreed; awaiting Certificate of Title information from applicant

LA04/2024/0483/F	34-44 Bedford Street and 6 Clarence Street, Belfast	Proposed change of use from Office (B1) and restaurant (Sui Generis) to Hotel comprising of 88 no. bedrooms, two storey rooftop extension, restaurant and bar offerings, gym facilities, including new dormer windows on roof, internal and external refurbishment and alterations, and all associated site works.	MAJ	19-Mar-24	15-Oct-24	30	81	15/10/2024	30	50	Unknown	Unknown	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement - issues to be resolved on the applicant's side
LA04/2024/0480/DCA	34-44 Bedford Street and 6 Clarence Street, Belfast	Part demolition of existing buildings (stripping back of roof, shopfront and other external alterations to facilitate change of use and extension of buildings to hotel use.	LOC	29-Mar-24	12-Jul-24	15	80	15/10/2024	28	50	Unknown	Unknown	See above
LA04/2024/0369/F	Lands at Former Monarch Laundry site, and Broadway Hall Site, No's 451 - 457 Donegall Road, Belfast, BT12 6HD.	Proposed Specialist Nursing and Residential Care Facility comprising approximately 158 no. beds, day/dining rooms, treatment rooms, staff rooms, office/store rooms, including car parking provision, cycle parking, refuse storage, landscaping, and associated site and access works.	MAJ	08-Feb-24	05-Sep-24	30	87	12/11/2024	39	46	31/10/2025	Unknown	Awaiting Section 76 Agreemen and new contamination issues - development commenced without planning permission and updated contaminated land surveys required from applicant

LA04/2023/2557/F	Lands East of Meadowhill, North of Glencolin Court, North and East of Glencolin Rise, East of Glencolin Grove, North and West of Glen Road Rise, and North of Glen Road Grove. Belfast.	260 no. dwellings, children's play area and other ancillary and associated works.	MAJ	24-Feb-23	22-Sep-23	30	137	10/12/2024	93	42	Unknown	Unknown	Unable to agree terms of Section 76 agreement with applicant - specialist legal advice sought
LA04/2024/1869/F	The Edge, 48-52 York Street, Belfast, BT15 1AS	Temporary Change of Use of 92 No. Student Bedrooms to Short Term Let Accommodation	LOC	01-Nov-24	14-Feb-25	15	49	18/03/2025	19	28			Withdrawn
LA04/2024/0626/F	1 Havelock House Havelock Place, Ormeau, Belfast, BT7 1EB .	Erection of 104no. social rented residential units (comprising a mix of General Social Housing and Category 1 over 55's accommodation) across two detached blocks [ranging between 3 and 5 storeys], landscaping, communal and private amenity space, ancillary cycle and car parking provision, and other associated site works	MAJ	17-Apr-24	13-Nov-24	30	77	18/03/2025	47	28	Unknown	30/11/2025	Holding direction issued by DfI in March 2025 released - Pre-Determination Hearing and reconsideration of application scheduled for November Committee

LA04/2024/0675/F	The Arches Centre 11-13 Bloomfield Avenue / 387-389 Newtownards Road, , Belfast, BT5 5AA	Change of Use of first and second floor to 39 No. apartments; extension to second floor for 6 No. apartments and erection of new third floor for 19 No. apartments (all social housing dwellings, 64 No. in total), and ancillary/associated works. Solar panels on roof (amended plans and description).	MAJ	13-May-24	09-Dec-24	30	73	15/04/2025	48	24	Unknown	Unknown	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement - Certificate of Title outstanding
LA04/2024/2026/RM	Royal Ulster Agricultural Society the Kings Hall, 488-516 Lisburn Road, Belfast, BT9 6GW	Multi Storey Car Park with ground floor units for local retail uses, restaurant and cafe uses, leisure and gym facilities at Plot 8, new public realm and amenity open space including a central plaza in accordance with outline planning permission LA04/2020/0845/O, seeking approval of layout, scale, appearance and landscaping details	MAJ	29-Nov-24	27-Jun-25	30	45	13/05/2025	23	20			Permission Granted
LA04/2024/0058/F	68 Fortwilliam Park, Belfast BT15 4AS	Demolition of existing 31 no. bed private nursing home and erection of 20 no. sheltered housing units (3 storey building) for the elderly; warden accommodation; communal facilities; landscaping; car parking and site works.	LOC	20-Dec-23	03-Apr-24	15	94	13/05/2025	72	20	31/08/2025	31/10/2025	Delegated authority given to resolve final response fom Waste Management. This is ongoing and expected to be resolved shortly

LA04/2023/4543/F	885 Shore Road, Belfast, BT36 7DH	Proposed new changing pavilion, enhancing grounds entrances including turnstiles, ancillary facilities and upgrade to existing car park. Proposed 3G surfacing to existing grass pitch with flood lighting.	LOC	01-Feb-24	16-May-24	15	88	17/06/2025	71	15	N/A	Unknown	Outstanding consultations from DAERA NIEA and SES
LA04/2024/1036/F	Lands to the east of the River Lagan located between Lagan Gateway Phase 1 and Belvoir Park Forest, running adjacent to the west of Belvoir Park Golf Club and approximately 120 metres to the east of Newtownbreda Water Treatment Plant, Galwally Ave, Belfast BT8 7YA.	Lagan Gateway Phase 2 – Proposed greenway connection extending between Lagan Gateway Phase 1 at Annadale Embankment to Belvoir Forest Park. Comprising compacted gravel paths; a new elevated (4-5 meter high) timber boardwalk (approximately 85m long); landscaping works, new cycle stands, bollards, seats and bins; and all associated works	LOC	10-May-24	23-Aug-24	15	74	17/06/2025	57	15	30/09/2025	31/10/2025	Awaiting outstanding consultation from DAERA NIEA
LA04/2024/0267/F	11 Friendly Way, Belfast, BT7 2DU	Change of Use from Dwelling to 6no bed/6person HMO (amended description)	LOC	15-Feb-24	30-May-24	15	86	17/06/2025	69	15	31/08/2025	31/10/2025	June Committee resolvd to delegate authorty to refuse, decision notice being drafted

LA04/2025/0535/F	Lands West of Monagh By-Pass South of Upper Springfield Road & 30-34 Upper Springfield Road & West of Aitnamona Crescent & St Theresa's Primary School. North and East of 2-22 Old Brewery Lane, Glanaulin, 137-143a Glen Road & Airfield Heights & St Mary's CBG School Belfast	Variation of conditions 1, 2, ,3, 4 ,5, 11, 14, 17, 18, 19, 36, 37 and 41 of approval LA04/2023/2390/F and LA04/2020/0804/F to facilitate removal of 31 previously approved dwellings and retaining structure along northern boundary of site adjacent to Upper Springfield Road. Retention of existing sloping ground levels and landscaping at this location.	MAJ	27-May-25	23-Dec-25	30	19	17/06/2025	3	15	30/09/2025	31/10/2025	Awaiting final DFI Roads response and conclusion of S77 agreement (amendment to S76 agreement)
LA04/2024/1592/F	Marlborough House at no. 28-32 Victoria Street, Belfast and no. 8 and 10-12 Marlborough Street; 11 Prince's Street and 2-4 Prince's Court, Belfast, BT1 3GG	Residential development comprising the demolition of no. 8 Marlborough Street, partial demolition of existing Marlborough House, and the refurbishment of existing Listed Building (Princes Court) (3 storeys), for the erection of 103 no. apartments (mix of 1-bed, 2-bed and 3 bed units) (8 storeys), with provision of private amenity, and internal and external communal amenity spaces; and associated site and infrastructure works. (amended description)	MAJ	20-Sep-24	18-Apr-25	30	55	17/06/2025	38	15	30/09/2025	31/10/2025	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement completed - decision to issue

LA04/2024/1761/RM	Land forming Plot 9 of the Kings Hall development as approved by LA04/2020/0845/O.	Application for approval of reserved matters application for a medical facility in accordance with outline planning permission LA04/2020/0845/O, seeking approval of layout, scale, appearance and landscaping details	MAJ	15-Oct-24	13-May-25	30	51	17/06/2025	35	15	30/09/2025	31/10/2025	Resolving condition issues.
LA04/2024/2044/F	Lands at 39 Corporation Street, Belfast, BT1 3BA	Erection of 895 room Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) across 9-20 storey building blocks with communal facilities, internal and external communal amenity space including landscaped courtyard and roof terraces and ancillary accommodation. With additional use outside term time (no more than 50% of the rooms) as short-term let accommodation and (no more than 50% of the rooms) accommodation for use by further or higher education institutions	MAJ	05-Dec-24	03-Jul-25	30	44	12/08/2025	35	7	30/09/2025	31/10/2025	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement - near completion
LA04/2024/1654/F	432 Falls Road, Belfast, BT12 6EN	Change of use from a 7-bedroom dwelling house (C1) to a 7 bed/ 9 person House of Multiple Occupancy (Sui Generis)	LOC	21-Oct-24	03-Feb-25	15	50	12/08/2025	42	7	N/A	31/10/2025	Preparing decision notice for issuing

LA04/2024/1865/O	Land between No 22 Squires View and Nos 57 & 59 Squires Hill Road, Belfast.	3no. detached dwellings part 2 storey part 3 storey (amended plans)	LOC	28-Oct-24	10-Feb-25	15	49	12/08/2025	41	7	N/A	30/11/2025	Late objections received. Planning Service requested additional information from applicant in respect of land instabilithy issue
LA04/2025/0122/F	Lands Between 14 and 16 Lancedean Road, Belfast, BT6 9QP	Demolition of 4 no garages and erection of 2 no. semi-detached dwellings, part 2 storey part 3 storey (amended description) (additional plans)	LOC	28-Jan-25	13-May-25	15	36	12/08/2025	28	7	N/A	31/10/2025	Preparing decision notice for issuing
LA04/2024/2077/F	Adelaide Business Centre 2-6 Apollo Road, Belfast, BT12 6HP	Proposed change of use from office space (B1) and storage or distribution (B4) to Bowling Alley, Restaurant, Indoor Golf, Children's Soft Play, VR Zone & Amusements, Smoking Area, Car Parking and Associated Site Works. Proposal includes changes to elevations. (Amended Plans Received).	MAJ	29-Jan-25	27-Aug-25	30	36	12/08/2025	27	7	N/A	30/11/2025	Late objection received from neighbouring premises. Officers working through issues. Application will need to be reported back to the Committee for reconsideration
LA04/2025/0311/A	Telegraph Building, 124-144 Royal Avenue, Belfast BT1 1DN	Street Art directly on facade of Donegall Street Elevation	LOC	18-Apr-25	01-Aug-25	15	25	12/08/2025	16	7	N/A	31/10/2025	Preparing decision notice for issuing

LA04/2025/0242/F	2 - 10 Botanic Avenue, Belfast, BT7 1JG	Erection of hotel (164 beds) including ground floor bar / restaurant; proposed heights of 8 storeys (c. 26.8m to parapet) at Donegall Pass, reducing to 5 storeys at Botanic Avenue and 4 storeys at Ratcliffe Street; and associated works including demolition of existing building	MAJ	13-Feb-25	11-Sep-25	30	34	12/08/2025	25	7			Permission Granted
LA04/2024/1466/F	41 Rosetta Road, Belfast, BT6 0LR	Ground floor extension and alterations to provide 1 No. retail unit. Two storey rear extension. Rear dormer. Change of use of first & second floor level & part of ground floor level to 6 bed / 6 person HMO (amended description and plans).	LOC	30-Aug-24	13-Dec-24	15	58	12/08/2025	49	7	N/A	31/10/2025	Preparing decision notice for issuing
LA04/2023/2868/F	Lesley Retail Park, Unit 1 Boucher Road, Belfast, BT12 6HH	Section 54 application to vary condition 04 of Planning permission Z/1996/0985 to allow for the sale of convenience goods, non bulky comparison goods and bulky comparison goods. (Amended Description).	MAJ	13-Mar-23	09-Oct-23	30	134	12/08/2025	126	7			Permission Granted

LA04/2024/0948/F	Derelict lands at and to the rear of no.s 34-36 The Mount, Belfast, BT5 4NA	Redevelopment of listed buildings and lands to the rear for a residential development comprising 20no. townhouses and 6no. apartments with associated landscaping, parking and site works	LOC	03-Jun-24	16-Sep-24	15	70	16/09/2025	67	2	N/A	31/10/2025	Awaiting issuing
LA04/2024/0955/LBC	34-36 The Mount, Belfast, BT5 4NA	Restoration of external features with a new rear projection to no. 34 The Mount and new partitioning walls in both buildings to facilitate use for 6no. apartments	LOC	03-Jun-24	16-Sep-24	15	70	16/09/2025	67	2	N/A	31/10/2025	Awaiting issuing
LA04/2025/0607/F	5 Squires Hill Road, Belfast, BT14 8FJ	Amendments to previously approved application(LA04/2023/4093/F). Proposal includes raising of ridge, fenestration changes to side and juliet balcony to front.	LOC	09-Apr-25	23-Jul-25	15	26	16/09/2025	22	2	N/A	31/10/2025	Awaiting issuing
LA04/2025/0976/LBC	35-39 Royal Avenue, Belfast, BT1 1FD	Alterations to shopfront	LOC	19-Jun-25	02-Oct-25	15	16	16/09/2025	12	2	N/A	31/10/2025	Awaiting issuing
LA04/2025/1140/F	35-39 Royal Avenue, Belfast, BT1 1FD	Alterations to shopfront	LOC	08-Jul-25	21-Oct-25	15	13	16/09/2025	10	2	N/A	31/10/2025	Awaiting issuing

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Renewal of the Scheme of Delegation for Planning
Date:	24th October 2025
Reporting Officer:	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control
Contact Officer:	Ed Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management)

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number ☐

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
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
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	☐
After Council Decision	☐
Sometime in the future	☐
Never	☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? **Yes** ☒ **No** ☐

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The Council must prepare a Scheme of Delegation for planning which sets out which decisions on Local and minor applications are delegated to officers. The current Scheme of Delegation was implemented in December 2022. In accordance with legislation, the Council is required to review its Scheme of Delegation every 3 years, i.e. it is next due to be renewed by 31st December 2025.
1.2	The recommendation is to renew the existing Scheme of Delegation subject to several small changes.
1.3	The proposed amendments to the Scheme of Delegation have been noted by the Planning Committee and are to be agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. Under the legislation, the Scheme of Delegation must be approved by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI).
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to agree the proposed minor changes to the Scheme of Delegation ahead of referral to the Department for Infrastructure.
3.0	**Main report**
	Background
3.1	Section 31 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires a Council to prepare a Scheme of Delegation which enables a person appointed by the Council to determine applications for Local development, consents, agreements or approvals required by condition. All Major applications must by law be considered by the Planning Committee.
3.2	Article 9 of the Planning (Development Management) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 states that a council must not adopt a Scheme of Delegation until it has been approved by the Department for Infrastructure. Article 11 states that a council must prepare a Scheme of Delegation at intervals of no greater than three years.
3.3	Development Management Practice Note 15: Councils Schemes of Delegation provides Departmental guidance. It advises that the main benefits of delegation are: • to enable the Planning Committee to devote its finite time to determining applications that present issues that the Committee are best served to determine; • delegation of planning applications to officers is critical to affecting the overall performance of the development management process as it helps to ensure that decisions are taken at the most appropriate level, costs are minimised and members have more time to concentrate on the most complex cases.
3.4	The Council first published a Scheme of Delegation in March 2015 ahead of becoming a Planning Authority in April that year. It was then amended in June 2017 following a review (and updated in March 2019 to take account of the Council's new departmental structure). Further amendments were made in January 2020 and December 2022.
3.5	The Scheme of Delegation sets out a range of planning functions which are delegated to officers. These include:

- Decisions on certain types of Local application;
- Decisions on other forms of consent and approval;
- Preservation of trees;
- Determinations under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations;
- Enforcing planning regulations;
- Temporary listing of buildings;
- Responding to € and planning application consultations from neighbouring Planning Authorities;
- Conducting of appeals and public examinations;
- Responding to planning related consultations from other agencies;
- Negotiating financial developer contributions of less than £30k.

Renewal of the Scheme of Delegation

3.6 The Scheme of Delegation was last amended in December 2022 and was essentially a refinement of the Scheme adopted in 2017.

3.7 The current Scheme is considered to be working well, and it is not proposed to make any significant changes.

3.8 Delegation rates since 2020/21 are set out in Table 1, below. Historically, the rate of delegated decisions in Belfast comparable with the regional average.

Year	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Belfast Delegation Rate (%)	**92.5%**	**93.2%**	**94.5%**	**96.7%**	**94.7%**
Regional Delegation Rate (%)	92.8%	93.1%	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable

Table 1: % delegated decisions by year

3.9 The proportion of officer recommendations overturned by the Planning Committee has also been historically substantially lower than the regional average as shown in Table 2, below. This is positive indicator of Elected Members' confidence in officer decisions in Belfast.

Year	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Belfast Overturn Rate (%)	**3.8%**	**9.9%**	**3.5%**	**5.7%**	**2.8%**
Regional Overturn Rate (%)	13.9%	15.8%	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 2: % officer recommendations overturned by Committee

Proposed adjustments to the Scheme of Delegation

3.10 It is recommended that the current Scheme of Delegation is renewed subject to the following relatively minor alterations.

1. **Paragraph 3.8 – removal of sub-delegation by the Strategic Director of Place and Economy to the Operational Directors for Economic Development and City, Regeneration and Development.** This recognises that planning functions

should only be sub-delegated to the Operational Director of Planning and Building Control (the Strategic Director may also sub-delegate below that within the Planning Service).

2. **Paragraph 3.8.1 – confirmation that the 28-day period for an Elected Member to request that an application is referred to the Committee is also from the date that an application is re-advertised or re-notified to neighbours.** This change is intended to provide further clarity to the referral process and provides a larger window for Members to request that an application is referred to the Committee.

3. **Paragraph 3.8.1 – parts of the administration of the referral process is proposed to be dealt with by the Planning Service rather than Democratic Services to reduce "hand-offs"**. This change is intended to improve efficiency and handling of referral requests.

4. **Paragraph 3.8.1 – change to the definition of City Centre to include as defined by the draft Belfast Local Development Plan: Local Policies Plan 2035 once published**. Any Elected Member may request that an application in the City Centre is referred to the Committee. The boundary of the City Centre is currently defined by the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2025; the proposed change reflects that this is to be replaced by the new draft Policies Plan once published.

5. **Paragraph 3.8.2 – incorporation of the provision under paragraph 3.8.2 (f) of the current Scheme of Delegation that gives officers delegated authority to refuse applications (other those for Major development) where all the necessary supporting documentation has been reasonably requested but not provided within 28 days of the request.** It is proposed to move this provision from paragraph 3.8.2 (f) to paragraph 3.8.2 because in its current position, this provision potentially conflicts with the other provisions of paragraph 3.8.2. The intention of this provision has always been that the decision on the application is delegated if reasonably requested supported documentation is not provided within 28 days, irrespective of whether other provisions of the Scheme of Delegation under paragraph 3.8.2 require the application to be referred to the Committee. The objective is to ensure the quality of applications and that they are supported by the right information. For this provision to be effective, it should be moved to paragraph 3.8.2.

6. **Paragraph 3.8.2 (a) ii. and v. – increasing the threshold for delegated decisions on applications for retail and community relates uses from up to 500 sqm to below 1,000 sqm.** The proposed increase to the threshold reflects the adoption of the Belfast Local Development Plan: Plan Strategy 2035 and Policy RET2 that requires a retail impact assessment to be submitted for town centre uses of 1,000 sqm gross or above.

7. **Paragraph 3.8.2 (i) – removal of "partial" demolition so that only applications for full demolition of a Listed Building are required to be determined by the Committee.** The proposed removal of "partial" reflects the fact that many relatively minor proposals technically involve "demolition", such as the removal of the small area of roofing to make way for a rooflight or creation of a new internal doorway. The change would avoid applications for minor demolition proposal having to be referred to the Committee. Elected Members have the reassurance that the provisions of paragraph 3.8.5 require an application to be referred to the Committee where the officer recommendation is to approve and there is an objection from DfC Historic Environment Division.

8. **Paragraph 3.8.2 (i) – correction of terminology to "Proposal of Application Notice".** The proposed change corrects the terminology in the current Scheme of Delegation which incorrectly refers to "Pre-application Notice".

9. **Paragraph 3.8.4 (i) – clarification that this provision concerning the delegation of Developer Contributions of a value not exceeding £30k relates to "Financial" Developer Contributions.** The proposed change is to avoid any ambiguity that this provision also relates to the value of "in-kind" Developer Contributions, which is not the intention of this provision.

10. **Paragraph 3.8.5 – re-ordering of the sub provisions; change to the grading definition in paragraph 3.8.5 (d); clarification that the provisions only relate to applications for full or outline planning permission (and not other forms of consent); and clarification that paragraph 3.8.5 that requires applications for Major development to be determined by the Committee does not apply to associated applications such as a Non-Material Change to a Major permission or Discharge of Condition.** The proposed changes are intended to generally tidy up the provisions, reflecting legislation that states the types of application that cannot be delegated and must be determined by a Committee, as well as clarification of some of the other provisions.

3.11 These changes are shown are shown as "track changes" in the proposed amended Scheme of Delegation at **Appendix 1**, highlighted yellow for ease of reference. The current adopted Scheme of Delegation is provided at **Appendix 2** for comparison.

3.12 By way of context, the report to the 18th November 2022 Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, which set out the proposed changes to the previous Scheme of Delegation can be viewed at this link (item 19).

Other Schemes of Delegation

3.13 Members previously requested examples of other Schemes of Delegation. Hyperlinks to other examples are provided again below.

Derry and Strabane Council (bottom of webpage):
https://www.derrystrabane.com/getmedia/de1c6642-ab21-481d-b7a6-ae058a567f82/Approved-Delegated-Scheme.pdf

Newry, Mourne and Down Council:
https://www.newrymournedown.org/media/uploads/planning_scheme_of_delegation.pdf

Horsham District Council (pages 37 and 38 of the Council's Constitution):
Horsham District Council : Document Constitution of Horsham District Council (moderngov.co.uk)

Administration of the Elected Member application referral process

3.14 Changes are proposed to the process for Members to refer an application to Committee given that current practices resulted in a referral request being missed.

3.15 Where Members would like to request that an application is referred to Committee, they should email the Director of Planning and Building Control and the Planning mailbox setting out:

- The reference number of the application

	- Site address and proposal - Planning grounds for referral to Committee.
3.16	On receipt of the request, the Planning Portal will be updated to ensure that the decision is changed to a Committee decision pending consideration of the referral request. This should ensure that no decisions are issued when a referral request has been made.
3.17	The Director of Planning and Building Control will consider the request in consultation with the City Solicitor (where necessary) and will confirm the decision on the request to the Elected Member. Where the referral request is agreed, the Committee report will detail that the application is before the Committee as a result of a Member request and it will detail the Member who made the request and the reasons why.
3.18	Following ratification of the Scheme of Delegation, new guidance will be issued to all Elected Members setting out the detail of the new application referral process.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.19	The renewal of the current Scheme of Delegation, subject to minor modifications, will enable the Council to continue to determine planning functions in an efficient and cost-effective manner.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.20	No adverse impacts have been identified.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 – proposed amended Scheme of Delegation Appendix 2 – current adopted Scheme of Delegation (December 2022)

DRAFT SCHEME OF DELEGATION FOR PLANNING

XXXXX 2025

3.8 Strategic Director of Place and Economy

The exercise of the following functions, **in line with relevant Council policies**, is delegated to the Strategic Director of Place and Economy, who may delegate his/her relevant powers to his/her deputy unless otherwise stated, namely Planning and Building Control and Director (Operational).

Planning

3.8.1 An elected Member of the Council may request that an application that relates to a site within their District Electoral Area or within an adjoining District Electoral Area or within the City Centre[1] is referred to the Planning Committee provided that the request is made in writing or by email to the Planning Service within 28 days of either: the date that the application is publicly advertised (or re-advertised)in the newspaper; or the date of Neighbour Notification (or re-Neighbour Notification), whichever is the later. The Member shall clearly state their reason/s for requesting referral of the application to the Planning Committee, which must be material planning considerations. The Strategic Director of Place and Economy shall determine whether the reason/s are material planning consideration/s and of sufficient importance for consideration by the Planning Committee. The Planning Service will advise the relevant Member of their decision. If the decision is not to refer the application to the Planning Committee, then the decision shall be delegated to the Strategic Director of Place and Economy. The Planning Service will notify the Member that made the request of the outcome of their request to refer the application to the Planning Committee. Where the application is to be referred to the Planning Committee, Democratic Services will notify all Members. Where an application is referred to the Planning Committee under this provision the Planning Sservice shall notify elected Member/s that requested the referral and the applicant at least five calendar days before the application is discussed by the Planning Committee.

3.8.2 The functions listed below in relation to the legislation set out in Appendix C and legislation made thereunder for which the Planning Committee has responsibility. The thresholds set out at paragraph 3.8.2 (a) only apply where a representation[2] has been received which conflicts with the Planning Officer's recommendation. Where no representations have been received that conflict with the Planning Officer's recommendation, the thresholds do not apply and the decision is delegated to the Strategic Director of Place and Economy. Notwithstanding the provisions below, in respect of applications, where additional or revised plans and/or information has been

[1] City Centre as defined by the Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 and as replaced by the draft Belfast Local Development Plan: Local Policies Plan 2035 once published.

[2] Representation means a consultation response received during the consultation period including, but not limited to, responses from technical consultees, neighbours and the public. Conflict must be related to material planning considerations. Correspondence from an applicant is not deemed to be a Representation.

reasonably requested and not provided within 28 days of the request, the decision is delegated to the Strategic Director of Planning and Place.

(a) determining applications for the following categories of local developments[3], including building, engineering and other operations and material changes of use:

- **i.** housing schemes up to and including 12 units other than proposals for change of house type on an approved scheme below 50 units;
- **ii.** retailing below 1,000 square metres gross floor space outside the City Centre or District Centres; or below 2,500square metres gross floor space within the City Centre or District Centres;
- **iii.** office space below 5,000 square metres gross floor space;
- **iv.** business, light industry, general industry and storage and distribution below 2,500 square metres gross floor space;
- **v.** community-related below 1,000 square metres gross floor space;
- **vi.** recreation and culture below 1,000 square metres gross floor space outside town centres or below 5,000 square metres gross floor space within town centres;
- **vii.** hotels and hostels below 30 beds.

(b) determining applications for landscaping, car parking and minor works ancillary to the main use of the land which they are to be located; works required for the purposes of providing disability access; the erection of smoking shelters etc.;

(c) determining applications for alterations and extensions to residential property and ancillary and incidental residential development within the curtilage of residential property;

(d) determining applications for change of use but excluding those relating to student accommodation; and amusement arcades;

(e) varying **or** removing conditions except when the variation **or** removal relates to, or constitutes, a major development;

(f) determining applications for discharge of conditions;

(g) determining applications for a non-material change;

(h) determining applications for works to, or demolition of, buildings or structures in conservation areas and areas of townscape character, except where it involves full demolition of a main building (excluding buildings which are ancillary or incidental) <u>and</u> the officer recommendation is to grant demolition consent or planning permission;

(i) determining applications for listed building consent, excluding full demolition

(j) determining applications for the display of advertisements;

(k) determining applications for certificates of lawful development (existing and proposed);

(l) determining Proposal of Application Notices;

(m) exercising the Council's powers in relation to the preservation of trees;

[3] The definition of local development is provided for by section 25 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

(n) the making of a screening opinion or scoping opinion in relation to Environmental Impact Assessment[4]; Strategic Environmental Assessment/Sustainability Appraisal[5]; Habitats Regulations Assessment[6]; and Rural Needs Impact Assessment[7]

(o) enforcing all regulations and orders made under the said legislation and issuing and serving of notices;

(p) executing works in default of compliance with any notice or order and in an emergency where empowered by statute and recovering the costs of so doing;

(q) temporary listing of buildings including the issuing of building preservation notices and listing in urgent cases;

(r) instituting legal proceedings, in consultation with the City Solicitor, on behalf of the Council;

(s) authorising officers pursuant to relevant legislation for the purpose of exercising statutory powers;

(t) lodging representations including objections, in consultation with the City Solicitor, in relation to planning applications where the Council has been notified as part of the statutory process or where the Council's interests are likely to be affected;

(u) responding to consultations from neighbouring authorities in relation to their Local Development Plan;

(v) administering statutory registers;

(w) registering and removing notices and charges in the Statutory Charges Register, in consultation with the City Solicitor;

(x) conducting of planning related appeals to the Planning Appeals Commission; Public Examinations and other planning related public inquires;

(y) responding to planning related consultations from Government Agencies unless the Strategic Director of Place and Economy considers that the consultation raises a significant planning issue for the Council, relates to a matter which is controversial or likely to be of significant public interest.

3.8.3 In relation to planning related Public Examinations, the Strategic Director of Place and Economy may, in consultation with the City Solicitor / Chief Executive where it is considered necessary, carry out the following functions:

(a) agree minor, typographical or factual changes or modifications to the Council's Local Development Plan Documents; and

(b) agree changes to the wording (but not the trigger points) of the operational policies which may change the emphasis but not the overall objectives of the policy.

3.8.4 Negotiating Financial Developer Contributions rs in respect of those agreements in which the contribution is equal to or less than £30,000.

[4] Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017

[5] Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004 (EAPP)

[6] Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended)

[7] Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland 2016

3.8.5 The delegated functions set out above do not apply to the following planning applications[8]:

(a) Those made by the Council;

(b) Those in which the Council has an estate;

(c) Those made by elected members of the Council;

(d) Those made by Council staff at senior management grade (Grade 14 or above) and all staff in Place and Economy Department and Legal Services;

(e) Proposals for major development[9];

(f) There is an objection from a statutory consultee and the recommendation of the Planning Officer is to approve

(g) Purpose built student accommodation

3.8.6 All other applications, permissions or provisions of the legislation which are not specifically listed above shall be deemed to be delegated unless otherwise provided for within this Scheme.

3.8.7 Where a function is normally delegated but raises issues which the Strategic or Operational Director believes should be considered by the Committee, that matter will be referred to the Committee.

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[8] This provision relates to applications seeking planning permission for development and does not refer to other forms of approval such as applications for Advertisement Consent, Listed Building Consent, Conservation Area Consent and Certificates of Lawful Use or Development.

[9] Excludes applications associated with a planning permission for Major development such as applications for a Non-Material Change or Discharge of Condition

SCHEME OF DELEGATION FOR PLANNING

ADOPTED DECEMBER 2022

3.8 Strategic Director of Place and Economy

The exercise of the following functions, **in line with relevant Council policies**, is delegated to the Strategic Director of Place and Economy, who may delegate his/her relevant powers to his/her deputies unless otherwise stated, namely Director (Operational) of Economic Development, Director (Operational) of Planning and Building Control and Director (Operational) of City Regeneration and Development:

Planning

3.8.1 An elected Member of the Council may request that an application that relates to a site within their District Electoral Area or within an adjoining District Electoral Area or within the City Centre[1] is referred to the Planning Committee provided that the request is made in writing or by email to Democratic Services within 28 days of either: the date that the application is publicly advertised in the newspaper; or the date of Neighbour Notification, whichever is the later. The Member shall clearly state their reason/s for requesting referral of the application to the Planning Committee, which must be material planning considerations. The Strategic Director of Place and Economy shall determine whether the reason/s are material planning consideration/s and of sufficient importance for consideration by the Planning Committee. Democratic Services will advise the relevant Member of their decision. If the decision is not to refer the application to the Planning Committee, then the decision shall be delegated to the Strategic Director of Place and Economy. Democratic Services will notify the Member that made the request of the outcome of their request to refer the application to the Planning Committee. Where the application is to be referred to the Planning Committee, Democratic Services will notify all Members. Where an application is referred to the Planning Committee under this provision the planning service shall notify the applicant at least five calendar days before the application is discussed by the Planning Committee.

3.8.2 The functions listed below in relation to the legislation set out in Appendix C and legislation made thereunder for which the Planning Committee has responsibility. The thresholds set out at paragraph 3.8.2 (a) only apply where a representation[2] has been received which conflicts with the Planning Officer's recommendation. Where no representations have been received that conflict with the Planning Officer's recommendation, the thresholds do not apply and the decision is delegated to the Strategic Director of Place and Economy.

[1] City Centre as defined by the Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015

[2] Representation means a consultation response received during the consultation period including, but not limited to, responses from technical consultees, neighbours and the public. Conflict must be related to material planning considerations. Correspondence from an applicant is not deemed to be a Representation.

(a) determining applications for the following categories of local developments[3] , including building, engineering and other operations and material changes of use:

- **i.** housing schemes up to and including 12 units other than proposals for change of house type on an approved scheme below 50 units;
- **ii.** retailing below 500 square metres gross floor space outside the City Centre or District Centres; or below 2,500 square metres gross floor space within the City Centre or District Centres;
- **iii.** office space below 5,000 square metres gross floor space;
- **iv.** business, light industry, general industry and storage and distribution below 2,500 square metres gross floor space;
- **v.** community-related scheme up to 500 square metres gross floor space;
- **vi.** recreation and culture below 1,000 square metres gross floor space outside town centres or below 5,000 square metres gross floor space within town centres;
- **vii.** hotels and hostels below 30 beds.

(b) determining applications for landscaping, car parking and minor works ancillary to the main use of the land which they are to be located; works required for the purposes of providing disability access; the erection of smoking shelters etc.;

(c) determining applications for alterations and extensions to residential property and ancillary and incidental residential development within the curtilage of residential property;

(d) determining applications for change of use but excluding those relating to student accommodation; and amusement arcades;

(e) varying **or** removing conditions except when the variation **or** removal relates to, or constitutes, a major development;

(f) refusing any application, other than an application for major development, where all of the necessary supporting documentation has been reasonably requested but not provided to the Council within 28 days from the date of the request;

(g) determining applications for discharge of conditions;

(h) determining applications for a non-material change;

(i) determining applications for works to, or demolition of, buildings or structures in conservation areas and areas of townscape character, except where it involves full demolition of a main building (excluding buildings which are ancillary or incidental) <u>and</u> the officer recommendation is to grant demolition consent or planning permission;

(j) determining applications for listed building consent, excluding partial or full demolition

(k) determining applications for the display of advertisements;

(l) determining applications for certificates of lawful development (existing and proposed);

(m) determining Pre-Application Notifications;

(n) exercising the Council's powers in relation to the preservation of trees;

[3] The definition of local development is provided for by section 25 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

(o) the making of a screening opinion or scoping opinion in relation to Environmental Impact Assessment[4]; Strategic Environmental Assessment/Sustainability Appraisal[5]; Habitats Regulations Assessment[6]; and Rural Needs Impact Assessment[7]

(p) enforcing all regulations and orders made under the said legislation and issuing and serving of notices;

(q) executing works in default of compliance with any notice or order and in an emergency where empowered by statute and recovering the costs of so doing;

(r) temporary listing of buildings including the issuing of building preservation notices and listing in urgent cases;

(s) instituting legal proceedings, in consultation with the City Solicitor, on behalf of the Council;

(t) authorising officers pursuant to relevant legislation for the purpose of exercising statutory powers;

(u) lodging representations including objections, in consultation with the City Solicitor, in relation to planning applications where the Council has been notified as part of the statutory process or where the Council's interests are likely to be affected;

(v) responding to consultations from neighbouring authorities in relation to their Local Development Plan;

(w) administering statutory registers;

(x) registering and removing notices and charges in the Statutory Charges Register, in consultation with the City Solicitor;

(y) conducting of planning related appeals to the Planning Appeals Commission; Public Examinations and other planning related public inquires;

(z) responding to planning related consultations from Government Agencies unless the Strategic Director of Place and Economy considers that the consultation raises a significant planning issue for the Council, relates to a matter which is controversial or likely to be of significant public interest.

3.8.3 In relation to planning related Public Examinations, the Strategic Director of Place and Economy may, in consultation with the City Solicitor / Chief Executive where it is considered necessary, carry out the following functions:

(a) agree minor, typographical or factual changes or modifications to the Council's Local Development Plan Documents; and

(b) agree changes to the wording (but not the trigger points) of the operational policies which may change the emphasis but not the overall objectives of the policy.

3.8.4 Negotiating financial contributions from developers in respect of those agreements in which the contribution is equal to or less than £30,000.

[4] Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017
[5] Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004 (EAPP)
[6] Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended)
[7] Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland 2016

3.8.5 The delegated functions set out above do not apply to the following planning applications:

(a) Those made by elected members of the Council;

(b) Those made by Council staff at senior management grade (PO12) or above and all staff in Place and Economy Department and Legal Services;

(c) Those made by the Council;

(d) Those in which the Council has an estate;

(e) Proposals for major development;

(f) There is an objection from a statutory consultee and the recommendation of the Planning Officer is to approve

(g) Purpose built student accommodation

3.8.6 All other applications, permissions or provisions of the legislation which are not specifically listed above shall be deemed to be delegated unless otherwise provided for within this Scheme.

3.8.7 Where a function is normally delegated but raises issues which the Strategic or Operational Director believes should be considered by the Committee, that matter will be referred to the Committee.

STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Physical Programme Update
Date:	24 October 2025
Reporting Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Property & Projects
Contact Officer:	David Logan, Senior Programme Delivery Manager Shauna Murtagh, Portfolio Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number ☐

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
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
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	☐
After Council Decision	☐
Sometime in the future	☐
Never	☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? **Yes** ☒ **No** ☐

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	The Council's Physical Programme currently includes over 200 capital projects with investment of £150m+ via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Council's Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. This report presents the Half Year Update, requests for stage movement approvals under the Capital Programme along with updates on capital letters of offer and contracts awarded.
2.0	**Recommendations**

2.1	The Committee is requested to –
	• **Physical Programme Half Year Update** - Note the overall update on projects that have been completed recently and projects currently under construction at 3.3 to 3.5 below and in Appendix 1; and that the Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange a site visit to any projects that have been completed or are underway.
	• **Awards and Recognition** – note that Shankill Shared Women's Centre project was recently awarded with the prestigious 2025 REGIOSTARS Awards in the '*A Europe Closer to the Citizens'* category and also the City Cemetery project was a finalist in the Construction Employers Federation (CEF) Restoration Project of the Year 2025.
	• **Capital Programme Movements -**
	  ○ **Basketball Courts** – Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £550,000.
	  ○ **Musgrave Park Sensory Garden** - Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £100,000 to provide a greater range of equipment and improve the play value and accessibility of the facility.
	  ○ **Girdwood Hub H&S Works** - Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £310,000.
	  ○ **EV Charging Network Phase 1** - Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated with a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.
	  ○ **2 Royal Avenue Landlord Capital Works** – Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.

	○ **City Hall Security Improvements** – Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed. ○ **Staff Cycle Racks Installation** – Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed. • **Section 76 Planning Agreement Developer Contribution - Belfast Bike Station Queen's Island –** to agree that the S76 Agreement developer contribution be utilised for the installation of Belfast Bike station in the Queen's Island area. • **Capital Letters of Offer** – to note the update in relation to capital letters of offer. • **Contracts awarded in Q2 2025/26 –** to note the update in relation to contracts awarded.
3.0	**Main report** <u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	**Physical Programme Half Year Update** Members will be aware that the Council runs a substantial Physical Programme. This includes the rolling Capital Programme – a multimillion regeneration programme of investment across the city which improves existing Council assets or provides new council facilities. The Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange a site visit to any projects that have been completed or are underway. The Half Year Update below is a brief summary of projects completed as well as a sample of projects currently underway.
3.2	**Awards and Recognition** Members are asked to note that two of the Council's completed capital projects have been successful in gaining awards and recognition. The Shankill Shared Women's Centre won at the prestigious 2025 REGIOSTARS Awards in the '*A Europe Closer to the Citizens*' category held in Brussels. The centre has been recognised as a dedicated shared space with a vision for a prosperous, more peaceful and cohesive future for women and their families. Also, the City Cemetery project was shortlisted in the CEF Restoration Project of the Year 2025 category. The CEF Construction Excellence Awards are the most prestigious awards in the Northern Irish Construction Industry.
3.3	**<u>Recently completed projects:</u>** • **City Cemetery Visitor Centre - Heritage Fund project** - project to protect and enhance the existing history and heritage of the cemetery. The final elements of the project including the Victorian Fountain and central steps have been completed. • **Sporting Pitches Investment 24/25** – improvement works to pitches at Falls Park, Mallusk Playing Fields and Strangford Avenue Playing Fields have completed. • **Playground Improvement Programme 24/25** – improvements have been completed at Michelle Baird Playground.

	• **Innovation Factory — Access Control –** replacement of the access control system providing flexible access to the centre for businesses. • **Beacon Programme** - provision of beacons as an alternative to traditional bonfires. • **City Hall – Installation of Stained Glass Window – LGBT and NHS** – completion of window celebrating Belfast's LGBTQ+ community. • **Enhancements to a range of Council assets including -** IT projects via Digital Services such as Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS); Grazing Lands - Fencing Replacement; OSS and Bereavement Services Machinery Phase 1; Cherryvale Gate; HWRCs Service Bay Works - Palmerston and Ormeau; and Resources & Fleet Portacabin Facilities. • **Castlereagh Presbyterian Church Hall – Belfast Investment Fund (BIF)** – refurbishment of Church Hall to include new heating system, toilets, windows, lighting, minor paint works and new lighting. Improvements have made the building more energy efficient to improve its sustainability and increase community usage. • **Mercy Primary, Crumlin Road – Local Investment Fund (LIF)** - purchase and installation of new playground equipment. • **Finaghy Bridge (LIF) –** floral mural installation and improvements at Finaghy Bridge to cover graffiti. • **Nettlefield Multi-sports storage facility (LIF)** - installation of storage facility at Nettlefield Primary school. • **Parklands - Knocknagoney Dale** – environmental improvements to Knocknagoney Park under Section 76 Agreement developer contributions for open space.
3.4	***Physical projects underway:*** • **Ballysillan Playing Fields (Urban Villages)** - Work continues on site at this £8.4m partnership project with DfI's Living with Water Programme, DfC and Urban Villages. Completion anticipated by Autumn 2026. • **Lagan Gateway Greenway (BIF)** – major investment of £5m in a new navigation lock, iconic foot and cycle bridge and new path connections. Phase 2 procurement exercise is nearing completion for works on the Annadale side, linking the pathway to Belvoir Forest Park. Completion anticipated by Autumn 2026. • **North Foreshore Development Sites Infrastructure Works** – Work has started on site for the gas extraction system. Contractor is due to start foul pumping station fitout in January 26. NIE is progressing civil works to bring increased capacity from Whitla Street to North Foreshore. • **Strand Arts Centre (BIF)** – work continues on the £6.4m major refurbishment of the art deco cinema building. Completion anticipated by Summer 2026. • **Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre (NRF)** – work is progressing well on the new build community and heritage centre at Davitt's GAC.

	• **Belfast Orange Hall (NRF)** – work has recently commenced on site. The project comprises repairs to roof and refurbishment of facades, external walls, windows and external doors. • **ABC Trust Health and Leisure Hub (Urban Villages)** – Phase 2 of the project is on site and due to complete in Autumn 2025. This comprises a community café, boxing club, minor halls, community gym and office space. The final phase, installation of the sports hall is due to be completed by Autumn/ Winter 2025. • **Sandy Row Arts & Digital Hub (BIF and Urban Villages)** – work is progressing on the new build development for creative and digital arts entrepreneurs, and it is due to complete in Autumn 2025. • **Titanic People Exhibition (Urban Villages)** – redevelopment of the courtyard/ frontage of the existing building at Westbourne Presbyterian Church. Planned completion is anticipated in Winter/ Spring 2026. • **Corporate projects –** a range of capital IT projects via Digital Services to ensure business continuity; Waste Plan – Expansion of Glass Collection Scheme, HWRC and Civic Amenity Sites Containers, Historic Cemeteries – Clifton Street, Strangford Avenue Playing Fields Enabling Works, and ongoing delivery of Fleet Replacement Programme 25/26 via City & Neighbourhoods Services. • **Developer Contributions** – progressing open space projects via CNS. • **Playground Improvement Programme 25/26** – projects on the Programme this year are White Rise, Ohio Street, Roddens Crescent, Finvoy Street and Belmont and should be complete by Spring/Summer 2026. Work is underway. • **Alleygating Phase 5** – project progressing with 115 gates to be installed and works to be completed by February 2026. • **Floral Hall Health & Safety Works –** works are underway and project is nearing completion.
3.4	***Physical projects in development:*** The remainder of the Physical Programme covers projects where activity is at earlier stages i.e. tender preparation or before. This includes schemes at the start of procurement at *Stage 3 – Committed* as well as those at *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* and *Stage 1 – Emerging* or equivalent: **Capital Programme:** The Capital Programme comprises a vast range of projects including Cathedral Gardens, New Crematorium, Belfast Stories, Reservoir Safety Programme, LTP Girdwood Indoor Sports Facility, Waste Plan projects, St George's Market – New Stalls, Waterfront Hall – Chiller Units, Relocation of Dunbar Link Cleansing Depot, New Cemetery, Access to the Hills – Black Mountain/Upper Whiterock Pathway, Glencairn Park/Ligoniel Park Greenway, City Hall – External Christmas Tree, Wilmont House, Fernhill House and Courtyard, Historic Cemeteries and Historic Tiled Street Signs, City Hall Preservation, 2 Royal Avenue, 35-

39 Royal Avenue, Woodvale Park Sensory Garden, Communication Boards, Bridges Improvement Programme, and a range of health and safety projects.

A range of other schemes are also in development including the remaining LIF, BIF, SOF NRF and UV projects.

Capital Programme - Proposed Movements

3.5 As outlined above Members have agreed that all capital projects must go through a three-stage process where decisions on which capital projects progress are taken by the Committee. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project. Members are asked to note the following activity on the Capital Programme:

Project	Overview	Stage movement
Basketball Courts	Creation and upgrade of basketball courts at five Council park sites	**Move to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum budget of £550,000**
Musgrave Park Sensory Garden	Upgrade to sensory garden	**Move to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum budget of £100,000**
Girdwood Hub H&S Works	Urgent works to the roof of the Girdwood Community Hub building	**Move to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum budget of £310,000**
EV Charging Network Phase 1	A publicly accessible electric vehicle charging point network on Council owned assets	**Move to *Stage 3 – Committed***
2 Royal Avenue – Landlord Capital works	Capital works to the ground and first floor to meet its obligations to prospective occupiers and ensure the building is fully fit for purpose.	**Add as *Stage 1 – Emerging***
City Hall Security Improvements	Capital works put forward to make City Hall a safer place for visitors, employees and elected Members.	**Add as *Stage 1 – Emerging***
Staff Cycle Racks Installation	Installation of new cycle racks in CWB, City Hall and other premises to improve provision.	**Add as *Stage 1 – Emerging***

3.6 ***Basketball Courts***

In August 2025, this project was moved to Capital Programme at Stage 2 – Uncommitted. The project was part of the additional local schemes as a consequence of UKSPF. The work includes creation or upgrades of basketball courts at five Council park sites including Victoria Park, Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Park, Ormeau Park, Blacks Road Park and Páirc Nua Chollann. The outline business case has been completed and the project can now progress to delivery stage with the consultation of local key stakeholders. **Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £550,000. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.**

3.7 ***Musgrave Park Sensory Garden***

This project was moved to Capital Programme at Stage 2 – Uncommitted in August 2025 as part of the additional schemes concerning the recoup of capital funding from UKSPF. The outline

	business case has been completed and the project can now progress to delivery stage. **Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £100,000. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.**
3.8	***Girdwood Hub Health & Safety Works*** In March 2025, Members agreed that Girdwood H&S Works was added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 - Emerging as a programme of health and safety works. A condition survey has identified works that are required in terms of strengthening works to parapet walls, to flat roofs and pitched roof over the main hall and to fix leaks in the roof which have necessitated closure of specific areas including access lifts and therefore causing disruption of activities. The estimated cost for these works will be up to £310k. The project team is liaising with Legal Services and the Insurance team regarding legal recourse and next steps. **Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £310,000, subject to legal recourse. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.**
3.9	***EV Charging Network*** This project was moved to Capital Programme at Stage 2 – Uncommitted in April 2025 in line with the LEV Strategy. It will deliver a publicly accessible electric vehicle charging point network on Council owned assets, working with a commercial partner. Members are asked to note that a detailed report on this is also on the agenda for consideration by Members today. **Members are asked to agree that 'EV Charging Network' is moved to Stage 3 – Committed and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated with a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.**
3.10	***2 Royal Avenue – Landlord Capital works*** Potential capital works to the ground and first floor beyond routine maintenance will be required at 2 Royal Avenue to enable the Council, as landlord, to meet its obligations to prospective occupiers and to ensure the building is fully fit for purpose. **Members are asked to agree that the project is added to Stage 1 – Emerging to allow the business case to be developed.**
3.11	***City Hall Security Improvements*** The TRIO Solutions Group have completed a survey audit report regarding security arrangements for City Hall and made several recommendations. The proposed project will take these recommendations/ capital works forward to make City Hall a safer place for visitors, employees and elected Members. **Members are asked to agree that the project is added to**

	Stage 1 – Emerging to allow the business case to be developed. Further detail on this will be brought back to Members and will be brought to the City Hall Installations Working Group.
3.12	***Staff Cycle Racks Installation*** The proposed project is for the installation of new cycle racks in Cecil Ward Building and City Hall to include signage, and to review racks in in 9 Adelaide and Duncrue with the view to replacing and upgrading to provide adequate facilities. **Members are asked to agree that the project is added to Stage 1 – Emerging to allow the business case to be developed.**
3.13	***Section 76 Planning Agreement - Belfast Bike Station*** In line with the agreed Section 76 Planning Agreements internal procedures, it is proposed that the S76 Developer Contribution in relation to Planning Application No. LA04/2021/2280/F at Olympic Way, Queen's Road, Queen's Island, Belfast be utilised for the installation of Belfast Bike station in the area. The proposal is for the design, mobilisation, installation and commissioning of a new Belfast Bikes docking station including 12 new e-bikes. The total cost of £47,000 is the financial contribution from S76 Agreement. The project will be delivered as soon as the landscaping of the development is complete, anticipated by December 2025. Members will note that expansion of Belfast Bikes is an existing project in the Physical Programme. **Members are asked to agree that the S76 Agreement Developer Contribution be utilised for the installation of Belfast Bike station in the Queen's Island area.**
3.14	**Capital Letters of Offer** Members are asked to note the update in relation to capital letters of offer in Q2 2025/26 at Appendix 2.
3.15	**Contracts Awarded** Members are asked to note the award of tenders for capital works including services related to works in Q2 2025/26 at Appendix 3.
3.16	**<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>** *Financial Implications* – **Basketball Courts –** capital allocation of up to £550,000 **Musgrave Park Sensory Garden –** capital allocation of up to £100,000 **Girdwood Hub H&S Works –** capital allocation of up to £310,000 The Director of Finance has confirmed that these are within the affordability limits of the Council. *Resource Implications* – Officer time to deliver.
3.17	**<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u>** All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process.

4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 – Photos of completed projects Appendix 2 - Capital Letters of Offer in Q2 2025/26 – July to September 2025 Appendix 3 – Contracts Awarded in Q2 2025/26 – July to September 2025

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Physical Programme Completed Projects

April – September 2025

Belfast City Council

City Cemetery Visitor Centre - Heritage Fund project

Belfast City Council

Sporting Pitches Investment 24/25

Falls Park

Belfast City Council

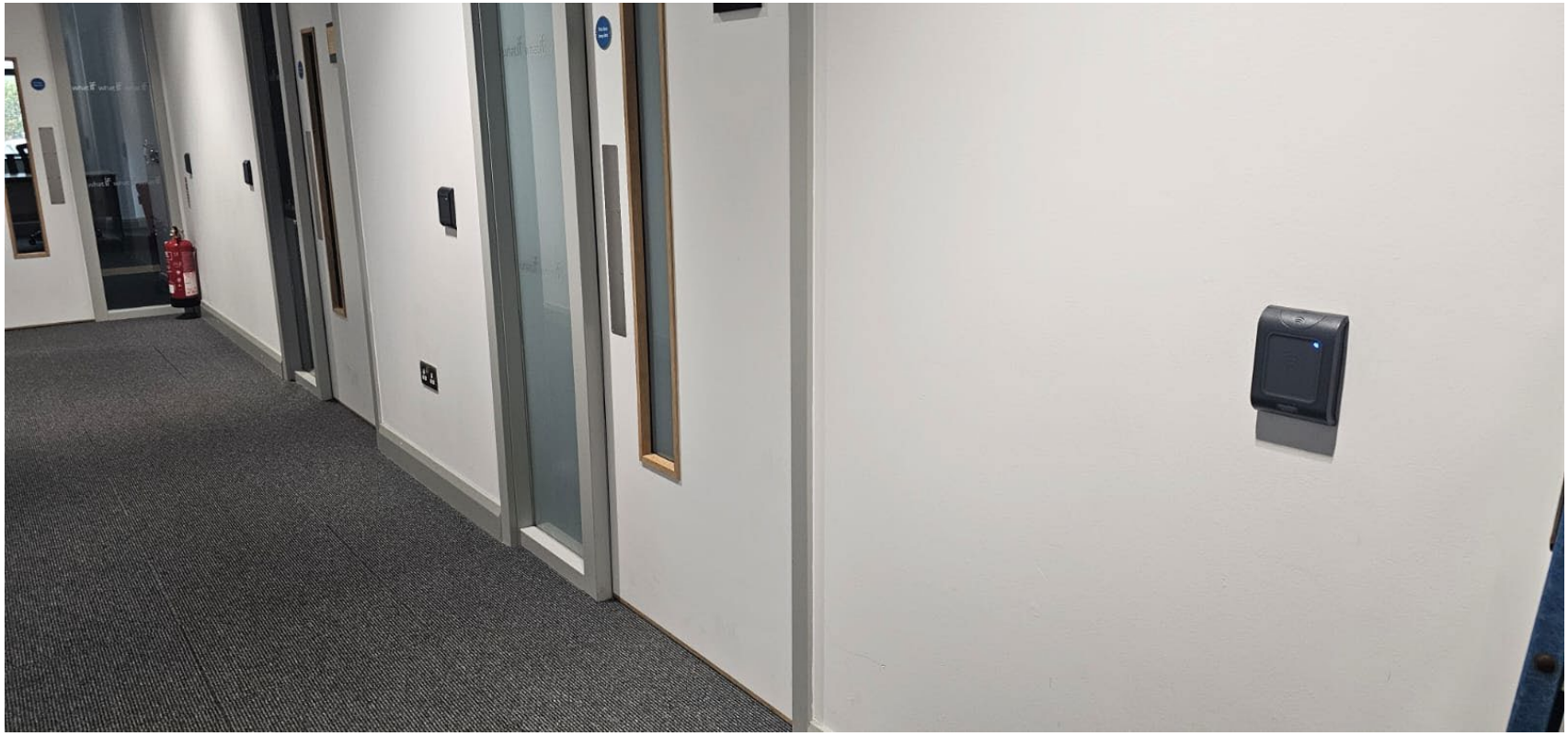
Sporting Pitches Investment 24/25
Mallusk Playing Fields

Belfast City Council

Playground Improvement Programme 24/25
Michelle Baird Playground

Belfast City Council

Innovation Factory – Access Control



Belfast City Council

City Hall – Installation of Stained Glass Window – LGBT

Belfast City Council

Upper Ardoyne Youth Centre

Belfast City Council

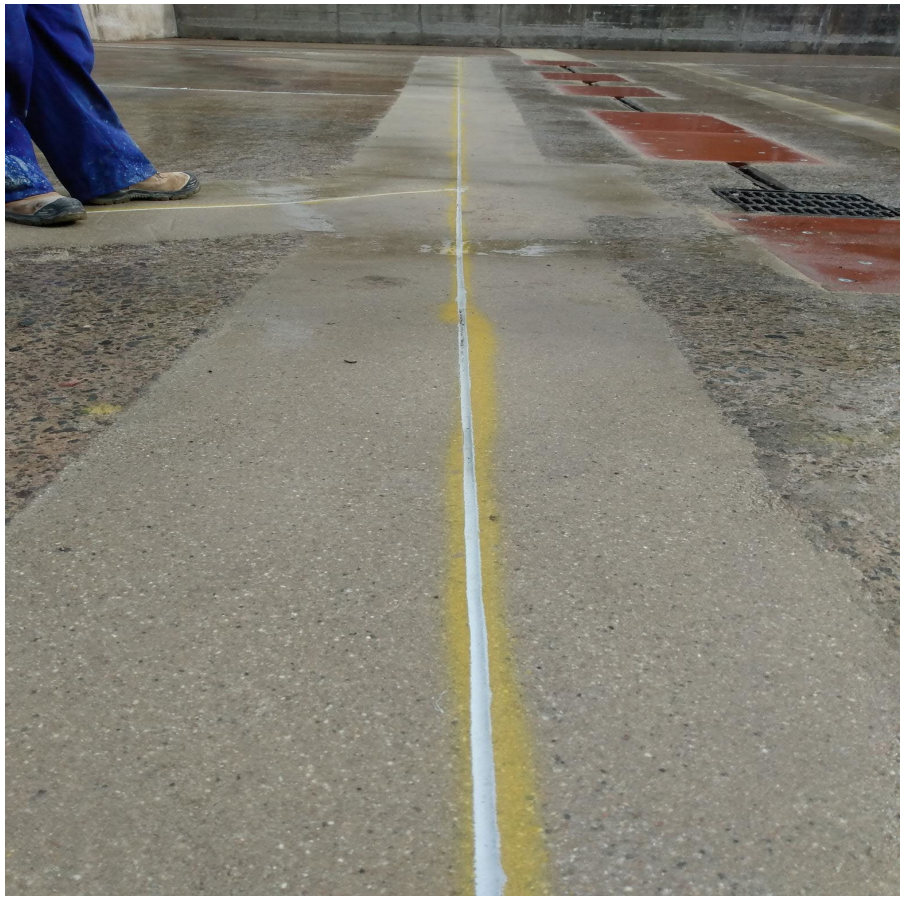
Grazing Lands - Fencing Replacement Phase 1

Belfast City Council

OSS and Bereavement Services Machinery Phase 1

Belfast City Council

HWRCs Service Bay Works - Palmerston

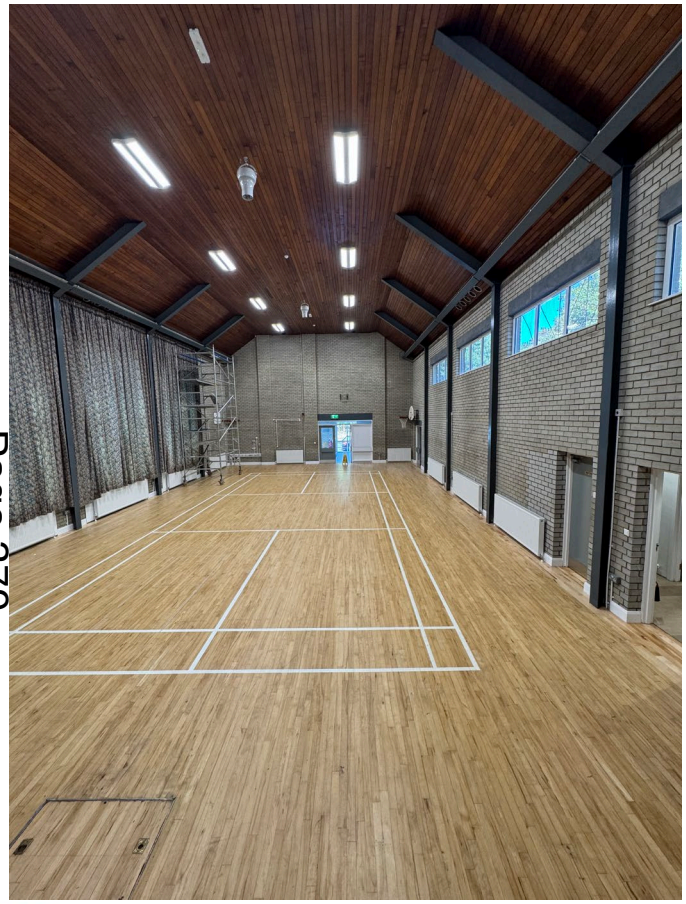


Belfast City Council

HWRCs Service Bay Works - Ormeau

Belfast City Council

Castlereagh Presbyterian Church Hall – Belfast Investment Fund (BIF)



Belfast City Council

Mercy Primary, Crumlin Road – Local Investment Fund (LIF)

Belfast City Council

Finaghy Bridge (LIF)

Belfast City Council

Nettlefield Multi-sports storage facility (LIF)

Belfast City Council

Parklands - Knocknagoney Dale

Belfast City Council

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Appendix 2

Capital Letters of Offer 01 July – 30 September 2025

Project	**Funder**	**Amount**
Coffee Culture (Amendment)	*TEO*	*£831,160*
Lower Ormeau Youth Hub - St John Vianney	DfC	£200,000
Waterworks - GROW NI Growing and Greening Project	CCAF	€30,000
Black Mountain Shared Spaces Project - Phase 2 - Finlay's Site (Amendment)	*IFI*	*£667,000*
Black Mountain Shared Spaces Project - Community Office Units (Amendment)	*DfC*	*£520,200*

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Appendix 3

Schedule of Contracts Awarded (Works and Works Related) for Notation

(July – September 2025)

Contract Awarded	Supplier	Date of Award
Term Service Contract for Stonemasons to carryout urgent and non urgent, health and safety repairs to stoneworks and monuments in Cemeteries and Graveyards	The Rock Stone Masonry	08/07/2025
MTC for Repair, Maintenance & Minor Works for high level lighting installations at Belfast City Council properties and locations	Braham Electrical	06/08/2025
MTC of Building repairs & maintenance at various Council Properties	WJM Building Services	06/08/2025
L1BCC07 Assembly Rooms & Adjoining Properties Building Condition Survey	Collins Rolston Architects	08/08/2025
Tender for the Provision of Consultancy Services to provide a Feasibility Study for Golden Thread Art Gallery in Wilmont House in Belfast	Hall Black Douglas	12/08/2025
Dargan Road Waste Transfer Station traffic improvement works	McQuillan Contracts	15/08/2025
Strangford Playing Fields Enabling Works	CivCo Ltd	21/08/2025
Belfast Zoo measured term contract for fencing, enclosures and building works	WJM Building Services	29/08/2025
Contractor for automatic doors repairs/ replacements at Belfast City Hall	MB Architectural T/A Doorways	01/09/2025
UV_Titanic People Sculpture	Hector Guest Sculptor	02/09/2025
MTC for Repair, Maintenance & Minor Works for swimming pools filtration and ozone installations at Belfast City Council properties and locations	WJM Building Services Ltd	03/09/2025
North Foreshore Foul Pumping Stations MEICA Fitout	Lagan MEICA Ltd	10/09/2025

Contract Awarded	Supplier	Date of Award
Hire of temporary office accommodation for Dargan Road Waste Transfer Station	P McVey Building Systems Ltd	10/09/2025
L1BCC04 New Build Community Hub for Bloomfield Community Association	Collins Rolston Architects	12/09/2025
L3BCC02 Sydenham Greenway Cost Consultancy	Hood McGowan Kirk	16/09/2025
PEACEPLUS Integrated Consultant Team for Design Services (Stages 3-7) for Reconnected Belfast	AECOM	23/09/2025
L1BCC08 North Foreshore, Gas Ring Main – Project Management Services	Doran Consulting	24/09/2025
L1BCC09 North Foreshore, FPS MEICA Fit Out – Project Management Services	Doran Consulting	24/09/2025

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Request for Funding
Date:	24th October 2025
Reporting Officer:	Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance
Contact Officer:	Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number ☐

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
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
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	☐
After Council Decision	☐
Sometime in the future	☐
Never	☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? **Yes** ☒ **No** ☐

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	To ask the committee to consider two requests for funding. 1. a request from Greater Shankill Partnership for funding of approximately £17,000 to support the Greater Shankill Winter Festival.

	2. a request from Cancer Lifeline to provide funding of £16,920 to support the provision of critical community-based counselling services for people affected by cancer.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is recommended to consider the attached requests.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	The Chief Executive has two requests for funding.
3.2	Members are reminded that there is no established budget for these requests however, an amount of £354k is available in the Discretionary Funding Reserve for this year.
3.3	The first request is for Greater Shankill Partnerships Greater Shankill Winter Festival. Unfortunately, the Partnership was unable to secure funding from NIHE for this annual event and is seeking funding from the council of £17,000. The request is included at Appendix 1.
3.4	The second request is from Cancer Lifeline to fund the shortfall in counselling service delivery costs up to the end of the financial year. The amount requested is for £16,920 to deliver 564 sessions of counselling up to March 2026. The request with more information is included in Appendix 2.
3.5	The Committee is asked to consider the requests.
3.6	**<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>** The requests fall under the Council's discretionary expenditure policy and be funded from the existing reserve.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.7	None.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 – Email from Greater Shankill Partnership Appendix 2 – Letter from Cancer Lifeline

From: Nicola Verner

To: John Walsh

CC: Trevor Wallace

Hi John

Greater Shankill Partnership have worked alongside colleagues from other community organisations for quite a few years now to organise the Greater Shankill Winter Festival.

This normally commences with a series of remembrance events to mark Armistice, followed by Diwali and then into Christmas. The main element is of course the festival of lights and switch on event along the stretch of the Shankill Road.

This year we have not secured funds to facilitate the programme which has now become expected by the community and I was hoping to make a submission for discretionary support for around £17,000.

As you can imagine, booking the various elements would need done pretty quickly and early consideration of the request would be greatly appreciated.

If you require any further information, please let me know

Kind regards

Nicola
Nicola Verner

The Spectrum Centre
331 Shankill Rd
Belfast
Antrim
BT13 3AA

T: 02890 311455 / 02890 504555

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help is at hand...
CANCERlifeline

42-44 Alliance Avenue
Belfast
BT14 7PJ

T 028 9035 1999
F 028 9035 1999
M 07949 109091
E info@cancerlifeline.info
W www.cancerlifeline.info

Tuesday 7th October 2025

Chief Executive's Office
Date: 09/10/25
Noted by CX: Y/N
Ref: JW 9.10
Referred to: CX
Copy sent ✓ Original sent
MB updated Invite reg

John Walsh
Chief Executive
Belfast City Council
City Hall, Belfast BT1 5GS
Belfast

Dear Mr Walsh

Re: Request for Funding to Support Counselling Services for Cancer Lifeline Service Users (£16,920)

I write on behalf of **Cancer Lifeline** to respectfully request your consideration of a possible grant of £16,920 from Belfast City Council to support the provision of critical community-based counselling services for people affected by cancer. Our services primarily target the North Belfast community because of its higher incidences of cancer and poor health outcomes.

About Cancer Lifeline
Cancer Lifeline is a local community led, support organisation based at 42 - 44 Alliance Avenue, Belfast BT14 7PJ www.cancerlifeline.info . All the volunteer management committee are living with cancer themselves.

We provide drop-in support, practical and emotional care, bereavement support, access to welfare benefits advice, wellbeing workshops, complementary therapies, support groups, and counselling services etc. to those living with cancer and their family networks and carers who are impacted. Our vital holistic support service targets isolated, vulnerable people from the North Belfast community who are facing a traumatic cancer diagnosis in their lives. Supporting them at this time of crisis in their lives to develop their skills, relationships, resilience and connections with others to help rebuild their lives and move forward.
Our mission is to ensure that some of the most vulnerable in our community do not have to face the physical, mental and emotional burden of cancer alone. Instead, we offer vital support to help them work alongside their health professionals' whilst having access to holistic, compassionate support so they can maintain dignity, mental well-being, and quality of life.

Need & Rationale
Coping with a cancer diagnosis (and its treatment, aftermath, or recurrence) places significant psychological distress not only on patients but also on their families, carers, and support networks. Many individuals struggle with anxiety, depression, fear of relapse, grief, and existential distress. These emotional burdens can, in turn, impair recovery, adherence to medical regimes, social functioning, and overall wellbeing.
Our community led, counselling service is a unique model of support, offering specialised, quick response services in response to community need. Many report the service is a

COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES
COUNSELLING
WELFARE BENEFITS ADVICE
SUPPORT GROUP
ADVOCACY SUPPORT
INFORMATION SESSIONS
HEALTH AWARENESS
WORKING TO IMPROVE SERVICES

Registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC100002
Company Limited by Guarantee Reg. No. NI055010
FR FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

"Lifeline" to them. Demand far exceeds our current financial capacity resulting in having to place people on waiting lists, raising serious concerns for those who are very vulnerable or potentially facing end of life.
By funding this service, Belfast City Council would:

- Ensure equitable access to high-quality counselling for all, regardless of financial means.
- Reduce barriers to psychological care, especially among those on lower incomes and the most vulnerable in our community.
- Complement medical care by strengthening mental health, which increasingly is recognised as integral to recovery and quality of life.
- Demonstrate civic leadership in addressing cancer's psychosocial impact within our city.

The Request: £16,920 to fund the shortfall in counselling service delivery costs up to the end of the financial year. We estimate that £16,9200 would enable us to sustain a dedicated counselling allocation up to the end of March 2026. Additional funding applications are in progress for the time period beyond this.

Cost breakdown

Delivery of 564 sessions of counselling @ £30.0 per session for professional counsellor fees.

Total amount requested
= £16,920

Outcomes & Benefits

With your support, we anticipate the following:

1. **Number of service users helped**: we estimate being able to provide counselling to 70 additional vulnerable clients affected by cancer.
2. **Improved psychological wellbeing**: reductions in anxiety, depression and distress levels.
3. **Enhanced treatment adherence and outcomes**: clients better able to engage with medical care, attend appointments and follow treatment plans.
4. **Reduced burden on statutory mental health services**: by providing early intervention, preventative support, clients may avoid escalation to crisis services, hospitalisation or more acute interventions.
5. **Strengthened community resilience**: families and carers are better supported, improving overall social cohesion and reduced isolation.

This potentially fatal diagnosis has profound consequences. It represents a crisis point in people's lives evidenced by extreme feelings of fear, isolation, anxiety, distress and helplessness. We target those who are isolated and vulnerable, many of whom lack the confidence or capacity to reach out and ask for help, despite their complex needs. These target beneficiaries experience significant need.

We will provide Belfast City Council with all requested monitoring reports, including anonymised client numbers, reported health improvement outcomes, case studies, and financial accountability.

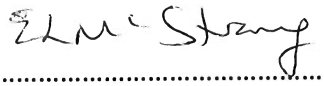
Alignment with Belfast City Council Priorities
This request aligns strongly with the council's priorities around **public health, community wellbeing, social inclusion**, and **support for vulnerable populations**. By funding emotional health alongside physical health services, we can help ensure more holistic care for people affected by cancer in Belfast.

Sustainability and Co-funding
We are actively pursuing a diversified funding model and view this grant as cornerstone funding that will enable us to leverage further funds from trusts, charitable foundations, private donors, and fundraising campaigns. In time, we hope to secure recurring resources, so the counselling service becomes a stable, long-term offering.

Request and Next Steps
We respectfully request Belfast City Council's consideration of a **£16,920** grant to sustain counselling services for the remainder of the financial year. We would be very happy to meet with you (or your representatives) to present a fuller proposal, budget, and implementation plan at your convenience.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to the welfare of our local community. We hope you will partner with us to ensure that no one facing cancer is left to face the psychological burden alone.

Yours sincerely,



.....

Liddean McStravog
Co-ordinator (07970363697)
Email liddean@cancerlifeline.info

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STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 6th October 2025
Date:	24th October 2025
Reporting Officer:	Jim Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Godfrey McCartney, Good Relations Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number ☐

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
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
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision ☐
After Council Decision ☐
Sometime in the future ☐
Never ☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? **Yes** ✓ **No** ☐

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To report to committee on the key issues discussed at the Shared City Partnership meeting held on the 6th October 2025.
2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	That the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approve the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on the 6th October, including:
2.2	**Presentation on Girdwood Community Hub** • The Shared City Partnership noted the presentation and recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the presentation.
2.3	**Good Relations Action Plan Quarter Two Update** • The Shared City Partnership agreed to note the update and recommends to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee that they also agree and note the contents of the report.
2.4	**TEO Additional Funding Application and Allocation** • The Shared City Partnership noted the contents of the report and approved the application. It also approved the allocation of an additional £27,000 in TEO funding to the next two eligible applications received following the Community Recovery Fund – Open Call and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the report and approve both the application and the funding allocation as detailed in the report.
2.5	**Community Recovery Fund Update** • The Shared City Partnership agreed to note the update and recommends to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee that they also agree and note the contents of the report.
2.6	**Peace Plus Local Community Action Plan (LCAP) Mobilisation Update** • The Shared City Partnership noted the contents of the report and confirmed agreement of the administrative extension to 30th September 2028 and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report and agree the administrative extension to 30th September 2028.
2.7	**Peace Plus Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update** • The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report
2.8	**Peace Plus Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update** • Shared City Partnership noted the contents of the report and agreed flexibility on the split of the 24 mentors/mentees for CCD5 Lot 2 up to 75% for mentors, and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agree the recommendation above and note the contents of the report.
2.9	**Peace Plus Processes Update** • The Shared City Partnership agreed to note the update and recommends to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee that they also agree and note the contents of the report.
2.10	**Update from Partnership Members** • Updates were noted from East Belfast Community Development Association and the PSNI, and are included in the minutes.

2.11	**<u>Any Other Business</u>** • The Good Relations Manager advised that, following input at the recent Partnership workshop, future Updates from Shared City Partnership Members would be moved to the start of the agenda and that the notes of that workshop would be presented to the Partnership at its meeting in November.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1 3.2 3.3 3.4 3.5	<u>Key Issues</u> The Shared City Partnership is a Working Group of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee which consists of Elected members and representatives from various sectors across the city. The minutes from the Partnership are brought before the Committee for approval on a monthly basis. The key issues on the agenda at the 6th October 2025 meeting were: • Partnership Papers of the 8th September 2025 • Presentation Girdwood Community Hub • Good Relations Quarter Two Update • TEO Additional Funding Application and Allocation • Community Recovery Fund Update • Peace Plus BCC Local Community Action Plan (LCAP) Mobilisation Update • Peace Plus Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update • Peace Plus Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update • Peace Plus Processes Update • Members Update • AOB More details regarding the above issues and recommendations are included in the following minutes of the meeting attached in Appendix 1: Minutes of the Shared City Partnership from the 6th October 2025, Appendix 2: Presentation from Girdwood Community Hub, Appendix 3: Good Relations Quarter 2 Update, Appendix 4: TEO Additional Funding Application and Appendix 5 Community Recovery Fund Update. **<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>** All financial implications are covered through existing budgets, and the Good Relations Action Plan is included in the current estimates process. **<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>** The recommendations of the Partnership are to promote the work of the Council in promoting good relations and will enhance equality and good relations impacts for the City of Belfast.
4.0	**Appendices - Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 – Minutes of the Shared City Partnership from the 6th October 2025 Appendix 2 – Presentation from Girdwood Community Hub Appendix 3 – Good Relations Quarter 2 Update Appendix 4 – TEO Additional Funding Application Appendix 5 – Community Recovery Fund Update

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SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

Monday 6th October, 2025

MEETING OF SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

Members present: Councillor J. Duffy (Chairperson);
and Councillors Abernethy and I. McLaughlin.

External Members: Ms. B. Arthurs, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Ms. L. Euler, BHSCT;
Mr. L. Gunn, NIHE;
Mr. A. Hagan, Police Service of Northern Ireland;
Ms. J. Irwin, Community Relations Council;
Rev. G. Kennedy, Faith Representative;
Ms. A. Roberts, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Mr. G. Walker, Community and Voluntary Sector; and
Ms. A. M. White, British Red Cross.

In attendance: Mr. G. McCartney, Good Relations Manager
Ms. D. McKinney, PEACE Programme Manager;
Mr. D. Robinson, Acting Senior Good Relations Officer;
Ms. L. Dolan, Acting Senior Good Relations Officer;
Ms. L. Holmes, Community Engagement Officer, Girdwood;
Ms. E. Kennedy, Project Officer (Good Relations); and
Mr. A. McMullan, Members' Services and Digital Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Smyth.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 8th September were taken as read and signed as correct, subject to an amendment to show that Ms. B. Arthurs had been in attendance at that meeting. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 19th September.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Duffy, Ms. Arthurs and Ms. Roberts declared interests under Item 3c, Community Recovery Fund and Item 4b, PEACEPLUS Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update, in that they were associated with organisations delivering projects under the Community Recovery Fund and the PEACEPLUS Programme. As the reports did not become subject to debate or discussion, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Presentation – Girdwood Community Hub

The Community Engagement Officer provided the Partnership with a presentation on the work of Girdwood Community Hub. She outlined its vision to be an internationally recognised centre for peace and reconciliation promoting good relations and equality.

She also highlighted the programme of diverse events held at the Hub, including children's summer schemes, living history and diversity awareness sessions, seniors' tea dances and the Girdwood 4 All Brighter Nights Project and Sunday League football.

The Partnership paid tribute to the work undertaken by the Community Engagement Officer and her predecessors and commended her dedication to the role.

Noted.

Good Relations Action Plan Quarter Two Update

The Acting Senior Good Relations Officer provided the Partnership with an update on the delivery of the Council's Good Relations Action Plan during the 2025-2026 quarter two financial period.

He reported that, out of a total budget of £600,000, £468,862.20 was available for the funding of projects and that £271,990.67 had already been allocated during the 2025-2026 quarter one financial period, with a further £88,716.67 allocated in quarter two.

He reminded the Partnership that the Council had, in July 2025, received from The Executive Office an additional £20,000 towards funding for projects and that a further £27,000 was granted in September specifically to address issues around racial tension.

The Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

TEO Additional Funding Application and Allocation

The Partnership considered the following report:

1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Issues

1.1 To inform members about the availability of an additional 27k TEO funding through projects aligned with the aims and objectives of the Community Recovery Fund, and to seek approval for the proposed application and allocation of these funds to the Good Relations Action Plan - BCC5 Minority Ethnic Equality and Inclusion Programme.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are requested to note the contents of the report and approve the proposed application outlined in Appendix 1, along with the allocation of an additional £27,000 in TEO funding to the

next two eligible applications received following the Community Recovery Fund – Open Call.

It is recommended that this funding be assigned to the Good Relations Action Plan, specifically aligning funds under BCC5 Minority Ethnic Equality and Inclusion Programme. Furthermore, members are asked to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (SP&R) that they acknowledge the report and approve both the application and the funding allocation as detailed.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Together, these three projects—community dialogue, intercultural engagement, and crisis preparedness—form a comprehensive strategy to address racial tensions and promote social cohesion across Belfast. Each initiative aligns with the T:BUC strategy and the BCC Good Relations Action Plan, offering measurable impact TBUC Evaluation and Monitoring.

3.2 Community Dialogue and Hate Crime Awareness (Refuge Language)

Aim

To rebuild trust and foster social cohesion between local residents and migrant communities in Belfast following the 2024 race riots, through inclusive dialogue, education, and community engagement.

Objectives

- **Deliver weekly community conversation classes that facilitate structured discussions on culture, identity, and integration.**
- **Promote mutual understanding and empathy between local and migrant populations through shared activities and storytelling.**
- **Recruit and train volunteers to facilitate conversation sessions and support intercultural dialogue.**
- **Leverage existing community infrastructure to ensure cost-effective delivery and sustainability.**
- **Provide hate crime awareness training to 120 refugees and asylum seekers to improve recognition, reporting, and response.**
- **Increase participants' confidence and safety by equipping them with knowledge of their rights and support systems.**
- **Collaborate with GEMS (South Belfast) and 174 Trust (North Belfast) to ensure geographic coverage and community buy-in.**
- **Align with the T:BUC strategy and Belfast City Council's Good Relations Action Plan to reinforce policy coherence and shared goals.**

Funding requested: £13,943.75

2. Intercultural Family Engagement (Whiterock Children and Family Centre)

3.3 Aim

To foster meaningful cross-community relationships between women from host and migrant backgrounds through inclusive, skill-based cookery sessions that promote cultural exchange, mutual respect, and community cohesion.

Objectives

- **Deliver three four-week cookery courses that encourage participants to share recipes, culinary traditions, and personal stories in a welcoming group setting.**
- **Provide on-site childcare during all sessions to ensure accessibility for parents, particularly those who might face barriers to participation.**
- **Facilitate intercultural dialogue and bonding through collaborative cooking activities that highlight diversity and shared experiences.**
- **Organize a joint celebratory trip at the end of the programme to reinforce connections and celebrate the achievements of participants.**
- **Utilise existing kitchen facilities and group-based delivery methods to ensure cost-effectiveness and sustainability.**
- **Support the T:BUC strategy by creating safe, shared spaces that promote mutual understanding and respect between communities.**
- **Advance the Good Relations Action Plan by strengthening neighbourhood ties through inclusive, family-friendly engagement.**

Funding requested: £3,262.00

3. Proposed Contingency - Belfast City Council – Good Relations - Reserve for Emergency Response

3.4 To strengthen capacity for rapid intervention during future emergencies, Belfast City Council proposes that we reserve £9,794.25 contingency reserve. This fund will be strictly ring-fenced for genuine crisis situations and will not be used for routine expenditure.

The reserve is intended to support immediate action in scenarios such as:

- **Safeguarding vulnerable communities**
- **Responding to racially motivated incidents**

- **Addressing threats to public safety and cohesion**

This proactive measure reflects hard-earned lessons from the 2024 race riots and recent episodes of vigilante activity, which have contributed to heightened fear and insecurity among ethnic minority residents.

Contingency allocation: £9,794.25

4.0 Evaluation and Monitoring Reporting Requirements

All projects and submissions are required to include TBUC Monitoring Forms, which should reflect alignment with the aims and objectives of the Community Recovery Fund.

After discussion, the Good Relations Manager confirmed that the proposed contingency fund would be made available for projects and not to individuals, should the contingency fund not be accessed during this financial year, the budget would be reprofiled.

The Partnership noted the contents of the report and approved the application as set out in the appendix. It also approved the allocation of an additional £27,000 in TEO funding to the next two eligible applications received following the Community Recovery Fund – Open Call and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the report and approve both the application and the funding allocation.

Community Recovery Fund

The Partnership considered the following report:

1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Issues

1.1 To provide an update on the status and progress of the Community Recovery Fund, previously approved by Council.

2.0 Main report

Background

2.1 The Deputy Prime Minister of the UK established a Community Recovery Fund to support areas impacted by the public disorder that occurred between July and August 2024, including Belfast. The funds were allocated to the Department of Finance to assist the most affected communities. In Belfast, the City Council's Good Relations Unit, with cross-departmental support, has been responsible for managing the local implementation of this support.

The Community Recovery Fund was delivered through a cross-departmental approach approved and agreed by Council. This involved close collaboration between Officer across internal departments particularly across Neighbourhood Services and external community partners. Neighbourhood Integration

Managers led the engagement on consortium bids, ensuring that each project was tailored to meet the specific needs of local areas across the city. Community Development teams also played a vital role by designing inclusive events at community centres that celebrate the city's diversity.

In response to the public disorder during July and August 2024, the Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) implemented targeted in-house initiatives. At the same time, the Good Relations Team oversaw the quotation process and open call for applications. This process revealed the exceptional quality of submissions and showcased the inspiring anti-racism work happening throughout Belfast—initiatives that can now be supported through this funding stream and the opportunities it provides.

2.2 **Community Recovery Fund Update**
Appendix 1 – Detailed Community Recovery Report
CRF001 – PCSP - Safer Neighbourhood Officer
Community Engagement Project

This project supports communities affected by the 2024 public disorder by enhancing safety, reducing harm, and fostering social cohesion across Belfast. It deploys Safer Neighbourhood Officers, addresses antisocial behaviour and hate crimes, and promotes inclusion through community engagement, events, and leadership workshops. Special focus is given to ethnic minority, migrant, and refugee communities, with strong collaboration among local partners to build trust and resilience.

2.3 **CRF002 - Integration and Inclusion**
Awarded to: Wheelworks

The programme aims to promote diversity awareness, challenge stereotypes and misinformation, and support integration within communities. It targets teachers, Boards of Governors, community youth leaders, and young people, equipping them with tools to foster inclusion and counter hate. Key components include training programmes, interactive toolkits, workshops, and youth-led initiatives. The content focuses on understanding prejudice, critical thinking, cultural awareness, hate crime prevention, and relationship-building. Overall, it seeks to build cohesive, informed, and inclusive communities through education and engagement.

2.4 **CRF003**
Belfast City Council Community Centre
Programme – Reaching Out

Funds have been allocated to the Community Development Department, who are currently planning local neighbourhood projects across both Council-run and independent community centres in Belfast. These initiatives and projects will be supported

by a comprehensive communication campaign on the Belfast City Council website to promote inclusion and celebrate community engagement across all diverse communities.

2.5 <u>CRF004 - Challenging the Narrative</u>

Funds have been allocated for *"Challenging the Narrative"*, a Belfast-based programme to be delivered by March 2026. There will be a total of 8 workshops, 2 within each area of Belfast and the aims is to train key groups on migration and integration, with migrant-led input and a focus on reducing hate and misinformation.

2.6 <u>CRF005 - Expansion of Schools of Sanctuary</u>

The project aims to expand Schools of Sanctuary in South and North Belfast, especially in areas impacted by racism. It promotes social cohesion by making schools more welcoming for refugees and asylum seekers. School communities will be supported in adopting inclusive practices and anti-racism education. The initiative also builds partnerships with local stakeholders and offers leadership training. Family support services, including multilingual clinics, will aid integration and community relations.

2.7 <u>CRF006 – Belfast City Council, Economic Development – Business Mentoring, Engagement, and Integration Programme</u>

The initiative aims to boost enterprise and business growth in the WULO area using £20,000 from the Community Recovery Fund. It focuses on engaging the community, promoting entrepreneurship, and supporting existing businesses through drop-in sessions, promotional outreach, and tailored resources, ensuring inclusive access to mentoring and development programs.

2.8 <u>CRF007 - WULO – LORAG</u>
<u>Engaged Citizens</u>

The Engaged Citizens project fosters community cohesion and trust in Belfast's Wider University and Lower Ormeau area. It supports those affected by hate crime through inclusive dialogue and cultural celebration. Residents are trained as ambassadors to welcome newcomers and counter harmful narratives. Creative programs and exhibitions highlight shared identities and experiences. The project partners with local groups to ensure sustainable, community-led solutions.

2.9 <u>WULO - Forward South</u>
<u>Creating a shared vision through building a Shared Space</u>

This project, led by Forward South Partnership, aims to build community cohesion and resilience in South Belfast in response to recent racist hate crimes. It will include storytelling workshops,

community dialogues, and discussions with unionist women to address prejudice and misinformation. Activities will take place in an inclusive space supporting services like the Roma Support Hub, with a focus on engaging minoritised and migrant communities through culturally sensitive programming and translation support. The goal is to foster trust, counter disinformation, and promote a shared, inclusive future.

2.10 CRF008b - Focused Consortium Projects

North Belfast - Greater Shankill Alternatives – Community Navigator Support Programme

To support migrant and ethnic minority communities, a Community Navigator will link newcomers to vital services. Workshops and outreach will promote inclusion, safety, and awareness of rights. Hate crime prevention materials and youth engagement will help reduce tensions. Collaboration with local agencies will strengthen community ties and amplify lived experiences.

2.11 South Belfast Consortium - Application is still pending.

Engagement has taken place with groups within South Belfast to develop projects that could be submitted in the near future to deliver on the aims and objectives of the Community Recovery Fund. Specifically positive engagement has taken place with Windsor Women's Centre, Belfast South Community Resources and Belfast bands Forum. Officers are working with said groups to align potential projects with the CRF and an update on any successful awards will be notified to the Partnership once made.

2.12 West Belfast - Blackie River - Newcomer Family Liaison Project

This initiative aims to support and integrate migrant communities in West Belfast, especially those impacted by the racist hate crime and unrest of July–August 2024. It seeks to foster social cohesion and rebuild trust among migrant, refugee, asylum-seeking, and host communities in the Greater Falls area. By addressing root causes of tension through proactive engagement, the project hopes to prevent future disorder. Key actions include hiring a part-time Liaison Officer, distributing welcome packs, and serving as a bridge between new families and local services.

2.13 East Belfast - East Belfast Alternatives - Connswater Community Recovery Project

This initiative fosters healing and unity in East Belfast by bridging divides between host and migrant communities. Through dialogue, cultural exchange, and youth engagement, it addresses the root causes of unrest. It empowers minority leaders, promotes trust in public services, and strengthens community networks.

2.14 CRF008 – Open Call

Please refer to Appendix 1 for a detailed progress report on the delivery of the Community Recovery Fund.

2.15 CRF009 – Hate Crime Hardship Programme
Belfast City Council – PCSP

The initiative aims to provide practical support to victims of hate crime through the Belfast PCSP's Home Security Service. It is developing sensitive referral pathways with partners like PCSP, PSNI, and Bryson to ensure victims receive both emotional support and home safety measures. Key community groups involved include Association Darfur NI, Afghan Community, and NI Somali Association, among others. This collaborative effort seeks to enhance personal safety and foster trust within diverse communities.

3.0 Financial and Resource Implications

3.1 The proposals in this report are 100% funded through Community Recovery Fund.

4.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Implications

These proposals have strong good relations outcomes and complement the work being delivered through the Council's Good Relations Action Plan and the Belfast Agenda.

5.0 Evaluation and Monitoring Reporting Requirements

Internal projects are required to submit Belfast City Council Evaluation and Monitoring Forms. These forms must clearly demonstrate alignment with the aims and objectives of the Community Recovery Fund.

External projects must provide the following:

- **CRF004 and CRF002 required mid-way report**
- **All other end of project of Belfast City Council evaluation and monitoring form**

After discussion the Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

PEACEPLUS Belfast Local Community Action Plan (LCAP) Mobilisation Update

The Peace Programme Manager provided the Partnership with an update on the mobilisation of the PEACEPLUS Action Plan.

She reported that the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB) had confirmed that all pre contract checks had been completed and the Action Plan had been formally contracted on the JeMS system which would enable development costs to be released and advance requests to be progressed.

The Partnership was reminded that a further three-month administrative extension was required to aid in the submission of financial controller costs. A request for this extension had been agreed by SEUPB. The PEACEPLUS Programme Manager also highlighted that Council officers would be required to facilitate the control work and that costs would not be reimbursed from the programme.

It was reported that the self-declaration assessment of CCD4 - Ex Politically Motivated Prisoners had been finalised and that the contract was progressing to award. Also, that the tendering process for CCD5 Lot 1 – Multiculturism to Interculturism had closed but the evaluation process had not resulted in an appointment. The next steps to mobilise the project was under review.

The PEACEPLUS Programme Manager advised the Partnership that Design Teams had been appointed for each of the capital projects. Collins Roulston had been appointed for CRT2 (Annadale), CRT3 (Distillery St), CRT4 (Access to the Hills) and CRT5 (Sanctuary). The Design Team appointed for the LGBTQIA+ hub project was Taggarts. Pre-Start meetings had taken place and the timeframe for delivery was being confirmed with Project Steering Groups meetings taking place during September and October 2025.

She reported that planning for the procurement of the animation activity for each of the projects was underway. A Pre Market Engagement event covering all the projects was scheduled for 7th October 2025 at the Markets Community Centre. She highlighted that the value of the animation contracts, approximately £86,000, was below the threshold and to uphold SEUPB procurement requirements of advertising in both jurisdictions would be advertised on e-sourcing, -e-tenders.ie and OJEU.

She reported that advice on cross community cohorts had been issued to delivery partners and that further delivery partner training on compliance, monitoring and evaluation, communications, finance and procurement had taken place on 28th August 2025 which had been well received.

The PEACEPLUS Programme Manager advised that responses to questions raised during the Due Diligence Review had been received from SEUPB and KPMG and these would be retained for audit and verification purposes.

The Partnership was reminded that the revised KPMG proposal for management verification services for the PEACEPLUS Action Plan of £162,395 had been agreed by the Programme Board and that the key steps to progressing the contracting process had been continuing, with an Application for Approbation of an External Controller having been submitted to SEUPB for agreement.

The Members noted that a request to SEUPB for an assurance on meeting costs higher than SEUPB's guidance (£35K), referred to previous correspondence issued by the Body. As such, the Members noted that the application would include the below caveat:

> *It is noted that SEUPB's MA memo of 14 May 2025 is applicable to this Controller contract, extract of the assurance by SEUPB to cover the extra controller cost is below:*

For projects that do not fall within 3.2 Thematic Area: *If a Contractor proposes an amount for external verification that the project wishes to accept but does not have adequate budget for, the project should be aware that SEUPB has undertaken efforts to ensure that the project will not result in financial loss due to the overspend. SEUPB will engage steering committees to secure additional funding as required to avoid adverse impacts on delivery.*

Finance and Claims

The Programme Manager reported that the claims position remained as previously reported with spend of approximately £1.1m. Preparation for the submission of claims was progressing and the first claim would be formally submitted once the Financial Controller was contracted.

She advised that the new PEACEPLUS Project Support Officer was scheduled to commence on 7th October 2025. Recruitment of the Project Officer was progressing. She reported that the Monitoring and Data Analyst had taken up a new position within the Council in September, however, due to the critical nature of the monitoring work, it had been agreed that the officer would continue to provide support for PEACEPLUS one day per week until November. A recruitment timeline for the post was being confirmed with Human Resources.

The Partnership noted that the International Day of Peace event had taken place on 22nd September 2025 at the City Hall, the event had been well attended and received.

The Partnership noted the contents of the report and confirmed agreement of the administrative extension to 30th September 2028 and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report and agree the administrative extension to 30th September 2028.

PEACEPLUS Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update

The Partnership considered the following report:

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Shared City Partnership with a progress update on projects within the Thriving and Peaceful Communities (TPC) Theme of the PEACEPLUS Belfast Local Community Peace Action Plan (LCAP).

2.0 Recommendations

Members are requested to note the contents of the report and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Project Delivery

Projects and Delivery partners are at various stages of implementation. An overview of project progress within the TPC theme is outlined below:

3.2 TPC 1 Community Empowerment – Lead Delivery Partner NICVA

Project Partners: Forward South Partnership (FSP), East Belfast Community Development Agency (EBCDA), West Belfast Partnership Board (WBPB), Falls Community Council (FCC), Greater Shankill Partnership (GSP) and Marrowbone Community Association (MCA).

An information session for the OCN Level 2 in Community Development with 17 participants are registered to attend the first course in September 2025.

Four Local Community Empowerment Plans (LCEPs) are due to commence between October and December 2025.

The Advisory Forum, to oversee the project will consider the Terms of Reference and membership, particularly elected member involvement. Members are advised that the TOR aims to include one elected member for each of Belfast's DEAs. Further information and an invitation to participate on the Forum will be circulated to via the SCP in October 2025.

3.3 TPC 2 Health & Wellbeing - Lead Delivery Partner Ashton

Project Partners: Shankill Partnership Board, East Belfast Community Development Agency, West Belfast Partnership Board, & North Belfast Community Partnership.

The Project Board and the Local Working Group meetings are ongoing. The first meeting of the City-Wide Shared Learning Group took place on 8 September 2025.

Delivery of activity for the first cohort of participants is due to be commence in October 2025.

Members are requested to note that two change requests to include delivery by facilitators and to amend membership of the Programme Oversight Group are currently being considered by PEACEPLUS officers and the Programme Board, with a further update to be provided to the Partnership in November 2025.

An outstanding contract initiation action is being finalised which will enable approval of the Phase 1 payment.

A project launch event is scheduled for Tuesday 14 October 2025 at 10.00 am in Belfast City Hall, an invitation has been issued to the Lord Mayors office and the Shared City Partnership Vice Chair has been invited to speak at the launch.

3.4 TPC 3 Youth Empowerment, Inspiring Future Belfast

Lot 1: 9–12 year olds (Juniors) - Lead Delivery Partner Giga Training
Project Partner BEAM Creative Network.

During July and August 2025, 157 participants were engaged in PEACEPLUS activity which included exploring culture and identity through:

- **3 x Digital Art Academies at Girdwood Community Hub**
- **2 x Art academies at Avoniel Centre**
- **1 x Community programme - Kids Together at Black Mountain Shared space**

A review of monitoring data and analysis of data / performance indicators are progressing, which should enable completion of Phase 2a targets and release the payment.

3.5 Lot 2: 12–15 year olds (Intermediate) - Lead Delivery Partner Active Communities Network (ACN)
Project Partners: Ledley Hall Boys & Girls Club, Lagmore Youth Project and Rosario Youth.

As reported in September 2025, 70 participants, across all partner organisations, are actively engaged in the project, with 59 contact hours delivered to date.

All participants have completed their young leadership award and took part in a cross border residential at Carlingford Activity Centre and planned their social action project. It is envisaged the social action project will be confirmed in September 2025

Alignment of the project's monitoring data is underway to confirm achievement of the Phase 2a targets and release payment.

3.6 Lot 3: 16–18 year olds (Seniors) - Lead Delivery Partner Streetbeat Youth Project
Project Partner YEHA (Youth Educational Health Advice).

The number of participants registered and actively engaging in the programme has increased slightly to 48, with all participants data recorded on the M&E system.

Participant groups from Street Beat North/West, YEHA North and YEHA West jointly completed a one night NI residential and

engaged in leadership workshops, cross community engagement and relationship building.

The YEHA North group is progressing to stage 2 activity which includes diversity/equality training and preparation for the international residential.

3.7 **<u>Lot 4: 19-25 years olds (Young adults) – Lead Partner GEMS NI</u>**
Project Partners: Diverse Youth NI (DYNI), Training Network for Women (TWN).

The lead delivery partner has agreed Memorandum of Understanding and Service Level Agreements with sub partners, and clarifications from the contract initiation continued to be progressed.

Project activity is commencing, and GEMS NI aim to recruit 26 participants by end September 2025. Discussion with 3 organisations in Spain to explore the residential element of the programme are progressing

All clarifications from contract initiation have been completed with the formal contact issued week commencing 8 September 2025, receipt of the signed contract will release the initial payment.

3.8 **<u>TPC 4 Sport for Peace - Lead Delivery Partner Active Communities Network</u>**
Project Partners: Sport Changes Life Foundation, PeacePlayers NI and Community Sports Network.

Pillar 1 coach training mop up sessions are to be completed by September 2025 to ensure the qualification achievement of both groups (Malone College & Byson).

Two participants have progressed to Young Leaders Pillar 3 and are supporting delivery of Pillar 2 community activity as part of their leadership development. A second cross border event was completed with Bryson hosting a group from Kildare.

Pillar 2 community activity delivery continues with eight citywide groups facilitated by: John Paul youth club, Rossa GAC, Norman Whiteside Boy's Group, Belfast Knights, Ledley Hall, St Malachy's youth club.

Members are requested to note that monitoring verification confirmed 81 registrations, rather than 95 as previously reported, although the delivery partner has advised that additional registrations are to be input on to the Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) system. Alignment of monitoring date will enable targets to be confirmed for Phase 2a and payment progressed.

Recruitment for new cohorts for coach training (Pillar 1) and Community Activity (Pillar 2) is underway.

Members are requested to note upcoming project events include:

- **PLUS Sport Programme launch on 24 October 2025, 10:00am-12:00pm in Avoniel Leisure Centre.**
- **Best Practice Event – 26 September 2025, 12:00-1:30pm at Quaker House, Fredrick Street, Belfast. This event will highlight strong partnerships within third sector S4D, share success stories and recognise how a collective effort can drive our work forward.**

3.9 <u>TPC 5 Employability Language Up – Lead Delivery Partner People1st</u>

Project Partners: Belfast City Mission, Conway Education, Donegall Pass, Fane Street Primary, Food Stock, Footprints, Holy Rosary Primary, Mears, Refuge Language, Russian Speaking Community, Street Soccer NI, The Suitcase Project, Wee Chicks, Windsor Women's Centre.

Vocational training for 10 cohorts engaging 158 participants is progressing, as per Table 1 below. 21 participants have completed the minimum hours, however, at this stage only 5 participants are deemed achieved due to specified contact hours for each strand of activity. As such members are advised that flexibility across strands for contact hours for the initial cohorts will be required. Further detail is being confirmed, and report will be submitted for agreement by the Programme Board and Shared City Partnership.

Members should also note an ongoing risk of participants unable to complete the required hours due to appointments with the Home Office or relocations.

Table1: TPC5 Employability Language Up – Cohorts and Vocational Training

Title	Lead Partner	Strand 1: Vocational Training Focus	Strand 2: Community Integration Activities
Cohorts completed			
Cohort 4	Street Soccer NI	Construction	Mix of vocational talks about the construction industry with an onsite tour and completing of CSR cards at R&A Consulting

Cohort 7	**Conway Education**	**Admin and Employability**	**Library and leisure centre visits, art therapy and guest speakers from Kings trust and People 1st.**
Cohorts and activity progressing			
Cohort 1	**Donegall Pass Comm Forum**	**Hospitality**	**Healthy Eating Course – Airfryer**
Cohort 2	**Donegall Pass Comm Forum**	**Focus on Customer Services**	**Titanic Museum**
Cohort 3	**Donegall Pass Comm Forum**	**Customer Service**	**Titanic Museum**
Cohort 5	**Mixed Recruitment**	**Retail**	**Working together to create job adverts, CV building and mock interview workshops**
Cohort 6	**Suitcase Project**	**Health and Social Care**	**Interview workshops**
Cohort 8	**Anaxa / mixed recruitment**	**Admin and Employability**	**Co-design to take place to determine this**
Cohort 9	**Anaxa / mixed recruitment**	**Admin and Employability**	**Co-design to take place to determine this**
Cohort 10	**Mixed Recruitment**	**Retail**	**Co-design to take place to determine this**

3.10 <u>TPC 6 Arts Across the Genres – Delivery Partner Maywe</u>
Project Partners: BEAM Creative Network

The Lead Delivery Partner, Maywe has advised that GIGA Training has withdrawn as a sub-project partner. As such, all five sub-projects will be redistributed across MayWe and BEAM Creative Network. Members should note that Maywe has confirmed there is no impact on contractual targets.

As previously reported, capacity building sessions for Project 1 (PolyPhonic) will begin late September and October 2025, with sessions scheduled in Girdwood (North), Accidental Theatre (South), Portview/ Banana Block (East), Brassneck and Black Mountain Shared Space (West). 80 people have expressed interest, and targeted recruitment through creative arts groups and schools. is continuing.

Project 5, Creative Xchange has completed recruitment and registration. It will also hold capacity building and skills sessions in September 2025 and will deliver photo shoots at other project activity.

Project 2 has groups confirmed for recruitment (MENCAP, NOW, Harberton, Black Box, Kids Together). Capacity building sessions are to commence from October 2025.

3.11 <u>TPC Thematic Steering Group</u>

Members are requested to note that the quarterly TPC Thematic Steering Group took place on 4 September 2025. Seven delivery partners were represented at the meeting.

Collaboration and links between Youth Empowerment Lot 2 and Lot 3 then further progression to Youth Empowerment Lot 4 were discussed.

Some delivery partners highlighted the issue of price increases since submission dates particularly in transport and accommodation costs, which may impact residential activity.

It was noted there are synergies across all the themes and an action identified from the meeting is to share information on Theme 1 - CCD and Theme 3 - CRT.

All thematic risks were reviewed as good or fair and no issues for escalation were identified.

The next meeting is taking place on Tuesday 4 November 2025 and NICVA has agreed to host the meeting.

4.0 <u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>

All expenditure associated with the PEACEPLUS Action Plan is eligible from 1 January 2024.

5.0 <u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u>

The PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan has been screened for equality, good relations and rural needs assessment, and has been screened out.

The Members were advised that the Terms of Reference for the TCP1 Forum aimed to include two representatives from each of the Local Community Empowerment Plan (LCEP) areas to form part of the LCEP Forum. It was envisaged that elected member representation might be required on the LCEP Forum at a later stage.

After discussion the Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

PEACEPLUS Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Shared City Partnership with a progress update on projects within the Celebrating Culture and Diversity (CCD) Theme of the PEACEPLUS Belfast Local Community Peace Action Plan (LCAP).

2.0 Recommendations

Members are requested to note the contents of the report, agree flexibility on the split of the 24 mentors/mentees for CCD5 Lot 2 up to 75% for mentors, and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agree the recommendation above and note the contents of the report.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Project Delivery

Delivery partners and projects are at various stages of implementation, and confirmation of delivery approaches have been submitted. An overview of project progress within the CCD theme is outlined below:

3.2 CCD1 – Interfaith and Belief Lead Delivery Partner: Corrymeela Community
Consortium Partners: Redeeming Our Communities, Belfast Islamic Centre, NI Inter-Faith Forum

Recruitment is ongoing for the three Steering Groups, and two online information sessions have been provided for the 30 people expressing an interest in the project. The project continues to engage with key faith representatives across Belfast.

A Reference Team is being created which will provide expertise on the development of the youth education resources to be delivered to young people in schools and youth setting as part of Stream 1.

An interfaith walking tour of Belfast City Centre is planned to take place in November 2025 as one of the events to be delivered in Stream 3.

The first contract initiation payment for the project has been processed.

3.3 CCD2 – Community Connections Lead Delivery Partner: GEMS NI
Consortium Partners: Business in the Community, Belfast City of Sanctuary, Diverse Youth NI, Migrant Centre NI, Ballynafeigh Community Development Association

Initial project mobilisation is ongoing. Preparation work for the delivery of participant activities is continuing in line with the implementation plan. Outline training plans for each strand are being finalised following the design workshops that took place in July and August 2025

Proposed locations for Strand 4 Welcome Hub are being finalised, and further details will be submitted to the Programme Board and Partnership for review and approval.

3.4 <u>CCD 3 – LGBTQIA+ Community Engagement Project -</u> Lead Delivery Partner: The Rainbow Project
Project Partners: Cara Friend, HERe NI

Due to the later start date of the project and a delay in appointment of the project team, members are requested to note that the Delivery Partner has advised that delivery is approximately 1 month behind schedule.

Two of the three project staff are now in post, with the remaining postholder in place by the end of September 2025. The Project Steering Group will be initiated by the end of September 2025 and a project launch event is being planned for October 2005.

The Project Manager is liaising closely with the Delivery Partner to bring project delivery back on track.

3.5 <u>CCD4 – Community Empowerment Ex Politically Motivated Prisoners</u>

Clarifications identified in relation to GDPR checks by IGU, continue to be addressed with Procurement and the bidder. GDPR policies have been resubmitted, and the contract award process is now progressing.

3.6 <u>CCD5 From Multiculturalism to Interculturalism</u>

<u>Lot 1 – Language and Cultural Access</u>
Members are advised that the tender closed and following evaluation no contract can be progressed. Officers are considering the next steps and will seek guidance from SEUPB and Procurement. A further update will be provided to members in due course.

3.7 <u>Lot 2 – Cultural Spaces</u> Lead Delivery Partner: MayWe

MayWe is progressing with project set-up and finalising project planning documents.

As previously reported additional cultural spaces are to be agreed by Council. These cultural spaces will form the basis for participants for the Steering Group, the Steering Group Capacity

Building Programme and the Capacity Building for Grassroots groups linked to the cultural spaces.

To ensure that all requirements regarding geographical participation and thematic focus are met, feedback on the proposed spaces has been provided by the Project Manager and Programme Manager. A final list is be submitted for agreement by the Programme Board and the Partnership.

3.8 <u>Lot 3 – Festivals and Flagship Events</u> Lead Delivery Partner: Féile an Phobail

As previously reported, there are issues regarding the mentoring aspects of the project. A proposal to vary the split between the 24 mentors/mentees and provide flexibility is under consideration. Given, the overall number of participants and contact hours achieved within this element will not be affected the Programme Board agreed to 75% flexibility for mentors (9) and delegated authority to the Project Manager and the Programme Manager, to further consider the request. As such the Programme Board recommends that members agree this proposal.

Membership of the steering groups and training plans for the Festivals Cultural Connector (mentoring) element and Flagship Event Capacity Building programmes are being finalised.

A Programme launch and associated comms for the Festivals Cultural Connector (mentoring) element is being planned for October 2025.

3.9 <u>Lot 4 – Culture and Shared Built Heritage Lead</u> Delivery Partner: Arts Ekta
Project Partners: Cairde na Cille, Kabosh Theatre

Delivery has continued over August 2025 with the Tours series: Victorian Maritime Tour, Docklands and Belfast Entries Tour, Heritage Walking Day Tour, Tea Walking Tour, City Centre Walking Tour, Victorian Pubs of Belfast and Docklands & Mary Ann McCracken Walking Tour.

Participating groups to date include:	
Tours Series June	**The Heart Project Women's Group, Maureen Sheehan Centre Ligoniel Community Group, Woodstock Road Men's Shed, LORAG.**
Event Series June	**Forthspring Inter Community Group, Conway Education Centre, Féile an Phobail, Conway Education Centre, Falls**

	Residents Association, Greater Shankill Partnership, Greater Village Regeneration Trust.
Event Series July	**Windsor Women's Centre, NI Resources Network, Art Route Collective and Oxfam Volunteers, Ashton Women's Centre, Shankill Women's Centre, Bomoko NI.**
Burial Traditions Programme June/ July	**LORAG, Orangefield Church of Ireland, Giob Gheab Chlannlaithe, Great Victoria Street Baptist Church, Hannahstown community group, St George's Church of Ireland.**

Further activity took place on 6 and 7 September 2025 in St Joseph's Church in Sailortown to coincide with the Belfast Maritime Festival. The events include Belfast's Maritime Past (talk), Maritime Print Making Workshop and Sailortown Music Sessions.

The second Steering Group meeting and the commencement of the OCN L2 in Tour Guiding through Belfast Met is also being progressed.

Members should note that the first Burial Traditions animation event at Friars Bush Graveyard due in late August was rescheduled to 20 September 2025 due to facilitator availability.

3.10 <u>CCD Thematic Steering Group</u>

The quarterly CCD Thematic Steering Group took place on 9th September 2025. All 6 awarded contracts within this theme were represented at the meeting. Several opportunities for collaboration were identified at the meeting and an action was agreed for Corrymeela, Féile an Phobail and ArtsEkta to liaise with each other to ensure there is no duplication and to explore collaboration opportunities within the faith-based activities each of the delivery partners are delivering.

All thematic risks are assigned as good or fair and no issues for escalation were identified.

The next meeting is taking place on Tuesday 4th November 2025

4.0 <u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>

All expenditure associated with the PEACEPLUS Action Plan is eligible from 1 January 2024.

4.1 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

The PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan has been screened for equality, good relations and rural needs assessment, and has been screened out.

The Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report and agree flexibility on the split of the 24 mentors/mentees.

PEACEPLUS Processes Update

The PEACEPLUS Programme Manager provided the Partnership with an update on the processes to aid the implementation of the PEACEPLUS Belfast Local Community Peace Action Plan.

She highlighted that a reimbursement of the €100,000 development costs had been received from the SEUPB. The payment was converted to £85,962.35 at the payment date's exchange rate of €1.1633.

The Partnership was reminded that the Action Plan budgets were submitted at a rate of €1.15 and that if that exchange rate had been used an amount of £86,956.52 would have been received instead. Consequently, the exchange rate cost to Council had been £994.17.

The Members noted that this variance could be offset by deferred income and were made aware that budgets might come under pressure due to exchange rate variances.

After discussion, the Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

Update from Shared City Partnership Members

Ms. Roberts updated the Partnership on a recent stakeholder meeting she had attended on interface violence in East Belfast, highlighting the residents' frustrations at lack of resources arising from funding cuts.

Superintendent Hagan advised the Partnership that a substantial proportion of those issues were due to transient youth and were not motivated by sectarianism. He suggested that youth provision services along with intervention and education had been pivotal in tackling these issues and that successful interventions had included signposting and managing behaviours.

In response to a Member's question regarding CCTV monitoring, he described resource issues faced by the PSNI but provided an assurance to the Partnership that during any spike period the monitoring capacity was boosted.

Noted.

Any Other Business

The Good Relations Manager advised that, following input at the recent Partnership workshop, future Updates from Shared City Partnership Members would be moved to the start

of the agenda and that the notes of that workshop would be presented to the Partnership at its meeting in November.

Date of Next Meeting

The Partnership was reminded that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Monday, 10th November.

Chairperson

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Belfast City Council

GIRDWOOD
COMMUNITY HUB

Background to the Girdwood Site

A masterplan for the Girdwood site was published in May 2012. The Girdwood Masterplan Conceptual Framework aims to maximise economic, social and environmental benefits to the local and wider community. Promoting a safe and shared space is at its core.

To date, these elements of the plan have been delivered:

- The Girdwood Community Hub
- 3G pitches,
- Kinnaird housing, and infrastructure including roads, cycle paths and landscaping.

Progressing

* The indoor sports facility and a second site for housing and a mixed-use economic space have still to be developed.

- With a total value of £11.7 million, the hub was the first development to be built on the former Girdwood Army Barracks site. Funding was provided by the EU's PEACE III Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), Belfast City Council and the Department for Social Development.

Before

Before

After

After

- Girdwood Community Hub opened in January 2016 with support of a local community forum representing residents and community groups.

- This group is known as the Girdwood Community Forum, and they continue to be involved in the present. We will celebrate ten years in the new year January 2026.

- Members include Lower Oldpark Community Association , Cliftonville Community Regeneration forum , Lower Shankill Community Association , TAMHI , New Lodge Arts , Our Club Our Community, TDK, PSNI, EA , NIHE , DfC , NHA and BCC.

- Girdwood Community Hub opened with opportunity to build peace and reconciliation. The vision was to be an international centre of recognition for PEACE and Reconciliation promoting Good Relations and equality.

- The centre is a legacy of PEACE III funding , funded and supported by SEUPB and continues to drive cross community participation with inclusion and diversity embedded in all events and programming.

Changing landscape @ Girdwood

View from Alloa Street to Cliftonpark Avenue 1996

View from Alloa Street to Cliftonpark Avenue 2025

Community Performances

Tuesday 17th September 2024

7PM (Performance Start Time)

Girdwood Community Hub
10 Girdwood Avenue, Belfast BT14 6EG

Email **pcsp@belfastcity.gov.uk** to book your place

Policing & Community Safety Partnership
making North Belfast safer

This performance contains strong language and addresses challenging themes/issues
Advisory age: 16+ For more information please visit www.bruisertheatrecompany.com

Butterfly Effect @ Girdwood Community Hub Thursday 09 January @ 7.30 pm

Butterfly Effect is inspired by the real-life stories of ***young people and ex-offenders that have been impacted by prison, addiction and struggles with their mental health***. We follow six characters from their school days through to the present day, exploring why they made the choices that led to them serving time in jail and how they might have made different decisions or accessed support.

Spanner in the Works Theatre Company's new production explores how trauma, lack of opportunity, and a lack of resources can influence young people's choices. How do we take care of each other and ourselves in a world where the odds can seem stacked against us? How do we change or recover from choices that have led us onto difficult paths? Butterfly Effect is written and directed by award-winning playwright Patricia Downey.

This event is free to attend with no tickets or booking required , this is funded and supported by North Belfast District PCSP and Girdwood Community Hub Shared Space.

Contains strong language and scenes that some might find upsetting or triggering. Suitable for 15+.

Spanner in the Works theatre company

GIRDWOOD COMMUNITY HUB

Policing & Community Safety Partnership
making North Belfast safer

Free admission and everyone welcome – no tickets required

Free Community Performance showing @ Girdwood Community Hub – ***Tuesday 02 September 2025 @ 7pm***.

Does anybody plan to end up in jail? Runny Honey addresses issues ***of domestic violence, drug use, and sexual abuse, containing scenes that some may find distressing. Suitable for 16 +***

We see three women as they come to know and understand each other in prison,

- one a recidivist who keeps offending on the outside ("a warm bed and three meals a day in here - why try to make a life outside?")
- one whose unhappy childhood has led her to become a drug dealer
- one who for various reasons had to leave her new-born with her abusing male partner.

Supported by North Belfast District PCSP, Girdwood Community Hub & Belfast City Council.

Policing & Community Safety Partnership
making North Belfast safer

Belfast City Council

Changing Community Capacity for local groups

- Food Hygiene , Child Protection , safeguarding and Mental Health First, Health & Safety is delivered under the Girdwood Action plan to support pop up café , summer scheme & drop-in youth sessions.
- Increasing the capacity of local community group members knowledge.
- Bringing groups together based on a common goal of need rather than differences.

Diversity & Inclusion

LIVING HISTORY PROJECT & DIVERSITY AWARENESS SESSIONS

PROMOTING GOOD RELATIONS

Schools Out for Summer Friday 27 June 5.45 pm to 8.30 pm

Supported By Belfast City Council

Free Admission , everyone welcome

Join us at Girdwood Community Hub for Retro Games and Family Silent Discos.

No tickets required for games , visit mayweeventbrite.co.uk for disco tickets.

Senior Adults Activities

Girdwood 4 All Brighter Nights project & Sunday league

- 1202 players aged 10 + take part
- 111 teams registered
- 218 volunteers support this programme
- Delivered via TAMHI & Our Club Our Community

Girdwood Youth Space Summer Scheme

TAMHI & OCOC Summer Scheme

Active & Able Summer Schemes

PEACE PLUS Digital Tech Camps

Personal Safety Events @ Girdwood Community Hub

Everyone is welcome to attend all 4 sessions or on a drop-in basis.

Increase your self-awareness.

Improving your confidence over the 4 sessions.

Free personal protection alarm provided.

Learn different self-defence techniques and practice in a safe space with Rakia.

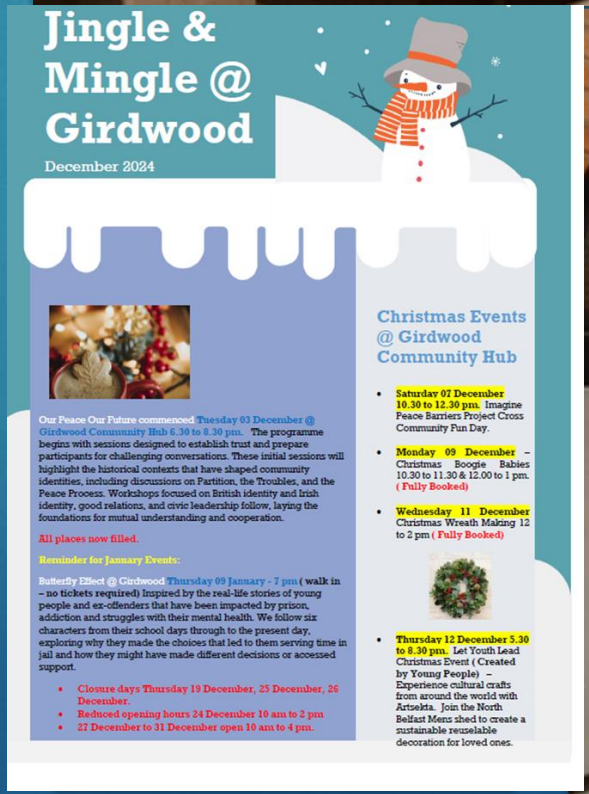
(No Booking required)

Under 18s must be accompanied by an adult / youth groups must have a leader present if attending.

Wear comfortable clothes , flat shoes, trainers etc.

Halloween & Christmas @ Girdwood 2025

- Autumn Wreath Making
- Parent & Toddler Boogie Babies
- North Belfast Lantern Parade
- Let Youth Lead Christmas event and festive craft events



Jingle & Mingle @ Girdwood

December 2024

Our Peace Our Future commenced Tuesday 03 December @ Girdwood Community Hub 6.30 to 8.30 pm. The programme begins with sessions designed to establish trust and prepare participants for challenging conversations. These initial sessions will highlight the historical contexts that have shaped community identities, including discussions on Partition, the Troubles, and the Peace Process. Workshops focused on British identity and Irish identity, good relations, and civic leadership follow, laying the foundations for mutual understanding and cooperation.

All places now filled.

Reminder for January Events:

Butterfly Effect @ Girdwood Thursday 09 January - 7 pm (walk in – no tickets required) Inspired by the real-life stories of young people and ex-offenders that have been impacted by prison, addiction and struggles with their mental health. We follow six characters from their school days through to the present day, exploring why they made the choices that led to them serving time in jail and how they might have made different decisions or accessed support.

- Closure days Thursday 19 December, 25 December, 26 December.
- Reduced opening hours 24 December 10 am to 2 pm
- 27 December to 31 December open 10 am to 4 pm.

Christmas Events @ Girdwood Community Hub

- Saturday 07 December 10.30 to 12.30 pm. Imagine Peace Barriers Project Cross Community Fun Day.
- Monday 09 December – Christmas Boogie Babies 10.30 to 11.30 & 12.00 to 1 pm. (Fully Booked)
- Wednesday 11 December Christmas Wreath Making 12 to 2 pm (Fully Booked)
- Thursday 12 December 5.30 to 8.30 pm. Let Youth Lead Christmas Event (Created by Young People) – Experience cultural crafts from around the world with Artsekta. Join the North Belfast Mens shed to create a sustainable reuselable decoration for loved ones.

Changing attitudes and experiences

Many thanks for listening

2025/26 Quarter 2 Action Plan Summary Report

Code	Key Priority	Project Summary	Budget	Progress in Quarter 2	Total Q2 allocation
BCC1	All 4 themes – projects will be aligned to relevant theme	**Good Relations Small Grants Prog** Criteria focusing on the 4 T:BUC themes and providing opportunities for organisations across Belfast to engage in activities which promote Good Relations.	**Total: £160,000**	48 projects awarded letters of offer in Q1 continuing to be delivered.	**£0**
BCC2	Cultural expression	**St Patrick's Day Civic Events programme** to embed Good Relations Outcomes into events marking the celebration of Saint Patrick's Day.	**Total: £20,000**	No activity in Q2	**£0**
BCC3	Cultural expression	**Positive Cultural Expression Programme** – to facilitate the positive expression of cultural heritage through the provision of bonfire beacons on the 11th July.	**Total: £40,000**	15 areas supported with Beacons and community events on July 11th. Groups and locations are as follows: - White City Community Centre - Denmark Street Community Centre - Medway Street - Dunmurry Carpark (Auburn Place) - Brown Square - Haig Street/Lord Street Junction - Clara Street, junction at Ravensdale - Grove Street East – Channing Street - Outside Oak Centre, Clarawood Park - Tamar Street – Severn Street - Highspring Avenue, off Blackmountain Grove - Moltke Street – Village green space - Trassey Close – green space - Ainsworth Avenue – end of Ceylon Street - Annadale Embankment	**£40,000** **Total: £40,00**
BCC4	Shared Community	**Civic Engagement and Learning Programme** To develop and deliver a range of programmes of events and training on good relations/diversity issues.	**Total: £20,000**	September Migrant Forum meeting. GR Week Living Library event.	**£330.40** **£3,500** **Total: £3,830.40**

BCC5	Shared Community	**Minority Ethnic Equality and Inclusion Programme** To facilitate partnership working on the inclusion and participation of new communities. This programme will build on this engagement and continue to support initiatives that seek to support the integration and inclusion of all Communities, through good relations related projects as well as supporting advice giving organisations.	**Total: £70,000**	No further allocations in Q2	**Total: £0**
BCC6	Safe Community	**Interface Engagement Programme** Work with a range of internal and external stakeholders to identify strategic projects that will: 1. develop and deliver a city-wide initiative on anti-sectarianism and anti-racism to include other agencies and government 2. support progress towards the softening, transformation and/or removal of interface barriers.	**Total £70,000**	2 projects allocated support: - Suffolk Community Forum - Lanark Way Christmas Market	**£1,522.07** **£5,000** **Total: £6,522.07**
BCC7	Children & Young people	**Shared Education Schools Programme** This initiative will be delivered in partnership with Education Authority and will focus on developing the Pupil Voice in Shared Education Partnerships. 4 Post-Primary Shared Education Partnerships (220 pupils) will be recruited onto the programme. The purpose of the programme is to engage pupils from different communities in a range of Pupil Voice Programmes that seek to explore sensitive and controversial issues through a variety of engagement sessions.	**Total £20,000**	2 elements of this programme will be delivered: 1. Good Relations Week: Shared Education Day in Girdwood on Thursday 16th October providing an opportunity for 20 School leaders to attend and learn about Shared Education, its benefits and how they can interconnect into new Programme being facilitated by PeacePlus. 2. Pupil Voice Event: EA will co-facilitate a Pupil Voice Event in February/March 2026. Politics in Action will be invited to participate in the programme of learning with EA and engage pupils from post-primary settings in conversations relating to sensitive and controversial issues such as racism, hate crime, sectarianism, etc.	**£20,000** **Total: £20,000**

BCC 8	All 4 themes – projects will be aligned to relevant theme	**Strategic Connections and Support Programme** The aim of the Programme is to target resources through a Strategic Connections and Support Programme distributed on a themed basis for localised programmes, events and activities – across the City.	**Total £48,862.20**	Projects allocated support: - Women's Network GR Week event - East Meets West Community Centre Programme - Beacon recognition event - North Belfast Good Relations Week Events - Community Centre staff anti-racism training programme - Recognition event for Good Relations practitioners	**£1,500** **£7,000** **£364.20** **£2,000** **£5,000** **£2,500** **Total: £18,364.20**
			£448,862.20	**Quarter 1 allocation**	**£271,990.67**
			£448,862.20	**Quarter 2 allocation**	**£88,716.67**
			£448,862.20	**Quarter 3 allocation**	
			£448,862.20	**Quarter 4 allocation**	
			£448,862.20	**Total allocation**	**£360,707.34**

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APPLICATION FOR FURTHER FUNDING TO ADDRESS RACIAL TENSIONS / IMPROVE SOCIAL COHESION

TOTAL AMOUNT BID FOR: £27,000

1. Please outline the emerging / existing need in your council area, relating to issues around social / racial cohesion

Belfast is an incredibly diverse city and benefits from ethnic minority communities making important cultural and economic contributions, yet this growing diversity is accompanied by enduring structural inequalities and longstanding patterns of segregation. Recent events in Belfast have highlighted the fragility of intercommunity relations, with a pressing need to strengthen social and racial cohesion across the council area.

PSNI statistics show that Belfast consistently records the highest number of racist incidents and hate crimes in Northern Ireland, reaching a peak with the race riots in Summer 2024. These figures almost certainly underestimate the problem as hate crime remains significantly underreported as demonstrated through anecdotal conversations with support organisations. Alongside these trends, far right and anti – immigration groups have mobilised in a number of disadvantaged neighbourhoods, using social media and public demonstrations to exploit local grievances and disseminate hostile and untrue narratives about migrants and the ethnic minority population. Such activities have now begun to normalise anti migrant rhetoric and inflame community tensions.

The race riots of summer 2024 exposed the depths of these problems and has caused long lasting tensions and fear within the ethnic minority community. Minority owned businesses were attacked and in some cases, destroyed with many residents faced intimidation and harassment. Although political leaders and support organisations responded with public condemnation and action, the riots deepened perceptions of exclusion.

More recently, there have been credible reports of self styled ‘patrols’ and other forms of vigilante activity targeting individuals perceived to be migrants or members of ethnic minority groups. These incidents which are often documented on social media have contributed to an atmosphere of fear and insecurity. Families and business owners from minority backgrounds remain disproportionately exposed to risk, which some feeling compelled to restrict their participation in public life.

Belfast City Council area therefore faces a clear and urgent need for sustained action to promote social and racial cohesion. Strengthening hate crime enforcement, investing in community dialogue, supporting those affected by racist violence and addressing the socioeconomic deprivation are all necessary to rebuild confidence and ensure that all residents can participate fully and safely in the city.

2.

Following an open call for the Community Recovery Fund, Council proposes allocating **£17,205.75** to the next two eligible projects: -

- Refuge Language requested £13,943.75
- Whiterock Children and Family Centre requested £3,262.00
- **Combined total requested: £17,205.75.**

With the remainder of the funds earmarked for a contingency pot to address arising crisis situations - **£9,794.25** therefore totalling the £27,000 made available by TEO.

Refuge Language has developed a targeted project in direct response to the ongoing racial tensions and the 2024 race riots during which both staff and students were directly affected. During the disturbances, classes had to be suspended and it was necessary to arrange emergency transport to ensure that students could still attend critical exams and appointments. The organisation's South Belfast classes, which were located at the centre of the unrest were particularly impacted. To address these challenges, Refuge Language proposes to deliver multiple weekly community conversation classes designed to build trust and foster positive relations between local residents and migrant communities. Volunteers will be recruited to participate in these sessions which will include structured discussion on culture alongside two integration activities aimed at encouraging mutual understanding. Another key component to the project will be to provide training to 120 refugees and asylum seekers, on how to recognise and report hate crime. Delivery will be in partnership with GEMS in South Belfast and 174 Trust in North Belfast, ensuring strong local reach. This initiative represents good value for money by combining existing volunteer capacity with targeted training and community-based dialogue, allowing a relatively modest resource to reach a wide and diverse audience. It aligns closely with the T:BUC strategy by promoting community relations, fostering mutual respect and supporting safer, shared spaces. This programme also complements the BCC Good Relations Action plan through its emphasis on intercultural engagement, practical support for those affected by hate crime and collaborative delivery with well established partners.

Whiterock Children's Centre proposes a community integration programme built around three separate, four week cookery courses that bring together women from host and migrant residents to share skills, recipes and conversation. To remove a common barrier to participation, the centre will provide on site childcare throughout the session. The programme will culminate in a joint celebratory trip that reinforces the relationships formed. By using the centre's existing kitchen facilities and group-based delivery, the initiative achieves strong value for money, relatively modest costs and generates opportunity for cross community interaction and skill sharing while also supporting parents who may be otherwise excluded. The project aligns with T:BUC strategy by creating safe, shared spaces that foster mutual understanding and respect amongst diverse communities. It also complements the BCC Good Relations Action Plan by promoting positive intercultural engagement and strengthening neighbourhood connections through practical, family friendly activities.

The remaining funds will be retained in a dedicated contingency reserve to ensure the Council can respond swiftly and effectively to unforeseen challenges and emergencies. This reserve will not be used for routine expenditure, instead it will be held solely for genuine crisis situations where immediate action is required to safeguard communities or meet urgent community needs. By planning for contingencies in this way, the council can ensure that critical services can be funded in the event of a crisis.

it focuses on supporting local project delivery, achieves value for money and aligns to one or more key aims of the T:BUC Strategy

3. Please outline how the impact of the additional funding on racial / social cohesion will be measured

The impact of the additional funding on racial and social cohesion will be measured through a combination of quantitative indicators, qualitative feedback and long term outcome tracking. These will be tied into the specific objective of each funded programme and will include; baseline and follow up surveys to measure the participants attitudes towards other ethnic or cultural groups, and sense of belonging of those from a minority ethnic background and their perception of safety.

Participation and attendance trackers will be used record the demographics of each participant and repeat participation within a programme. This will indicate how many people are brought together through a programme and whether diverse groups are engaging.

Qualitative evidence will be recorded through structured interviews, focus groups and engagement with council officers.

Hate crime statistics and reports of racially motivated incidents will be monitored with the hope that these will indicates a downward trend as a result of the programmes or alternatively, an increase in confidence to report hate crime.

Long term community indicators will be tracked to analyse trends such as increase in joint projects between host and migrant communities, the representation of ethnic minorities in local committees and in civil life.

This mixed method will provide a robust overview of how the additional funding is helping to strengthen social cohesion and reduce racial tension whilst aligning to the principles of the T:BUC strategy and the BCC Good Relations Action Plan.

PLEASE NOTE

1. Any funding received through this scheme remains subject to the terms and conditions of the DCGRP, as per your existing 2025/26 Letter of Offer.
2. The extra funding **does not require** matched funding.
3. The desire is to see money flow through the council to local groups in their area, where possible.
4. Upon written confirmation of a successful application, councils may commence delivery immediately – Letters of Variance will be drafted in due course.
5. Applications must be submitted by **5pm on 22 Sept 2025**.

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Community Recovery Fund Action Plan – 2025 – 2026

CRF001 Safer Neighbourhood Officer Community Engagement Project

Amount Allocated: £20,000 **Start Date: July 2025** **Completion: March 2026**	**Aims and Objectives** • To support communities affected by the 2024 public disorder by providing direct assistance that safeguards life and property, alleviates suffering, and prevents future unrest, while fostering social trust, inclusion, and cohesion across Belfast. • Deploy Safer Neighbourhood Officers to provide visible reassurance in key areas. • Tackle antisocial behaviour and hate crimes through community engagement and responsive policing. • Support ethnic minority events to build trust and enhance safety. • Promote social cohesion in diverse areas like the Wider University and Lower Ormeau. • Encourage integration through targeted outreach. • Deliver leadership and anti-racism workshops for ethnic minority groups. • Strengthen relationships with Muslim, migrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking communities. • Co-design inclusive community events that foster intercultural understanding.

CRF002 - Integration and Inclusion

Awarded to: Wheelworks **Amount Awarded: £29,400** **Start Date of Project: June 2025** **Completion: March 2026**	• The programme aims to promote diversity awareness, challenge stereotypes and misinformation, and support integration within communities. • It targets teachers, Boards of Governors, community youth leaders, and young people, equipping them with tools to foster inclusion and counter hate. • Key components include training programmes, interactive toolkits, workshops, and youthled initiatives. • The content focuses on understanding prejudice, critical thinking, cultural awareness, hate crime prevention, and relationship-building. Overall, it seeks to build cohesive, informed, and inclusive communities through education and engagement.

CRF003
Belfast City Council Community Centre Programme – Reaching Out

Belfast City Council Community Centre Programme – Reaching Out **Amount Allocated: £30,000** **Start Date: August 2025** **Completion: March 2026**	• Funds have been allocated to the Community Development Department, who are currently planning local neighbourhood projects across both Council-run and independent community centres in Belfast.

CRF004 - Challenging the Narrative

Amount Allocated: £29,800 **Awarded to: Edie Shillue Consulting** **Start Date: August 2025** **Completion: March 2026**	• *Challenging the Narrative: Understanding Migration and Immigration"*, will be delivered by March 2026 for beneficiaries in the Belfast City Council area. • The programmes focus is to educate community leaders, statutory services, educators, and grassroots organisations on migration and immigration, aiming to reduce tensions, challenge hate and stereotypes, and foster integration—particularly in areas affected by hate crime following the July–August 2024 violence. • The project will include a comprehensive training package and a booklet covering migration patterns, asylum journeys, forced migration, and the contributions of immigrants, while addressing trauma, bias, and misinformation.

CRF005 - Expansion of Schools of Sanctuary

Amount Awarded: £20,000 **Awarded to: Schools of Sanctuary – Education Authority** **Start Date: May 2025** **Completion: March 2026**	The project has been awarded and the objective is to expand the number of Schools of Sanctuary in South and North Belfast, particularly in areas affected by recent racist incidents. The project seeks to: • Promote social cohesion by making schools safer and more welcoming for asylum seekers, refugees, and other newcomers. • Support school communities—including leaders, governors, parents, and students—in developing inclusive practices and anti-racism curriculum content. • Foster partnerships between schools and local stakeholders to rebuild social trust and reduce the risk of future disorder. • Provide leadership training and community engagement opportunities to ensure broad participation in the programme. • Deliver family support services, including multilingual drop-in clinics, to assist with integration and community relations.

CRF006 – Belfast City Council, Economic Development - Business Mentoring, Engagement, and Integration Programme

Allocated Amount: £20,000 **Start Date: April 2025** **Completion: March 2026**	• The aim of this initiative is to stimulate enterprise and support business growth in the WULO area through targeted investment from the Community Recovery Fund. • The Enterprise and Business Growth Team seeks to engage the local community, encourage entrepreneurship as a pathway to employment, and provide tailored support to existing businesses. • Objectives include delivering at least three business drop-in sessions, distributing promotional materials, and leveraging existing funded programmes. This approach ensures inclusive access to mentoring, workshops, and business development resources.

CRF007 – WULO
Amount Allocated: £40,000

CRF007 - WULO – LORAG **Engaged Citizens** **Amount Awarded - £15,000** **Start Date: June 2025** **Completion: March 2026**	The *Engaged Citizens* project seeks to enhance community cohesion, restore trust, and promote meaningful integration in the Wider University and Lower Ormeau area of Belfast. It aims to support communities impacted by racist hate crime and public disorder by creating inclusive spaces for dialogue, empowering residents to challenge harmful narratives, and celebrating cultural diversity through creative and participatory engagement. **Aims and Objectives** • Facilitate inclusive conversations on racism, hate speech, and extremism to build mutual understanding and respect among diverse community members. • Train residents to serve as community ambassadors who actively welcome and support newcomers, fostering inclusive and resilient neighbourhoods. • Develop and implement a community-led strategy to identify and counter misinformation and far-right narratives. • Engage participants in a creative programme that highlights cultural identities and culminates in a public exhibition to showcase shared experiences. • Partner with local organisations to ensure the project reflects lived experiences and addresses the needs of both migrant and host communities. • Facilitate co-designed planning sessions to develop sustainable approaches for promoting inclusion and preventing future unrest.

WULO - Forward South **Creating a shared vision through building a Shared Space** **Amount Awarded - £15,000** **Start Date: June 2025** **Completion: March 2026**	**Aims** This project seeks to build community cohesion, inclusion, and resilience in South Belfast in response to recent racist hate crimes and unrest. Forward South Partnership will lead: • Storytelling workshops for children • Community dialogue sessions • Interactive discussions with unionist women on prejudice and misinformation **Objectives** Activities will take place in a new inclusive space, supporting services like the Roma Support Hub and social supermarket. The project will engage minoritised and migrant communities—especially in the Wider University and Lower Ormeau areas—through: • Culturally sensitive programming • Translation and interpretation support • Collaborative planning with local partners The goal is to foster dialogue, counter disinformation, and promote trust, empowerment, and a shared vision for an inclusive South Belfast.
WULO **Programming Fund** **Amount: £10,000**	**Development of Project has commenced – Not allocated**

CRF008b - Focused Consortium Projects
Amount Allocated: £160,000

North Belfast **Greater Shankill Alternatives** **Community Navigator Support Programme** **Amount Awarded: £39,500** **Start Date: June 2025** **Completion Date: March 2026**	**Aims** • Appoint a Community Navigator to connect newcomers with services. • Run diversity and inclusion workshops in schools and communities. • Distribute hate crime safety packs and awareness materials. • Provide training on rights and responsibilities for newcomers and professionals. • Conduct youth outreach during tense periods to promote safety. • Foster ongoing support between host and migrant communities. **Objectives** • Support integration of ethnic minority and migrant communities. • Raise awareness of rights, responsibilities, and services. • Improve safety through hate crime prevention and support. • Strengthen ties with agencies like PSNI, NIHE, and schools. • Reduce tensions through targeted outreach. • Amplify local voices, especially those with lived experience.
South Belfast Application is still pending.	
West Belfast **Blackie River Newcomer Family Liaison Project** **Amount Awarded: £40,000** **Start Date: June 2025** **Completion Date: March 2026**	**Aims** • Support and integrate migrant communities—particularly those affected by the racist hate crime and public disorder in West Belfast during July–August 2024. • Promote social cohesion and rebuild trust between migrant, refugee, asylum-seeking, and host communities in the Greater Falls area. • Prevent future disorder by addressing root causes of tension and misunderstanding through proactive community engagement. **Objectives** • Employ part-time Liaison Officer to engage with newly arrived families.

	• Provide welcome packs with essential local information (e.g., services, bin collection, sports groups). • Act as a point of contact between new families and community/statutory organisations.
East Belfast **East Belfast Alternatives** **Connswater Community Recovery Project** **Amount Awarded: £39,400** **Start Date: June 2025** **Completion Date: March 2026**	**Aims** • Promote dialogue, understanding, and collaboration across communities. • Heal divisions from the 2024 unrest and foster community cohesion. • Encourage shared experiences and mutual respect. • Strengthen ties between host and migrant communities. • Tackle root causes of conflict like racism, inequality, and misinformation. **Objectives** • Engage communities affected by the 2024 unrest, including Muslim, migrant, refugee, asylum, and host groups in East Belfast. • Run community conversation courses on cultural exchange and public services. • Revive the East Belfast Race Relations Network with better planning and representation. • Support emerging leaders from minority ethnic backgrounds. • Use restorative youth programs and joint activities to build empathy. • Offer welfare and housing support clinics. • Host multi-sport sessions to promote integration. • Partner with PSNI for hate crime awareness and trustbuilding. • Organise educational visits across Northern Ireland for cultural learning.

CRF008 – Open Call
Allocated Budget: £160,000
12 Projects Funded

Community Recovery Fund – Open Call	**Project Description**
ACSONI **Amount Awarded: £17,900** **Completion Date: 31 March 2025**	• ACSONI proposes a community-led initiative to address hate crime and rebuild trust following the 2024 public disorder in Belfast. • The project focuses on anti-racism training, leadership development, and the creation of sustainable educational resources. • It will engage with minority ethnic leaders through workshops and advanced training. • A multimedia anti-racism toolkit will be developed for long-term use in schools and community groups. • Training will be CPD-approved and delivered by experts in cultural competence and non-violent communication. • The initiative bridges migrant and host communities to foster empathy, dialogue, and mutual respect. • It aims to reduce future disorder by equipping communities with tools to challenge hate and misinformation. • The project is innovative, sustainable, and rooted in real community needs and feedback.
Annadale Community Centre **Amount Awarded: £18,400** **Completion Date: 31 March 2025**	• The project responds to increased hate speech and division following the 2024 public disorder in South Belfast. • It aims to rebuild social trust and cohesion through inclusive community engagement. • A part-time Community Engagement Officer will be hired to lead outreach and programme delivery. • Activities include leadership training, volunteer management, and inclusive programme design. • Media literacy workshops will target misinformation about migrants and refugees for both youth and adults. • The initiative fosters mutual understanding between host and migrant communities through shared activities. • The goal is to create a safer, more inclusive community where diversity is embraced and respected.
Voicing the Void **Amount Awarded: £19,600** **Completion Date: 31 March 2025**	• The project addresses the aftermath of 2024's public disorder in Belfast, focusing on hate crime, racism, and community division. • It uses trauma-informed restorative storytelling to foster empathy, inclusion, and healing across newcomer and host communities. • Four 10-week storytelling courses will engage 36–40 participants, including refugees, asylum seekers, and local residents. • Participants will earn accredited OCN qualifications and develop leadership, advocacy, and public speaking skills. • Activities include storytelling workshops, resilience training, creative media production, and public events. • Outreach will be delivered through school sessions, community events, and digital campaigns. • The project is co-designed with partners like PBNI, ArtsEkta, Queen's University, and the PSNI. • It promotes integration by empowering marginalised voices and challenging harmful narratives.

	• Public events and media outputs will raise awareness and promote upstanding behaviour against hate.
Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum **<u>Amount Awarded: £11,900</u>** **<u>Completion Date: 31 March 2025</u>**	• The project addresses the needs of minority ethnic residents in North Belfast, particularly in Cliftonville and Lower Oldpark, following the 2024 public disorder. • It aims to reduce hate crime, build trust with statutory services, and promote integration through structured engagement. • Key issues identified include barriers to accessing services, low trust in authorities, and widespread misinformation about Muslim communities. • The programme includes thematic workshops on housing, benefits, education, healthcare, and hate crime reporting, with interpreters and direct agency engagement. • History and myth-busting sessions will challenge stereotypes and foster cross-community understanding. • Accredited hate crime and hate speech training will be delivered to residents and service providers, empowering them as peer leaders. • Visual signposting materials in multiple languages will be coproduced and distributed to improve access to key services. • The project is delivered in partnership with the Northern Ireland Muslim Culture Association (NIMCA), ensuring grassroots involvement. • Activities will be hosted at Cliftonville Community Centre and Girdwood, with a focus on dialogue, inclusion, and cultural awareness.
Upper Andersonstown Community Forum **<u>Amount Awarded: £7,150</u>** **<u>Completion Date: 31 March 2025</u>**	• The project responds to increased hate crime and racial tension in Belfast, particularly targeting the Syrian Muslim community but not (exclusively) after the 2024 public disorder. • It is a partnership with “Happy Life Together N.I.” (HLTNI), a Syrian family support group, to promote integration, safety, and cultural understanding. • The project will provide HLTNI with office space and access to meeting rooms for 9 months at Tullymore Community Centre. • Activities include cultural awareness workshops, Syrian cooking sessions, and discussions on hate crime legislation and Section 75. • A Level 1 OCN-accredited Community Safety Awareness course will be delivered to 10 participants, enhancing their confidence in engaging with statutory services. • Youth and community groups will participate in joint workshops to build relationships and understanding with the Syrian community. • Evaluation will be conducted through surveys and feedback, with political representatives invited to key events to reinforce community support.

Dreamscheme NI **<u>Amount Awarded: £8,160</u>** **<u>Completion Date: 31 March 2025</u>**	• The project targets young people in South Belfast, especially those from Belvoir and Milltown estates, affected by the 2024 public disorder and exhibiting racist attitudes. • It partners with Breda Academy, a diverse school with over 40 nationalities, to support newcomer pupils and foster inclusion. • Activities include one-to-one mentoring, small group workshops, and after-school youth cafés to build empathy and challenge prejudice.

	• The programme addresses social exclusion, bullying, and emotional distress among migrant-background students. • It promotes integration between Protestant/Loyalist youth and newcomers through relationship-based interventions. • Youth leadership is developed through training in communication and project delivery, empowering participants to co-lead sessions. • The project is co-designed with school staff and young people, ensuring responsiveness to real needs and experiences. • Partnerships with community safety officers and youth services ensure alignment with broader anti-hate crime efforts. • The initiative aims to reduce future disorder, rebuild social trust, and create a more inclusive, resilient school and community environment.
NI Food to Go **Amount Awarded: £16,400** **Completion Date: 31 March 2025**	• The project responds to hate crimes targeting migrant-owned food businesses in South Belfast during August 2024, aiming to rebuild trust and cohesion. • It will deliver nine multicultural food and cultural events across Belfast over nine months, starting June 2025. • Events will showcase cuisines, music, and traditions from newcomer communities alongside local Belfast culture. • The programme is coordinated by the NI Food to Go Association, representing 1,200 food businesses, one-third of which are ethnic minority-owned. • Events will be held in both affected areas and neutral city centre venues to promote inclusivity and safety. • The project includes skills development and entrepreneurship support for migrant food businesses, in partnership with Belfast Met and the Council's Enterprise Team. • Activities will feature cookery demos, taster sessions, workshops, and cultural performances linked to Belfast's UNESCO City of Music status. • Communications will be multilingual and community-driven to ensure broad engagement and accessibility.
West Belfast Partnership Board **Amount Awarded: £16,000** **Completion Date: 31 March 2025**	• The project addresses rising racial tensions and hate crimes in West Belfast, particularly affecting newcomer and asylum-seeking families. • It aims to build integration and social cohesion between newcomer and host communities through community-led initiatives. • Activities include co-designed training programmes, a "Community Neighbourhood Guide," and a "Good Neighbour Agreement" tailored to five Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. • The project will engage 50 participants (10 per area) from both minority ethnic and local communities, including youth and emerging leaders. Training topics include cultural awareness, safeguarding, restorative practices, and anti-racism education, with a focus on building leadership and resilience. A three-month community consultation will inform the design of training and guides, ensuring relevance and inclusivity. The project will use workshops, community events, and strategic engagement to dispel myths, reduce fear, and promote mutual understanding. The initiative is designed to leave a lasting legacy by empowering participants to become community champions and role models.

Northern Ireland Somali Association **<u>Amount Awarded: £11,385</u>** **<u>Completion Date: 31 March 2025</u>**	• The project supports refugees and asylum seekers, mainly from Somalia but also from Sudan, Eritrea, Syria, and other communities in Belfast. • It responds to the fear and disruption caused by the 2024 racerelated violence, which led to the suspension of community services and increased anxiety. • The initiative includes 10 workshops covering racism awareness, supporting children, online safety, legal rights, and bystander intervention. • A final cultural community event will bring together migrant and local residents to promote understanding through food and storytelling. • Workshops will be delivered in English, Somali, and Arabic to ensure accessibility and cultural relevance. • The project is community-led and co-designed with members who have lived experience, ensuring it meets real needs. • It aims to empower individuals with practical tools to respond to racism, report hate crimes, and support others. • The programme strengthens intergenerational support by working with both parents and young people.
Market Development Association **<u>Amount Awarded: £16,000</u>** **<u>Completion Date: 31 March 2025</u>**	• The project addresses racial tensions and lack of integration in the Market area of Belfast, where diverse communities live side by side but with limited interaction. • It aims to reduce hate crime and promote social cohesion through two strands: a local multicultural programme and a citywide partnership training initiative. • Strand 1 includes a 6-week multicultural cooking course where participants share traditional meals, fostering dialogue and cultural exchange. • This strand also includes anti-racism and political economy training, encouraging participants to explore racism at personal, cultural, and structural levels. • Strand 2 involves seven partner organisations from across Belfast in an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) course. • The ABCD approach focuses on community strengths and assets, empowering residents to lead inclusive development and challenge discriminatory narratives. • The project is supported by the Belfast Community Research & Innovation Network (BCRIN), which includes partners from diverse neighbourhoods and Queen's University. The initiative promotes sustainability through follow-up mentoring, community leadership development, and the creation of a digital multicultural cookbook. It includes expert facilitation from organisations to support dialogue, training, and practical tools for addressing racism.

Rosario Youth Club **Amount Awarded: £17,268.44** **Completion Date: 31 March 2025**	• The project targets young people aged 14–17 in the Ballynafeigh/Ormeau area, which has a high number of newcomer and minority ethnic residents affected by racism and hate crime. • It aims to reduce future disorder and rebuild social trust through a shared programme of youth work activities focused on inclusion and good relations. • Delivered in partnership with St Malachy's Youth Centre, the programme will engage 24 young people identified as vulnerable to exploitation and involvement in unrest. • Activities include groupwork sessions, cultural celebration events, art creation, pro-social outings, and a residential experience. • Young participants will become community inclusion ambassadors and co-create a community inclusion charter to promote long-term cohesion. • The programme will explore the causes, impact, and consequences of hate crime, racism, and discrimination through structured workshops. • It promotes empathy, critical thinking, and experiential learning to challenge misinformation and encourage understanding across cultures. • Monthly cultural events and art sessions will celebrate diversity and foster positive relationships within the community. • The project includes training in leadership, advocacy, and teamwork, empowering young people to influence peers and contribute to policy.
Féile an Phobail **Amount Awarded: £18,500** **Completion Date: 31 March 2025**	• The project responds to the 2024 public disorder in Belfast by addressing its root causes—social division, racism, and community disconnection—through inclusive, community-led programming. It • aims to rebuild trust and cohesion by engaging children, youth, and the wider community across political, cultural, and religious backgrounds in arts, cultural, sporting, and educational activities. • Key components include community connection workshops, antiracism education campaigns, storytelling and cultural events, and youth exchange programmes to foster empathy and understanding. • A Diversity Ambassadors Programme will train and mentor young people, especially from minority ethnic backgrounds, to become community leaders and role models. • The project includes cultural orientation workshops, mentorship schemes, and collaborative community projects like public art and gardens to promote integration and shared achievement. • It uses innovative methods such as dialogue circles, youth-led debates, and community mapping to explore and challenge hate speech, stereotypes, and misinformation. • Activities are designed to be inclusive and accessible, with continuous feedback and adaptation to ensure relevance and impact across diverse communities.
	• The programme will be delivered in partnership with local schools, community organisations, and stakeholders, ensuring broad engagement and sustainability. • The project's long-term goal is to create a more inclusive, resilient Belfast by empowering communities to celebrate diversity, reduce hate, and build lasting social cohesion.

CRF009 – Hate Crime Hardship Programme

Belfast City Council – PCSP **Amount Allocated: £20,000** **Start Date: July 2025** **Completion: March 2026**	• The initiative's aim is to offer practical support to people who have been victims of hate crime. Working through the Belfast PCSP's Home Security Service, sensitive referral mechanisms are being developed with appropriate organisations, PCSP, PSNI and Bryson to ensure victims are offered support services and practical measures to improve their personal safety at home. • The initiative's aim is to offer practical support to people who have been victims of hate crime. Working through the Belfast PCSP's Home Security Service, sensitive referral mechanisms are being developed with appropriate organisations, PCSP, PSNI and Bryson to ensure victims are offered support services and practical measures to improve their personal safety at home. Groups to be engaged include but not exclusively: • Association Darfur NI • Sudanese Community Association NI • Flowers of Belfast • Happy Women's Group • Belfast City of Sanctuary • NI Somali Association

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Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum
Thursday 16th October 2025

Attendance
Members:
Councillor Michael Long
Councillor Natasha Brennan
Councillor Sarah Bunting
Councillor Brian Smyth
Councillor Ciaran Beattie
Alderman Sonia Copeland
Councillor Séamas de Faoite

Officers:
John Walsh, Chief Executive
Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Strategic Director of Corporate Services
Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance
David Sales, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services
Sinead Grimes, Director of Property & Projects
Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration & Development
John Tully, Director of City & Organisational Strategy
Wendy Langham, Programme Director, Belfast Stories (for Item 2)
Eimear Henry, Strategic Lead, Belfast Stories (for Item 2)
Martin Doherty, Contracts Manager, Belfast Stories (for Item 2)
Kevin Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth & Anti-Poverty (for Item 3)
Joanne Delaney, Portfolio and Programme Coordinator (secretariat)

1. Draft Belfast City Airport Masterplan

The Chief Executive welcomed a deputation from Belfast City Airport which included Matthew Hall, Tim Halley and Michelle Hatfield along with Chris Brown from Brown O' Connor. Members received a presentation on the Belfast City Airport draft Master Plan 2040, which was opened for public consultation on 16 September at Parliament Buildings, Stormont. The deputation outlined the vision for growth over the next 15 years and the detail of the ambitions to improve connectivity and drive economic growth for the city and the region that is included within the draft masterplan. Members discussed the proposed physical and operational changes, passenger forecasts and the potential impact these changes may have in terms of meeting the path to Net Zero, for which clarity was provided. Members also noted the social impact work currently undertaken by the airport and the potential to further support local communities once the master plan is finalised.

The deputation outlined the consultation timeframe and advised that engagement had taken place with communities in South Belfast, East Belfast and North Down. Following the consultation process it is envisaged the final masterplan would be published in early 2026.

It was noted that parties would consider and submit individual party responses to the consultation and that a corporate response would be drafted to cover the areas of Local Development Plan, Environment and Economy.

2. Belfast Stories

The Programme Director and Strategic Lead for Belfast Stories provided a detailed update for Members on the progress achieved to date in relation to the completion of RIBA Design stage 2 and outlined the key programme milestones in RIBA stage 3. The Director outlined the recommendations that would be included in a detailed programme update report to October SP&R which will include the development of an Inclusive Growth Plan, the submission of the planning application and the request to hold Party Group Briefings. The Strategic Lead presented some illustrative concept design visuals and outlined the detail of the proposed stories development programme. There were some issues raised by Members in relation to the stories development programme presented, the Programme Director and Strategic Lead to reflect on the points raised and follow up in advance of SP&R.

Members also noted that the report will include a recommendation for an in principle agreement for additional capital costs subject to legal agreements, the detail of which was noted. An addendum to the Belfast Stories Outline Business Case will be required if approved by SP&R Committee and Members will be kept updated as this work progresses.

3. Supporting Area-based Community Planning and Community Wealth Building

The Head of Inclusive Growth & Anti-Poverty presented for Members a proposed approach to bring forward an area-based approach to community planning across the city which is a key action within the refreshed Belfast Agenda. He referred to the monies set aside as part of the 2025/2026 rates setting process to support this work and outlined the proposal that the funding be allocated on the basis of two interrelated programmes. Members noted the proposed purpose, principles and funding allocation model for the two programmes along with the proposed governance arrangements. Following discussion some issues and points were raised in relation to the proposals presented including governance and decision making arrangements linked to Council and the Head of Inclusive Growth & Anti-Poverty agreed this would be reflected in the report to be submitted to October SP&R Committee for consideration.

It was also noted that Officers engage with the relevant Government Departments in relation to recent funding announcements made for pilot community led development initiatives.

4. Finance Update

The Director of Finance provided a summary of the Medium Term Financial Plan and outlined the work that has been undertaken to date and advised that Departmental estimates and growth proposals have now been submitted for further consideration with efficiencies to follow imminently. A report will be brought to October SP&R outlining the work to date and a high level overview of the proposals that have been submitted. Members also noted that the next Member workshop to explore priorities for the setting of the 2026/27 District Rate aligned to the Corporate Planning process is scheduled for November. Further detail of The growth proposals and efficiencies submitted, following the Director challenge meetings will also be on the agenda for discussion at this workshop.

The Director also provided an update on the tenders for the provision of agency resources which was deferred at September SP&R Committee. He briefed Members on the engagement that had taken place and the actions that had been agreed with Directors which would be incorporated into the report to October SP&R Committee for Members consideration.

5. North Foreshore – Giant's Park Belfast Limited

The Director of Property & Projects updated Members on the Master Development Agreement with Giant's Park Belfast Limited. The Director outlined the original proposals and presented a number of revised proposals to the masterplan at the North Foreshore along with the rationale for the revisions. She outlined that these revisions were allowed for within the scope of the Master Development Agreement. Members noted the significant social and economic benefits as a consequence of the revised proposals and the key next steps. The detail discussed will be included in a report to October SP&R Committee.

6. Planning Update

The Chief Executive updated the Forum on the live planning applications that were considered at the October Planning Committee.

7. AOB

Governance

The City Solicitor briefed Members on Counsel opinion that had been sought and the background to the request for this opinion. A report will be brought to October SP&R Committee for consideration, and it was noted that the report is published in a timely manner to allow Members to further consider.

Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayoral Challenge Competition

The Deputy Chief Executive provided an update on the Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayoral Challenge bid development which is focused on re-imagining the city's alley-ways, ahead of the application deadline on 17 October 2025. Members noted the deadline for submission and that retrospective approval would be sought from November SP&R Committee.

The Chief Executive advised that James Anderson, Bloomberg's Head of Local Government Innovation had recently visited the city and had provided some useful reflections following his visit.

Illuminate Requests

The City Solicitor outlined for Members a number of illuminate requests received. Members noted the following requests would be agreed under the City Solicitors delegated authority.

- **80th Anniversary of the Founding of the United Nations** – 24th October 2025
- **Project Pink Walk –** 5th November 2025

Electric Vehicle Charging Point Network Project

The Director of Property & Projects advised that extensive work had been undertaken to date on potential sites within the Council's estate where electric vehicle charging stations could be installed. The Area Working Groups have been briefed on this programme of work, and it was noted that a report would now be brought to October SP&R Committee outlining the next steps.

Irish landmark Trust

The Director of Property & Projects provided a briefing on the Irish Landmark Trust, an all-island charity working to save and sustain unique built heritage into holiday accommodation. Members agreed to the Director engaging with the charity in relation to exploring funding for vacant council owned heritage assets. The Director agreed to forward further information to Members following the meeting and updated will be provided as this work progresses.

Freedom of the City

The Chief Executive referred to a previous request for Freedom of the City which a Member had asked was raised again with the Forum. It was noted that the process for considering Freedom of the City requests and alternative options on how citizens could be recognised by the council was ongoing.

Special Party Group Leaders's Meeting

Members noted that a special PGL's meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 22 October at 2.00pm, meeting invite to follow.

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STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality
Date:	24 October 2025
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Christopher Burns, Interim Functions and Exhibition Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number ☐

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
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
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	☐
After Council Decision	☐
Sometime in the future	☐
Never	☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? **Yes** ☒ **No** ☐

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	This paper, together with the attached appendix, contains the recommended approach in respect of each of the requests by external organisations for access to the City Hall function

	rooms received up to 10 October 2025.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • Approve the recommendations as set out in Appendix 1.
3.0	**Main report**
	Background Information
3.1	The current criteria for use of the function rooms used to review external applications is set out below.
3.2	Functions permitted • functions which support other events in the city and which are of demonstrable economic benefit to Belfast whether organised by the council or not. • functions which demonstrably enhance the city's image nationally or internationally as a desirable commercial, business or tourist destination. • functions designed to celebrate or commemorate a notable achievement or significant anniversary (25, 50, 100 years) by an organisation or body with close links to the city or province. • functions organised by recognised local community or voluntary sector groups for non-profit and non-political purposes.
3.3	Functions not permitted • conferences, meetings, seminars, performances, wedding receptions, private parties or receptions and similar booking requests in the prestige function rooms. • functions, which have as their principal purpose the generation of commercial gain for the organisers. Charity-fundraising functions are managed by the Lord Mayor's Office. • functions which have no compelling links to the council or the city specifically and which could instead use local private sector facilities. • functions which have as their primary purpose the advancement of any political or religious cause or campaign or are otherwise potentially contentious or involve significant reputation risks for the council. • functions which involve exceptionally large or disruptive set-ups or pose a real and tangible risk to the fabric of the building or grounds.
	Key Issues
3.4	Committee will recall that at its meeting on 24th May 2024, it considered an update on the City Hall Income Generation Project. Committee was advised that charging for the use of the Council's function rooms will be considered as part of a later stage of this project. This will include looking at a review of the current pricing structure and the provision of hospitality.

	Pending this work being brought to Committee, delegated authority was given to the City Solicitor and Director of Legal & Civic Services to depart from the existing charging structure and negotiate room hire charges for commercial type events.
3.5	The standard charging structure will apply to the events listed in the Schedule at Appendix 1 up until the end of the current financial year. Events from April 2026 onwards will not have prices confirmed to organisers until conclusion of current review.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.6	None, any recommendations for hospitality will be met from existing budgets.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.7	None.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 - Schedule of function requests received up to 10 October 2025.

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OCTOBER 2025 CITY HALL FUNCTION APPLICATIONS

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE
Blackie River Centre	17 January 2026	**Level 5 Student Graduation** to celebrate and acknowledge the achievements of adult learners. Award ceremony followed by lunch. Numbers attending – 30	D	Current rate free as charity
European Youth Parliament United Kingdom	3 March 2026	**2026 Northern Ireland Regional Forum of European Youth Parliament UK** sees teams of schools debate pre-written Resolutions providing a platform to express their opinions whilst building new skills Numbers attending – 80	B & D	Current rate free as charity
Memory Stones of Love in partnership with Cruse Bereavement Care NI	8 March 2026	An afternoon of commemoration with stories, poems and music as main regional event for **COVID-19 National Day of Reflection** Numbers attending – 200	D	Current rate free as charity
Ulster Society of Rugby Football Referees	2 May 2026	**75TH Annual Dinner for USRFR** provides an opportunity to invite senior representatives from their fellow associations in Leinster, Munster and Connaught to join with the Ulster Society in celebrating the season and their significant anniversary with dinner, speeches and awards. Numbers attending – 120	C & D	*Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC*
Belfast Pride	17 July 2026	**Belfast Pride 2026 Launch and Awards** annual event with drinks reception, dinner and awards to celebrate the launch of the annual pride festival in Belfast Numbers attending – 320	B & D	*Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC*
European Regions Airline Association Ltd	7 October 2026	**ERA Gala Awards Dinner 2026** brings together the members of the European Regions Airline Association to celebrate the achievements of Regional Airlines operating in Europe with drinks reception, dinner and award ceremony Numbers attending – 375	A & B	*Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC*
2027				
Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship	10 November 2027	**Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship Conference 2027 Welcome Reception** begins their conference which is being staged at the Europa Hotel	A & B	*Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC*

OCTOBER 2025 CITY HALL FUNCTION APPLICATIONS

		Numbers attending - 100		

STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Human Rights Day 2025 – Flag Requests
Date:	24 October 2025
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Christopher Burns, Interim Functions and Exhibition Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number ☐

1. Information relating to any individual
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3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
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
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	☐
After Council Decision	☐
Sometime in the future	☐
Never	☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? **Yes** ☒ **No** ☐

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek the Committee's approval to fly the Human Rights Day flag and the United Nations flag from the City Hall on 10th December to mark Human Rights Day 2025.

2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is requested to approve the flying of the Human Rights Day flag and the United Nations flag from the City Hall on Saturday 10th December 2025.
3.0	**Main report**
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	December 10th marks the anniversary of the ratification of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since 2018, a global campaign has called for civic buildings to mark the day by flying a dedicated flag which was created in partnership with the United Nations and organisations like Amnesty International to celebrate universal human rights.
3.2	Members have each year approved this request since first being received in 2021 and both flags have been subsequently flown from City Hall on 10th December annually.
3.3	The Committee is recommended to approve this request.
3.4	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> None.
3.5	<u>Equality and Good Relations / Rural Needs Implications</u> None.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	None

Cost of Living Working Group

Thursday, 14th October, 2025

MEETING OF THE COST OF LIVING WORKING GROUP

Members present: The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Doherty); and Councillors Bradley, I. McLaughlin and Nelson.

In attendance: Mr. J. Girvan, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services;
Mr. K. Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty;
Ms. N. Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager;
Mr. C. Tubridy, Hardship Programme Coordinator;
Mr. B. Carr, Portfolio Manager; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

Election of Chairperson

Moved by Councillor I. McLaughlin,
Seconded by The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Doherty); and

Resolved – That Councillor Bradley be elected to serve as the Chairperson of the Working Group until the date of the Annual Meeting of the Council in 2026.

(Councillor Bradley in the Chair)

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland and the Director of City and Organisational Strategy.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 4th September, 2025, were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Hardship Programme 2024/25 Update and Budget Position

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty reminded the Working Group that the budget for the Hardship Programme 2024/25 had totalled £1,100,000. Of that amount, £925,672 had so far been allocated across the several thematic areas and 49,604 individuals had received support. It was reported that, as of 7th October, £127,369 had been provided

across the District Electoral Areas in the Schools Programme, with 21,921 pupils having received assistance for the purchase of uniforms, stationery and meals, and other miscellaneous items. The percentage breakdown for the overall Programme expenditure stood at 25 percent allocated to support older people; 17 percent to support individuals/families in emergency need; with 58 percent allocated to families and children and young people.

The Working Group was informed that a sum of £75,000 remained within the budget and that a draft report (copies of which had been circulated to the Working Group) would be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 24th October. The views of Members were sought on how the remaining fund should be allocated to ensure maximum benefit across the city.

After discussion, the Working Group agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it agree that the remaining budget, and any further underspend identified, be allocated and distributed through the Family Support Hubs. It was agreed also that the fund be distributed through the provision of 750 x £100.00 family vouchers to address immediate emergency needs, that is, food or utility costs.

Hardship Programme 2024/25

Arising from discussion, the Working Group noted that the level of funding to support the Hardship Programme in 2025/26 would be reduced significantly unless additional funding was secured.

Anti-Poverty Event – January 2026

The Working Group was reminded that the first Anti-Poverty Networking Event had taken place in the City Hall in October, 2024, at which the Council had launched its Cost of living Support Guide. It was reported that a second networking event would be held in St. Comgall's School, Divis Street, in January 2026, and that invitations and information would be forwarded to Elected Members and a wide range of individuals, community-based groups, organisations and agencies.

Noted.

Social Supermarket Programme 2024/25 - Update

The Neighbourhood Services Manager provided an overview of the current Social Supermarket Programme, which, as of the date of the meeting, had provided support in the sum of £773,320, with £5,577 households and 14,294 individuals receiving assistance.

The Working Group noted that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 19th September, had agreed that an additional £100,000 be allocated for the Social Supermarket Fund and that a report be considered at the October meeting in this regard. In addition, the Committee had agreed to endorse a recommended approach and assessment criteria and granted approval to operate an open call for grant applications to the fund in 2026/27.

After discussion, the Working Group noted the information which had been provided and it was agreed that officers would undertake an audit of the various delivery models

operated by Social Supermarkets across the city, particularly in respect of the signposting services made available, holistic working methods and examples of good practice.

Cost-of-Living Support Guide

The Working Group noted that officers had updated the cost-of-living support guide, which had been launched in October, 2024. The aim of the guide was to signpost residents to support and advice services across the city. The guide, in respect of which 15,000 copies had been printed, would be made available at 150 locations, and that digital versions would be available on the Council's website, which would also have a dedicated section signposting users to the various support organisations.

Chairperson

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