

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 4th November, 2025

MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor R. Brooks (Chairperson);
Alderman Copeland; and
Councillors Abernethy, Black, Bower,
Bradley, Bunting, Canavan, Cobain,
M. Donnelly, R-M Donnelly, Doran, Flynn,
Garrett, Magee, Maghie, Murray, McKeown
and Verner.
- In attendance: Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and
Neighbourhood Services;
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Mr. S. Leonard, Director of Resources, Fleet,
Open Spaces and Streetscene;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of City and Neighbourhood
Services; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

There were no apologies reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 7th October were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd November.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Flynn declared an interest under the item 'Request from Commonwealth Games Northern Ireland', in that he was a member of Archery Great Britain and Archery Northern Ireland. Councillor McKeown declared an interest in the item 'Healthwise and Physical Activity Referral Programme', in that his employer was one of the funders of the programme.

Since the aforesaid items did not become the subject of discussion nor debate, the Members were not required to leave the meeting whilst the matters were under consideration.

Correspondence re: Annadale Embankment Pedestrian Crossing to Lagan Gateway

At its meeting on 6th August, the Committee had agreed to write to the Minister for Infrastructure, Liz Kimmins, MLA, and to her department's Active Travel Unit, to request that consideration be given to installing a pedestrian crossing between the Annadale

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Embankment and the Lagan Gateway. It was reported a response had been received on behalf of the Minister and the Active Travel Unit which had indicated that there were no existing plans to provide a crossing at the site since it was not considered to be a priority.

Noted.

Schedule of Meetings 2026

The Committee approved the following schedule of meetings for 2026, all to commence at 5.15pm:

Tuesday 13th January	July – no meeting
Tuesday 10th February	Tuesday 11th August
Wednesday 4th March	Tuesday 8th September
Tuesday 14th April	Tuesday 6th October
Tuesday 12th May	Tuesday 10th November
Tuesday 9th June	Tuesday 8th December

Restricted

Request for the use of Ormeau Park - Belsonic

The Committee was informed that an application had been received to host the 'Belsonic' event in the Ormeau Park in June of 2026, 2027 and 2028, with permission sought for up to a maximum ten concerts per year.

The Committee granted authority for the hosting the events as requested, subject to the applicants meeting with, and adhering to, all of the stipulations as set out within the report.

**Greenwich Leisure Limited –
Contract Compliance and Performance**

The Committee noted the contents of a report in the above-mentioned matter. Arising from discussion, it was noted that a report would be submitted in due course that would provide an overview of the proposed capital investment that the Council intended to make in the upgrade of a number of sites across the leisure estate, with particular reference to the Shankill Leisure Centre.

**Healthwise and Physical Activity
Referral Programme**

The Committee noted the contents of a report in the above-mentioned matter.

Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the above-mentioned Working Group which had been held on 8th October.

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Appointment of a Public Analyst

The Director of City Services reminded the Committee that, under Article 27 (1) of the Food Safety (NI) Order 1991, the Council was required to appoint a suitably-qualified individual as a public analyst for the purpose of examining and analysing food samples to determine compliance with food safety, compositional and labelling requirements.

Accordingly, the Committee approved the appointment of an individual, as recommended within the report, and agreed that the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services be granted delegated authority to approve any future appointments in this regard.

Matters referred from the Council/Notices of Motions

Notice of Motion - Imagination Library

(Councillor de Faoite attended in connection with this matter.)

At its meeting on 6th December, 2022, the Committee had adopted a motion in respect of the above-mentioned matter. Furthermore, at the meeting on 29th January, 2025, the Committee had agreed that a sum of £10,000 be allocated to support a project, to be delivered in conjunction with the 'Dollywood Foundation', to provide age-appropriate reading materials to the first 75 new-born babies registered at the Registration Office in the City Hall from 1st October, 2025. The Committee noted that all of the places within the scheme had been allocated within four days and that the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor had hosted a celebration event on 23rd October to mark the success of the initiative.

The Committee welcomed the success of the initiative and agreed that the motion would remain open and that an expression of interest form be made available on the Council's website should parents wish their children to be considered within a future scheme, subject to the securing of additional funding.

Committee/Strategic Issues

People and Communities Committee Plan

The Committee noted the contents of a report in the above-mentioned matter.

Partnership Liaison Officer

The Director of City Services reminded the Committee that, since 2010, a financial part-contribution had been provided to support the provision of a Partnership Liaison Officer whose role was to undertake collaborative work on behalf of the Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland with councils across Northern Ireland. It was reported that correspondence had been received seeking to extend the remit of the post for a further two-years, the cost of which would be approximately £7,000, per annum, to the Council.

The Committee approved the Council's continued contribution towards the funding of the post until the end of the financial year 2027/28. In addition, the Committee agreed

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that the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services be granted delegated authority to approve any future contributions, if deemed appropriate, after 2027/28.

Lagan Valley Regional Park

The Committee agreed to grant funding in the sum of £88,000 to the Lagan Valley Regional Park (LVRP) for the 2025/26 financial year, provision for which had been included within the department's revenue budget. The Committee noted that an inflationary-linked award could not be made in 2025/26, since no additional in-year budget existed.

The Committee noted further that an options' funding paper had been submitted for consideration by LVRP and officers would, in the interim period, continue to liaise with representatives of that organisation and to signpost them to other funding opportunities.

Operational Issues

Belfast Boxing Strategy 2025/26

The Committee noted the contents of the six-monthly update report in relation to the above-mentioned strategy.

During discussion, a Member referred to the findings of a recently-published report by the Equality Commission Northern Ireland relating to discrimination within amateur boxing in Northern Ireland. That report had made several recommendations to the Irish Amateur Boxing Association and the Ulster Boxing Council, which were partners in the delivery of the Council's strategy. It was proposed and seconded that, until formal assurances had been received that the Equality Commission's recommendations had been implemented by the aforesaid bodies, the Council should withhold any further funding linked to the strategy. In response, a Member pointed out that it would be prudent to seek legal advice prior to considering such a course of action. It was suggested that the matter be referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for clarity and legal opinion.

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the proposal with a view that legal advice be provided at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 21st November.

**Commonwealth Games NI –
Request for Financial Support**

The Committee considered a request from Commonwealth Games Northern Ireland for financial assistance to help support the team competing in the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

The Committee agreed that a contribution of £10,000 be made for the purpose outlined.

Stadia Community Benefits Initiative

The Committee noted the contents of a report in the above-mentioned matter regarding the progress achieved to date in the initiative. It was agreed that an invitation be extended to representatives of the Irish Football Association to present an overview of the present grounds' criteria applied to clubs seeking to progress within local league structures.

'School Streets' - Air Quality Monitoring Report

The Committee considered a report in the above-mentioned matter.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that the Council officers would convene a meeting with representatives of Sustrans, the Department of Education, the Education Authority, the Department for Infrastructure and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (to which interested Elected Members would be invited) to apprise them of the results of the project and to seek support for the retention of the existing 'school streets' air quality monitors and/or their relocation to other schools as deemed appropriate.

Resources and Fleet Waste – Update

The Committee considered a report in the above-mentioned matter which included, amongst other things, an update on the introduction of the 'Bin Safety Campaign', which had commenced in early-August. The section of the report in that regard is set out below:

On Monday 4 August 2025, the campaign started with amber tagging (bedding in period) for 8 weeks. Collections continued as normal (i.e. overfilled bins and bins with liners were still collected) with amber warning tags placed on bins and reported by crews. Resource Advisor Teams were on the ground raising awareness.

Whilst the Report it App (RIA) was initially to be used to report and gather data on tag use and areas/rounds where the issues are more pronounced, that approach encountered operational challenges including the fact that many of the containers presented for collection do not have an identifiable address. RIA was used for non-collection instances, but amber tag usage was instead summarised based on crews reporting the number of tags issued.

For the amber period the number of tags issued over the course of the eight weeks. The percentage of collected bins which were tagged during the period was less than 2% overall.

Monday 29 September 2025, saw the commencement of the red tag phase - collecting to policy. Overfilled containers have been tagged, not collected, and instances reported through RIA. Temporary, additional, Special Collection Teams (SCTs), Resource Advisors, OSS staff and Enforcement Officers are now deployed in the targeting of areas that remain persistently non-compliant with policy.

Additional Resource Advisors have been deployed since Monday 21st July. In terms of direct communications, they covered 1,650 streets, equating to 58,000 households with each household receiving communications regarding the campaign, centred around bin safety and recycling. These temporary Resource Advisors will be maintained throughout the bin safety campaign and also to deal with some business-as-usual issues which have been highlighted during the course of the campaign and outlined below.

A temporary collections resource has been established in the form of Special Collection Teams (SCT) to support the campaign and deal with cases where the issuing of a red tag has been caused by an operational issues e.g. vehicle breakdown, rather than excess waste presented by the resident. In such instances, a crew will be dispatched to remove excess waste from the bin in order for it to be collected. From 29 Sept – 24 October (two full collection cycles) the SCT was deployed on 71 occasions. The requirement for this resource will be monitored as the campaign progresses.

The campaign has magnified some of the business-as-usual issues at certain collection sites and areas e.g. overfilled euro bins and lidless/damaged euro bins at apartments. These issues are relatively small in number and being noted in the issues log and managed on an individual case basis by the Service.

The communications and engagement on the ground is having an impact. Resource Advisor visits to conduct assessments for additional bins increased significantly as have orders for containers. For example, in the seven weeks leading up to the start of the bin safety campaign, the average number of recycling box orders per week was around 240 units. In the twelve weeks since the start of the campaign this has risen to around 418 units per week. Increases in orders and requests for service suggest a positive trend around better recycling messaging and hopefully in due course this will translate into increased recycling tonnages.

In total, 1,484 red tags were issued during the first two full collection cycles (4 weeks). Table 2, Red Phase Key Metrics, provides further breakdown of this figure. Issues to highlight are:

- non-collection due to bin liners is a relatively minor issue in terms of number of cases reported.
- the percentage of red-tagged bins to overall bins collected, is around 0.5%.
- only 37 bins received their second consecutive red tag after the first two, full collection cycles.

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The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that a report be submitted for consideration that would outline, within the context of the revised bins' collection policy, the process and timescale set out for declaring an unemptied bin 'abandoned' and that the Council would liaise with housing management companies and other affected agencies and bodies in this matter.

Request for the Use of Boucher Road Playing Fields

The Committee considered two requests which had received for the hosting of circus events at the Boucher Road Playing Fields over the Easter periods in 2026, 2027 and 2028.

The Committee approved the hosting of a circus event in the playing fields over the Easter period in 2026. However, given the possible implications of any new Council Pitches' Strategy, it was agreed that the hosting of the events in 2027 and 2028 be considered on a year-by-year basis.

Management of Invasive Species

Further to a request which had been made at the meeting on 9th September, the Committee noted the contents of a report in relation to the Council's management of invasive plant species, particularly Himalayan Balsam, and the opportunities that might be afforded in involving local communities to assist in work of this nature at a future date.

Proposals for Dual Language Street Signs

The Committee agreed to the erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at Brookhill Avenue, Whitehall Parade, Cricklewood Park, Old Bakers Court, Ashton Avenue and Azalea Gardens.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Environmental Health Service - Staffing and Capacity

At the request of the Chairperson, the Committee agreed that a report be submitted for consideration that would outline the current staffing and capacity levels relating to Environmental Health Officers, particularly regarding roles associated with responding to planning consultations; and that the report would include reference also to the role of the Building Control Service in enforcement matters.

Leaf Clearance from Roads and Pavements

Councillor McKeown referred to the recent flooding which had occurred throughout the City and which had been exacerbated by a build-up of autumn leaves. He indicated that there existed a level of uncertainty as to which organisation, that being, the Council or the Department for Infrastructure, was responsible for the clearing of leaf litter, particularly during the autumn period.

Several Members concurred with the comments made and, after discussion, the Committee agreed that officers would seek to establish – and/or obtain legal clarity - as to

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where the legal responsibility lay (be that with the Council or the Department for Infrastructure) for the clearing of leaves from roads and pavements across the City.

Pedestrian Crossing at Knockbreda Road

At the request of Councillor Abernethy, the Committee agreed that officers would liaise with representatives of the Department of Infrastructure and provide an update on the projected commencement date for work on the pedestrian crossing at the above-mentioned location.

Donegall Pass Community Association

The Committee agreed to receive, at the request of the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, a deputation from the Donegall Pass Residents Association on 2nd December to outline a range of issues regarding the Reverend Robert Bradford Memorial Playground.

Last Meeting

Councillor R. Brooks referred to the fact that it was her last monthly meeting in her position as Chairperson. She thanked Members and officers for their help and assistance throughout her tenure. A number of Members thanked Councillor R. Brooks for the manner in which she conducted the business of the Committee throughout her period as Chairperson.

Chairperson