

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 21st November, 2025

HYBRID MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor Brennan (Chairperson);
Councillors Beattie, Black, Bunting, Cobain,
de Faoite, R-M Donnelly, Ferguson, Garrett,
Long, Maghie, McDonough-Brown, I. McLaughlin,
R. McLaughlin, Murphy, Nelson, Ó Néill,
Smyth and Whyte.
- In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director
of Corporate Services;
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. E. McConville, Director of Communications, Marketing
and External Affairs;
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Ms. W. Langham, Programme Director (Belfast Stories);
Ms. E. Henry, Creative and Strategic Lead (Belfast
Stories);
Ms. L-A O'Donnell, Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism;
Ms. K. Mullan, Fleadh Cheoil - Operations Lead;
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance
Coordinator.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Alderman McCoubrey.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 24th October were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd November, 2025, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of

which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee, and subject to the amendments of the minutes under the following headings:

Requests for Funding

The Council agreed that there would be a one-week expression of interest for winter programmes including project details forms which would be released for North, South, East and West Belfast;

Human Rights Day 2025 - Flag Requests

The Council agreed that the minute under the heading “Human Rights Day 2025 - Flag Requests” be amended to also provide that, in recognition of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, that the Council would erect the National Flag of Palestine above the City Hall on 29th November, 2025;

Belfast Stories Update

That the decision be amended to provide that the Council approves the recommendations (points 1-7) as outlined in the report and that recommendations 8-9 be referred back to the next Committee for further discussion, supported by additional information in relation to potential additional market demand for the use of a media production studio;

Correspondence - Translink – Belfast Grand Central Station Update

The Council agreed to write to the Belfast Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), the Belfast and Northern Ireland Chambers of Commerce and the hospitality sector’s Trade Unions to ask them to join with the Council in requesting that Translink lowers its bus fares over the Christmas period to encourage more footfall in the city centre and to lower traffic congestion;

EV Update - EV Charging Network on Council sites and Depot Charging Scheme

The Council agreed that the minute be amended to provide that the Council agrees that officers begin the tender process based on a Concession Operating model as outlined in the report and defers consideration of the specific locations of the proposed Phase One sites so that a broader list could be submitted to the Committee; and

Supporting Area-based Community Planning and Community Wealth Building

The Council agreed that the recommendations would go straight to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for its consideration, removing the requirement for Area Working Groups to consider them initially.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor R-M. Donnelly declared an interest under item 8. (a) Minutes of Shared City Partnership, in so far as it related to PEACEPLUS in that she worked for an organisation which was funded under the Programme. As the item did not become the subject of debate, she was not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor de Faoite declared an interest under item 5.e) Planning Information, in that he was on the Board of Governors of Forge Integrated Primary School. As the item did not become the subject of debate, he was not required to leave the meeting.

In relation to Item 5. (d). Update on Hardship Programme, Councillor Beattie declared an interest associated with a group/organisation which had applied for or received funding and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councillor Ferguson declared an interest regarding 9. (b) Requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality, in so far as he had assisted with the Cregagh Wanderers Football Club application, which was being recommended for the use of the City Hall. As the item did not become the subject of debate, he was not required to leave the meeting.

In relation to Item 3. (a) Motion - Together: Building a United Community Strategy and 5. (h) Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, Councillor R. McLaughlin declared an interest in that his partner was a Minister in the NI Executive and left the meeting whilst the items were under consideration.

Councillor Long declared an interest under item 3. (a) Motion - Together: Building a United Community Strategy, in that his wife was the Justice Minister and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following ten items is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following ten items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

The Members were advised that the content of ‘restricted’ reports and any discussion which takes place during closed session must be treated as ‘confidential information’ and no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann

The Committee was provided with an update on the planning to support the hosting of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Belfast in August 2026.

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting, Mr. A. McQuillan, Traffic Management Company, to the meeting. She advised that he was attending the meeting to answer any operational questions the Committee might have.

During discussion, Members highlighted the need for: accessible/blue badge parking; a pilot residents' parking scheme for the duration of the event; community and member engagement, in particular with the Department for Infrastructure; and international marketing.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the detailed update on venues and ground footprint;
- Approved the approach to submit a major events order to Department for Communities;
- Approved the request for permission to enter into land agreements;
- Noted the update in relation to communications and engagement;
- Approved proposals for addendum to Ards CCE funding agreement; and
- Noted that the issues raised by Members in relation to accessible parking, a pilot residents' parking scheme, community and member engagement with the Department for Infrastructure, and international marketing would be investigated.

Belfast Stories Update

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in November, the Council had agreed that the decision of the Committee of 24th October be amended to provide that the Council approved the recommendations (points 1-7) as outlined within the report and that the following recommendations (points 8 – 9), be referred back to the next meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for further discussion, supported by additional information in relation to potential additional market demand for the use of a media production studio:

- to undertake design development to include enhanced studio provision (Media Production Studio) in the planning application for the Belfast Stories scheme and to complete an addendum to the Outline Business Case to include the Media Production Studio; and

- to the financing of the additional capital costs associated with the Media Production Studio as set out at 3.31, subject to legal agreements and the approval by Council and the Department for Economy of an addendum to the Belfast Stories Outline Business Case.

Subsequently, the Programme Director (Belfast Stories) and Creative and Strategic Lead (Belfast Stories) presented an update on the further engagement that had taken place on the potential to include an enhanced studio/event space in the Belfast Stories scheme and the findings of an independent report on the opportunity presented by an enhanced studio/event space and mix of uses.

Proposal 1

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin

That the Committee agrees to cease the design development of the enhanced studio and event space provision (including use as a Media Production Studio) for the Belfast Stories scheme.

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

Proposal 2

Moved by Councillor Maghie,
Seconded by Councillor Nelson and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendations as outlined in the report.

Accordingly, the Committee:

1. Agreed to proceed with design development to include an enhanced studio and event space provision (including use as a Media Production Studio) in the planning application for the Belfast Stories scheme;
2. Agreed to complete an addendum to the Outline Business Case to further assess the viability of an enhanced studio and events space to inform a final decision by Council; and
3. Agreed, in principle, to the financing of the additional capital costs associated with the enhanced studio and events space subject to legal agreements and the approval by Council and the Department for Economy of an addendum to the Belfast Stories Outline Business Case.

2025-26 Quarter 2 Finance Report

The Director of Finance presented the Quarter 2 financial position, including the year-end forecast for 2025/26. The Quarter 2 Finance and Treasury Management reports had been included as appendices to the report.

The Committee:

- Noted the Quarter 2 financial position and year end forecast (Appendix 1);
- Noted the Quarter 2 Treasury Management report (Appendix 2);
- Agreed to use of remaining EPR monies, £6.2m, to fund Waste Collection Vehicles;
- Agreed to a specified reserve for unspent Leisure (£2m) and Pitches (£1.5m) capital financing in 2025/26;
- Agreed to creation of a parks improvement programme of £750k; and
- Agreed that an evaluation report be submitted to the Committee in December in relation to the 2025 Summer Diversionary Funding.

Revenue Estimates 2026/27 and Medium-Term Financial Planning

The Committee considered an update on the key issues influencing the rate setting process for 2026/27 and the development of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan for 2026/27 - 2029/30.

The Committee:

- Noted the challenges since the last update to be taken into consideration as part of the annual and medium-term rate setting;
- Agreed to monthly rate update reports to enable the striking of the district rate by February 2026; and
- Noted a further workshop would be held in January 2026.

Update on Standing Orders

The City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services presented the proposed amendments to Standing Orders as outlined in the report.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Bunting,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson,

That the Committee agrees not to proceed with the changes to Standing Orders as outlined in the report.

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

The Committee agreed to the proposed amendments to Standing Orders, as outlined in the report, which provided clarity in relation to the process for reconsidering decisions which had been subject to call-in.

Vacant to Vibrant Programme

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the Vacant to Vibrant Programme and sought approval for a Council contribution to the proposed extension to the Vacant to Vibrant City-Wide Scheme.

The Committee:

- Noted the update on the Vacant to Vibrant Programme and the current approvals for the extension of the Vacant to Vibrant City-Wide scheme, including the offer of funding from the Department for Communities; and
- Agreed the Council's contribution to the proposed extension to the Vacant to Vibrant City-Wide Scheme.

Asset Management - Gasworks

The Committee:

- I. **Plot 15 Gasworks Estate** – approved the disposal of the Headlease in return for payment of a premium of £725,000, subject to the successful outcome of the current tenant's auction process for the building; and
- II. Agreed, in principle, that, subject to the successful outcome aforementioned auction process, the premium secured be allocated to the following Capital Projects:
 - £600,000 to the refurbishment of the Assembly Rooms
 - £25,000 to the proposed Knowledge Hub led by QCAP
 - £50,000 to Riddel's Warehouse
 - £50,000 to Friar's Bush Cemetery

- III. Noted the additional requests for local groups to also be considered for other funding streams/support such as MSCNI, Mornington Community Project and Ormeau Park Bowling Greens.

UK Pipe Band Championships

The Committee was advised that an application had been received from the Ulster Scots Agency to host the 2026 UK Pipe Band Championships at Grove Playing Fields, Belfast in June 2026.

The Committee:

- a) Agreed to the request to support the application to host the 2026 UK Pipe Band Championships by permitting the use of Grove Playing Fields in June 2026, subject to all necessary due diligence and completion of the necessary licence agreements etc; and
- b) Agreed to provide a financial contribution towards the costs of delivering the event in the sum of £30,000.

Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy

The Committee considered the draft Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy as outlined in Appendix one of the report.

The Committee:

- Noted the contents of the report; and
- Agreed to adopt the draft Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy.

Sponsorship

The Committee considered a report in relation to a corporate and cross-departmental Sponsorship and Advertising Income Generation Pilot.

During discussion, the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services advised that Members' comments in relation to St. Patrick's Day sponsorship, the ethical procurement policy, naming rights and sponsorship of Council assets, the wording of the review report, and engagement with local businesses would be considered.

After discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

**Motion - Together: Building a
United Community Strategy**

The Committee was advised that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 23rd October, referred the following motion to the Committee for consideration, which had been proposed by Councillor Nelson and seconded by the High Sheriff, Councillor McAteer:

'This Council recognises the commitment laid out in the Together: Building a United Community' (T:BUC) Strategy to remove all Interface structures by 2023. Recognises that a failure to remove the interface barrier in Alexandra Park would be a missed opportunity and commits to developing plans to ensure the complete removal of the interface structure as part of the Reconnecting Waterworks and Alexandra Park project.

That a report is submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee detailing plans for the removal, alongside a programme of work with local stakeholders to establish support required to assist with the transition, including local detached youth and community relations provision, coinciding with significant investment in the park.

That Belfast City Council engages with key stakeholders, including the Department of Justice Interface Programme, to identify any resources that can assist with the removal of the interface barrier.'

Councillor Murphy proposed additional wording (highlighted in bold) and the proposer accepted the amendment. The motion, as amended, therefore read:

'This Council recognises the commitment laid out in the Together: Building a United Community' (T:BUC) Strategy to remove all Interface structures by 2023. Recognises that a failure to remove the interface barrier in Alexandra Park would be a missed opportunity and commits to developing plans to ensure the complete removal of the interface structure as part of the Reconnecting Waterworks and Alexandra Park Project.

That this Council prioritises the concerns of surrounding residents in this regard as per the T:BUC strategy in that "the removal of barriers cannot proceed unless local resident's views, perceptions and consent are sought.

That a report is submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee detailing plans regarding Alexandra Park Wall removal, in the context of the above over-arching priority, which will include plans for local stakeholder and resident engagement, including relevant statutory agencies, local detached youth and community relations organisations.

This Council also recognises the acute sporting pitch provision need in this area of Belfast and determines to ensure that the report to SP&R reflects this as an opportunity to address that need in an overall process of investment and wall-removal.

That this Council agrees that the SP&R report should include detail regarding accompanying significant investment in the park.

That Belfast City Council engages with the above stakeholders and refer to all past internal BCC reports re Alexandra Park, especially concerning the interface barrier, so as to explore all strategies and potential resources that can assist with the removal of the Alexandra Park interface barrier.'

During discussion, several Member's highlighted that community engagement was integral to the process.

After discussion, the Committee:

- noted that in accordance with Standing Order 13(i) that Notices of Motion which commit the Council to expenditure must be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and report;
- agreed the amended motion: and
- noted that a subsequent report would be brought to Committee outlining a detailed consideration of the Notice of Motion and the potential implications including any implications in respect of the letter of offer for the project.

Motion - Parents' Attendance Records at Council

The Committee was advised that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 23rd October, referred the following motion to the Committee for consideration, which had been proposed by Councillor Maghie and seconded by Councillor Abernethy:

"That this Council, recognising the important contribution of parents to politics, will investigate ways in which new parents' attendance records reflect the fact that they may have missed meetings due to maternity or paternity for the first six months after having a baby."

The Committee:

- noted that in accordance with Standing Order 13(i) that Notices of Motion which commit the Council to expenditure must be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and report; and

- agreed that a subsequent report would be brought to Committee outlining a detailed consideration of the Notice of Motion and the potential costs implications.

Governance

Committee Schedule 2026

The Committee approved the following schedule of meetings for the period from January to December, 2026:

- Friday, 16th January at 9.30 a.m. (Rate setting, if required)
- Friday, 23rd January at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday, 20th February at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday, 20th March at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday, 24th April at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday, 22nd May at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday, 19th June at 9.30 a.m.
- No monthly meeting in July
- Friday, 21st August at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday, 18th September at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday, 23rd October at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday, 20th November at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday, 18th December at 9.30 a.m.

The Committee also agreed to the holding of additional special meetings, if required, to consider the rate-setting process, on dates to be determined in consultation with the Chairperson.

Change of Date of Council Meeting in January and Schedule of Meetings 2026

The Committee agreed to move the Council meeting in January from Monday, 5th January to Thursday, 8th January, 2026.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Draft Amenity Bye Laws

The City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services presented the following report for consideration:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- update Members on the results of formal public consultation on draft byelaws for the city centre and further engagement,
- provide Members with revised draft byelaws for approval

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that Members:

- note the contents of this report and appendices
- approve the revised draft byelaws

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

Members will be aware of ongoing issues caused by noise and the display of graphic imagery in the city centre and the negative effect that this can have on social and economic activity. This primarily impacts the primary retail core but also extends more widely to those who work, live in and visit Belfast.

The Council is empowered to draft byelaws under Part VI of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 (the ‘Act’) and in the absence of primary legislation to enforce such a nuisance, officers agreed to draft byelaws to address these issues.

On 26 June 2023, Committee agreed to authorise officers to begin the formal public consultation process on a set of draft byelaws. This followed formal consultation and engagement with the Department for Communities and receipt of a legal opinion that addressed issues on human rights considerations that were raised by DfC.

3.2 Consultation and Engagement

A public consultation was launched on 27 November 2023 on the Council’s online engagement platform YourSay Belfast. The consultation ran for a period of 14 weeks and ended on 4 March 2024.

At the request of Elected Members, further workshops were held with stakeholders in May 2025.

Party briefings have been carried out in the past few months.

This report will give Members a high-level summary of the results of the public consultation and the workshops.

The proposed draft byelaws are attached to this report as Appendix 1 and the detailed Consultation Report is attached as Appendix 2.

3.3 Consultation Format

The online survey contained a series of questions designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative information in relation to the following areas:

- Extent of agreement or disagreement with the introduction of a rules and regulations around the use of amplification devices and the display of promotional material (including graphic imagery) in the city centre
- Level of usage of amplification and display of promotional material (including graphic imagery) in the city centre and for which purposes
- Experience of the use of amplification and display of promotional material (including graphic imagery) in the city centre (positive, neutral or negative)
- Extent of agreement or disagreement with the introduction of a permit scheme around the use of amplification devices and promotional literature (including graphic imagery) in the city centre
- Extent of agreement or disagreement with standard conditions for a permit as listed in the draft byelaws
- Extent of agreement or disagreement with the proposal that the Council may designate areas in which specific types of instruments or amplification is prohibited

Respondents were asked to declare their interest in Belfast in terms of whether they lived, worked, studied in Belfast, if they were a business owner in Belfast or a visitor. Respondents were also asked for feedback on equality of opportunity or good relations issues that they thought should be considered by the Council in relation to the draft byelaws.

Standard monitoring questions for the categories of age, gender, community background, ethnic origin, disability and dependency status were asked for the purpose of capturing

data in relation to the Council's obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Just under three-quarters of respondents indicated that they would be happy to answer these questions.

3.4 Further Engagement

At Members' requests, two further workshops with a range of stakeholders were held on 12 and 14 May 2025.

These sessions were facilitated by an independent consultant and were attended by Elected Members from the DUP, the UUP, the Alliance Party, the Green Party and the TUV as well as representatives from the following organisations: The Committee on the Administration of Justice; Belfast Chamber; Linen Quarter BID; Crown Jesus Ministries; Socialist Party NI; TUV; PSNI; Belfast One and the Free Presbyterian Church.

These sessions provided useful feedback, with general consensus being reached that there is nuisance created by amplified noise in the city centre.

3.5 Consultation results and analysis

There was a total of 3,571 responses to the survey, with a combined total of 14,878 written comments.

There was an extremely high level of engagement from varied sections of the public, who had a wide range of backgrounds, perspectives and opinions.

Many of the written responses were nuanced, thoughtful, detailed, reasoned and complex. They provide a rich source of data in terms of how the city centre is experienced by individuals and groups from a wide range of backgrounds. Respondents stated in detail how amplified noise and /or the content of that amplified noise, as well as the display of graphic imagery have affected them personally, whether positively, negatively or both.

An overriding theme amongst respondents' written answers is the importance that is attached to the (qualified) human rights afforded by the European Convention on Human Rights. The Consultation Report explores other themes in responses in more depth.

Written submissions were received from a diverse selection of interested groups and organisations as follows:

- Belfast & District Trades Union Council
- The Committee on the Administration of Justice
- HRe NI
- Free Presbyterian Church
- Northern Ireland Committee – Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- NIPSA
- UNISON NI
- Rainbow Project
- Socialist Party
- Traditional Unionist Voice
- WRDA
- A joint response from People Before Profit on behalf of a range of political parties, activist groups, art collectives, and other organisations

A summary of these submissions is included as Appendix 3 to the Consultation Report.

A total of 36 hard copy responses were received, which all expressed disagreement with the draft byelaws.

High-level quantitative results from the public survey in the form of pie charts and bar charts are attached to this report as Appendix 3.

3.6 Summary of Content of Draft Byelaws

The draft byelaws that were published for public consultation aimed to strike the balance between freedom of expression and the need to tackle the nuisance that can result when multiple individuals or organisations come together in busy pedestrian areas to share their views, ideas or performances, often using amplification devices.

The draft byelaws contained a requirement for a permit for anyone wishing to use an amplification device in the city centre, including the primary retail core. This related to any situation where on-street amplification is used, such as busking, preaching and outdoor performances. The same rules applied for anyone wishing to place a stand, stall or vehicle carrying any form of promotional literature or other information, regardless of its purpose. This would include displays of graphic imagery.

The draft byelaws further provided that a modest annual fee (to be determined) would be charged to cover the costs of administering the permit scheme.

3.7 Proposed Changes to Draft Byelaws Following Consultation

Permits

Feedback from the public survey and further engagement has indicated that whilst most respondents are in favour of regulating amplification in the city centre, a permit system is not considered to be the optimal way to achieve such regulation.

Reasons for disagreement with a permit system ranged from concerns around any fee to be charged, potential interference with freedom of expression and the ability to undertake spontaneous performances, and the administration and enforcement of such a scheme. These are explored in more detail in the consultation report.

Officers have therefore removed a permit system from the draft byelaws.

Decibel limit

The revised byelaws now provide for a maximum decibel limit of 70dB for performers wishing play music or operate amplifiers and similar devices in the city centre. This decibel limit is slightly louder than the ambient street noise and should ensure that performers can be heard, whilst not being excessively loud or intrusive.

Graphic Imagery

The draft byelaws presented for public consultation included provisions around the regulation of graphic imagery. Feedback from the public consultation indicates that the display of certain images in the city centre has a mixed reception. Whilst the majority of respondents in the public consultation indicated quantitatively that their experience was positive, the written comments of those not in favour of the display of graphic imagery (particularly with regards to abortion) expressed strong views to the contrary.

Officers are aware that enforcing a ban on certain graphic images is difficult given the current lack of legislative framework in this area. It is therefore suggested that the provisions on graphic imagery are removed from the current draft of the byelaws and that a separate report is brought back as this issue is further considered.

Special Events

The revised byelaws now contain provisions relating to Special Events to be held in the city centre.

Provision is made (i) for the restriction or prohibition of amplification in the city centre during Special Events and (ii) for the suspension contained within applicable Council byelaws for prohibition of consumption of alcohol in public places in certain areas of the city centre.

Alcohol

Whilst not directly addressed in the draft byelaws, the issue of on-street drinking was raised in the written comments during the public consultation and subsequently in the workshops.

Members will note that a report on the Council's view of the proposed commencement of Articles 68-72 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 was presented at the People and Communities Committee on 9 September 2025 and subsequently ratified at Council on 1 October.

The proposed commencement of these Articles would effectively extend the powers conferred on police officers requiring individuals to stop drinking alcohol in a designated area, and surrender any alcoholic drinks in their possession, to council officers. Anyone refusing will be committing an offence and may be issued with a fixed penalty notice. This is an 'opt in' power that the Council may choose to avail of.

The Council has indicated broad support of the commencement of these provisions to DfC and has noted that they would complement the proposed byelaws to make Belfast a safe and welcoming place for all, in line with the Belfast Agenda.

3.8 Enforcement Mechanisms

The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 provides a mechanism for officers to issue abatement notices in relation to noise, however, the current issues around noise in the city centre for the most part do not meet the threshold of a statutory nuisance.

Members may be aware that Section 92 of the Act provides that penalties for the contravention of byelaws shall be in the form of a fine payable on summary conviction. The draft byelaws contain a provision whereby an authorised officer

may issue a fixed penalty notice for an offence committed under the byelaws.

Whilst the issuance of a fixed penalty notice via byelaws is not usual practice, the Department has indicated that it will consider the fixed penalty enforcement mechanism currently included in the draft byelaws.

3.9 Suggested next steps

After considering feedback from the public consultation and workshops, officers have revised the draft byelaws that reflect the changes noted above. These are attached as Appendix 1 for Members' consideration and approval.

Members are also advised that officers will continue to log and monitor all complaints about busking, preaching, or any other kind of street performance. Current statistics are included in the consultation report.

Members will be aware that Section 91 of the Act requires byelaws to be approved by the Department for Communities before they can be adopted. Therefore, any revised draft byelaws will be subject to this process.

3.10 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no financial or resource implications connected to this report. There will however be resource implications in enforcing the bye-laws if approved by DfC. This remains under consideration and more detail will be provided once a response is received from DfC.

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

An equality screening was carried out on the draft byelaws that were presented for public consultation. The consultation provided useful feedback both on the draft screening form and more generally from Section 75 groups. Further screening will be undertaken as the byelaws progress to finalisation."

During discussion, one member raised concern in relation to the enforcement of all Bye-laws, in particular, the display of material at the railings of the City Hall.

In response to a Member's concern in relation to the display of graphic imagery material not being included in the draft Bye-Laws, the City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services highlighted that a report on this issue would be submitted to the Committee in the coming months.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth and

Resolved – That, to deal with some of the obstructive, threatening and abusive behaviour in the city centre, the Committee agrees to:

- write to the Justice Minister to outline the need for a standalone Hate Crime Bill and highlight the need for an additional class of offenses, noting that the change model in sentencing did not go far enough; and
- write to the Chief Constable to seek clarity in the use of the PSNI powers under Articles 9 (Use of words or behaviour or display of written material), 18 (Riotous or disorderly behaviour in public place), and 19 (Provocative conduct in public place or at public meeting or procession) of The Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987.

After discussion, the Committee:

- noted the contents of the report and appendices;
- approved the revised draft byelaws which would be forwarded to the Department for Communities for consideration;
- agreed that a report be submitted to a future committee in relation to the enforcement of all bye-laws, including the display of material at the railings of the City Hall;
- noted that a report be submitted to a future committee in relation to the display of promotional material (including graphic imagery) in the city centre;
- agreed to write to the Justice Minister to outline the need for a standalone Hate Crime Bill and highlight the need for an additional class of offenses and that the change model in sentencing did not go far enough; and
- agreed to write to the Chief Constable to seek clarity in the use of the PSNI powers under Articles 9 (Use of words or behaviour or display of written material), 18 (Riotous or disorderly behaviour in public place), and 19 (Provocative conduct in public place or at public meeting or procession) of The Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987.

Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayoral Challenge Competition

The Committee was reminded that the Council had applied to Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayoral Challenge in April 2025 with an outline concept 'to re-imagine Belfast's network of alleyways'.

Belfast was one of only 100 cities (from 640 applications worldwide) selected to further develop this concept into a more detailed proposal. It was reported that Belfast was subsequently one of only 50 cities awarded \$50,000 to support local engagement and to carry out research to develop the proposal into a funding bid. This bid was submitted to Bloomberg on 17th October. Bloomberg was currently assessing the final 50 applications, of which only 25 would be awarded \$1 million each to deliver their projects. This decision was expected in the next few weeks.

The Committee was provided with an update on the Belfast Bid which built on a series of successful alleyway transformations that had had a positive impact on the lives of local people. The challenge for the city going forward was how it could scale and replicate such successes across many more parts of the city and do in ways that were sustainable and community-led.

The Belfast proposal therefore sought to establish, over a two-year period, a city programme that could support the sustainable development of up to 25 miles of transformed alleyways. These projects might range from quite modest interventions to much more radical transformations, depending local circumstances and on the interest of each community. The programme sought to harness the Council's services in an integrated way and work directly with communities and with other public bodies (such as the Department for Infrastructure, the Department for Communities and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive) and utilise digital and data tools, co-design techniques and innovative funding models. It was reported that a decision from Bloomberg was expected in the next few weeks.

Belfast Inclusive Futures

The Committee was reminded that, in May 2025, it had approved a series called '*Belfast: Inclusive Futures*' which brings together city leaders (private, public and community) and senior policymakers to build understanding and consensus about the challenges and opportunities that digital technologies represent for our city's shared commitment to inclusive growth.

The Committee was advised that the second event was planned for Monday, 24th November in the City Hall. The guest speak was Dr Nell Watson, a national AI expert and advisor to Google. A follow up panel discussion would include the NI Chief Scientific Officer Helen McCarthy and Mark Lawler, Professor of Digital Health at Queen's University.

The Committee:

1. Noted the ongoing work on the Bloomberg alleyways transformation proposal;

2. Noted Bloomberg's final funding decision would be shared with Members at the following Committee meeting; and
3. Noted the invitation to the second Belfast: Inclusive Futures event on Monday, 24th November from 16:00 in the Great Hall.

Cities@Heart Project Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the progress of the Horizon Europe Cities@Heart project and to seek agreement to approve the final agreed Consortium Agreement.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committee are asked to note the contents of this report and agree that the Council signs the final agreed Consortium Agreement required for its participation in the Cities@Heart project.

3.0 Main Report

Background

- 3.1 Members will recall that at its meeting on the 18 April 2025, the Committee agreed that council officials work with QUB and Belfast Healthy Cities to input to a joint funding submission to the Horizon Europe Innovative Health Initiative grant funding call. The intention was to develop an overall €15million funding bid across seven cities (named Cities@Heart) to enable work to be undertaken with the WHO Healthy Cities Network and innovative technology with the aim of reducing recognised cardiovascular risk factors in order to more effectively manage risk and prevent future cardiovascular events.
- 3.2 The Cities@Heart proposal focuses on obesity, hypertension, dyslipidaemia and diabetes as key drivers of cardiovascular disease and poor health. The intention is to identify effective public health activities which offer potential to scale-up. The project will also seek to develop and deploy strategies to leverage engagement and citizen empowerment, raise awareness of cardiovascular disease, effective prevention, early detection and optimal management to improve outcomes.

- 3.3 The bid involves a range of representatives including public sector, academia and industry experts from across seven municipalities including Izmir (TR), Belfast (NI), Łódź (PL), Cork (IE), Udine (IT), Birmingham (EN) and Utrecht (NL). Each have diverse communities and a commitment to deploy multi-disciplinary health strategies. Working together with citizens and industry experts, each city would intend to apply a structured, multi-sector methodology which includes:
- i. City-level approaches to reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease;
 - ii. A digital ecosystem that will power the development of European health technology and economic growth;
 - iii. Integration of health policy and health economics to deliver cost-effective city-level solutions; and
 - iv. Sustainability at its core using an implementation framework that can apply across the 1800+ cities in the WHO European Healthy Cities Network.
- 3.4 It is intended that the Cities@Heart project would build connections and capacity across a broad array of stakeholders, including citizens, patients, municipalities, healthcare providers, policymakers and industry experts, and support the next generation of health technology to address critical barriers in cardiovascular disease across Europe. Members will be aware of the significant health challenges, including cardiovascular disease, impacting on people across the city and will also be aware that addressing health inequalities has been identified as a key priority set out in the Belfast Agenda.

Current position

- 3.5 Following Committee agreement, council officials continued to work alongside colleagues from QUB and Belfast Healthy Cities to explore a possible role for Belfast and Council in the emerging Cities@Heart project proposal. Officers have also engaged with representatives from the other cities working on the development of the project proposal and exploring the opportunities and benefits which can be realised for Belfast through participation in Cities@Heart. Some early opportunities identified include:
- Awareness: City-wide campaigns to raise understanding of CVD risks, targeting communities with highest inequalities.
 - Prevention: Building on strong partnerships to tackle obesity, inactivity, smoking, and poor diet; share and learn from other cities.

- **Detection:** Expansion of early identification of hypertension, diabetes, and dyslipidaemia in high-risk groups through community outreach and digital tools.
- **Inequalities:** Strengthen and improve knowledge of available services and support across Belfast, focusing on deprived populations with the highest premature CVD mortality.

3.6 Ultimately, through the participation in the project, Belfast has a real opportunity to understand the deep rooted and multi-faceted issues impacting on people's health and to design and bring forward innovative solutions to deliver:

- A reduction in premature cardiovascular disease deaths (currently 35.8 per 100,000 vs 26.9 NI average)
- Narrow the inequality gap between deprived and affluent wards (communities and neighbourhoods)
- Create a healthier, more active and sustainable city through prevention, active travel and behavioural change
- Position Belfast as a model city for equitable cardiovascular health and system-wide prevention

3.7 Pending notification of the Cities@Heart bid being successful, the organisations across the seven cities making the joint bid for funding are required to enter into a Consortium Agreement to specify the rights and obligations of each party and set out inter alia project management, governance, confidentiality etc between the parties. As a prerequisite to participation in the project, the Council is required to enter into the Collaboration Agreement. The draft Agreement has been reviewed by the relevant Council officers including Legal Services who have provided comments to the project administrators to inform the terms of the final Consortium Agreement.

3.8 In terms of specific areas which have been initially identified whereby Council can provide support as the Cities@Heart programme progresses include:

- Project management
- Communication, dissemination and engagement
- Civil society representative
- Prototyping and demonstration
- Public procurer of results

3.9 Members will note that discussions are underway with Belfast Healthy Cities (BHC) in terms of how they can support these areas of work from a Belfast perspective. The Council will be required to enter into a formal Grant Agreement with the IHI JU in respect of the funding being

awarded under the Cities@Heart bid and alongside this, the Council shall enter into a MOU with Belfast Healthy Cities to set out how both parties will work together on the project.

It is understood that the combined budget for the Council and Belfast Healthy Cities for the overall administration of the programme is in the region of €75,000 for 3 years.

- 3.10 It is further understood that additional project-specific funding awards would be allocated to Belfast, if successful, in securing delivery of projects within the overall Cities@Heart funding award. Any such opportunities would be presented to Committee for review.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.11 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Officer time will be required to help shape the emerging bid and programme of work.

**Equality and Good Relations Implications /
Rural Needs Assessment**

- 3.12 There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications arising directly from this report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Update on Hardship Programme 2025/26

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in October, it had been informed that, whilst some underspend from previous years was available to support a Hardship Programme in 2025/26, the amount available was £75,000 which was significantly lower than previous years. Subsequently, it had agreed to write to the Minister for Communities seeking funding support for the continuation of the Hardship Programme in the 2025/26 financial year.

The Committee was advised that the Council had issued correspondence to the Department for Communities requesting them to consider providing funding support for the continuation of the Hardship Programme in 2025/26. Additionally, the letter advised the department that the Council would welcome exploration of a recurrent multi-year funding model to enable more strategic long-term efforts in tackling poverty and hardship at the local level (copy available at Appendix 1). It was reported that update would be provided once a response had been received.

The Committee:

- I. Noted the contents of this report, including the recent correspondence issued to the Minister for Communities on 10th November; and

- II. Noted the vastly reduced budget position of £75,000 for the development and delivery of a Hardship Programme in 2025/26, which members had agreed should be allocated to Family Support Hubs to help support families and children.

Planning Information

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an update on major planning applications and applications which had been determined by the Planning Committee.

Consultation on Review of Planning Fees

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) is consulting on its review of planning fees, namely the proposed introduction of fees for the following types of application:

- Non-Material Changes**
- Discharges of Condition**

- 1.2 DfI is also seeking views on whether any other application types, which are currently not charged for, should also attract a fee.**

- 1.3 This report was noted by the Planning Committee at its 11th November 2025 meeting. The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is asked to agree the Council’s response to the consultation.**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

Agree to the Council’s response to the consultation as set out in this report including the additional comments provided by the Planning Committee (summarised at paragraph 3.28).

3.0 Main report

Background

- 3.1** Most planning applications submitted to the Council attract a planning fee, however, several application types currently do not, even though they can be quite time consuming and costly for the Council to process.
- 3.2** DfI is proposing to introduce a flat rate planning fee of £115 for the following types of application, for which there is currently no charge:
- Non-Material Changes
 - Discharges of Condition
- 3.3** In addition, the consultation is asking whether there are any other planning application types which are not currently charged for, but which should attract a fee, including but not limited to the following:
- Tree Preservation Order
 - Proposal of Application Notice (PAN)
 - Pre-application discussions
- 3.4** The introduction of fees for applications for Non-Material Changes and Discharges of Condition would be made through amendments to the Planning (Fees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.
- 3.5** The public consultation opened on 1st October 2025 and closes on 23rd December 2025. A copy of the public consultation document is provided at Appendix 1. This committee report (if agreed) will be provided as the Council's consultation response rather than completing the form as provided as all questions are addressed in the sections below.

Assessment

- 3.6** Belfast City Council is one of several NI councils that have advocated the introduction of planning fees for Non-Material Change (NMC) and Discharge of Condition (DOC) applications for many years. This is in the context of the not insignificant resources that councils expend on processing such applications each year.
- 3.7** DfI is proposing to introduce a flat rate fee of £115 for both application types, equivalent to the minimum fee charged for

such applications in some UK jurisdictions. Table 1 below shows the number of NMC and DOC applications that the Council has received over the last three years.

Application type	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
NMC	65	78	77	220
DOC	239	235	245	719
Total	304	313	322	939

Table 1: volume of NMC and DOC applications received by Belfast City Council

- 3.8 Table 2 below shows the income that would have been received by the Council over the last three years had the proposed fee of £115 been applied retrospectively. This would have amounted to around £36k per annum. However, this projection is caveated by the fact that the introduction of a fee for Discharge of Condition applications may result in more discharge of condition requests to be grouped under a single application, to save costs. This could result in fewer Discharge of Condition applications and lower overall fee income.

Application type	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
NMC	£7,475	£8,970	£8,855	£25,300
DOC	£27,485	£27,025	£28,175	£82,685
Total	£34,960	£35,995	£37,030	£107,985

Table 2: Projected fee income if the proposed fee of £115 was retrospectively applied

Non-Material Change applications

- 3.9 Section 67 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 ('the Act') permits the Council to approve a 'non-material change' to a planning permission to facilitate relatively minor and inconsequential amendments to an approved scheme. This dispenses with the requirement for applicants to submit a whole new planning application, therefore, saving time and costs for both applicants and the council. This provision also permits the imposition of new conditions as well as to remove or alter existing conditions. Where approved, the NMC amends the original planning permission; it does not create a new standalone permission.

- 3.10 There is no legal definition of a ‘non-material change’. Guidance is provided by DfI’s [Development Management Practice Note 25: Non-Material Changes](#).
- 3.11 As shown in Table 1 above, the Council receives around 70 applications for Non-Material Changes each year. The complexity of the amendments proposed by NMC applications can vary considerably and can be time consuming for the Council to deal with, especially where the proposals relate to largescale Local and Major applications (depending on the scale and nature of the proposed changes). The Council is also responsible for processing applications for Non-Material Changes to regionally significant permissions granted by DfI. Therefore, the principle of a charge for NMC applications is welcomed.
- 3.12 However, officers have the following concerns about the proposal to introduce a flat rate £115 fee for all NMC applications:
- Firstly, it is considered unreasonable and disproportionate that the fee to amend more complex applications, such as permissions for Major and large-scale Local proposals, is the same as the fee for amending a householder or minor applications.
 - Secondly, planning fees in NI should work towards increased cost recovery and a flat rate fee of £115 would not cover the Council’s costs in processing NMC applications. DfI acknowledges that further work should be undertaken by councils and DfI around increased cost recovery to inform more appropriate fees across the board.
- 3.13 Consideration should be given to separate rates for NMC applications for householder, Local and Major planning permissions, with an increasing scale of charges respectively. Alternatively, consideration could be given to the NMC fee being a percentage of the original application fee.

Discharge of Condition applications

- 3.14 Section 52 of the Act enables a council to impose conditions on a planning permission. Guidance on the use of condition is provided by DfI’s [Development Management Practice Note 20: Use of Planning Conditions](#). The Council may only impose a condition where it meets all of the six tests, namely that the condition is:

1. necessary;
 2. related to planning;
 3. relevant to the development permitted;
 4. enforceable;
 5. precise; and
 6. reasonable in all other respects.
- 3.15 Some conditions require submission and approval of further information to the Council before a specified trigger point being met, typically prior to commencement of development or occupation. This process is referred to as the 'discharge of conditions'.
- 3.16 Examples include the submission and approval of the following information:
- details of external materials (e.g. brick, stonework, render and roof tiles)
 - landscaping details (e.g. tree planting and boundary treatment)
 - a final remediation strategy to deal with contaminated land
 - details of the precise window specification to ensure appropriate sound-proofing if the development is next to a busy road or other noise source.
- 3.17 As a general principle, the Council's Planning Service seeks to avoid the use of DOC conditions where possible by front-loading the submission of the information as part of the original application. This saves time and costs later down the line; however, this approach is not always possible as often the information will only be available – or the developer is only willing to provide it – post-decision once the planning permission is in place.
- 3.18 Like NMCs, DfI is proposing to introduce a flat-rate £115 fee for DOC applications.
- 3.19 Officers have similar concerns to the proposed flat-rate fee of £115 for NMC applications:
- the charge for the DOC application is the same, irrespective of the scale and complexity of the development and nature of the conditions. For example, a householder would pay the same fee for approval of external materials for a domestic extension as a developer would pay for the discharge of a series of complex conditions (such as land contamination, archaeology and drainage) associated with a Major development. This is considered unfair, particular as the proposed fee would represent a third

(33%) of the original planning fee for a householder application. In comparison, for a largescale Major application, the fee might represent only 0.1% of the cost of the original application.

- in a similar vein, it is proposed that the same fee applies irrespective of the number of conditions that require to be discharged; therefore, a DOC application to discharge a single condition on a householder permission would attract the same fee as a DOC application to discharge a dozen conditions relating to a complex Major permission.
- in practice, the Council deals with very few DOC applications for Householder permissions and it would be more appropriate to waive the fee for such applications, with a higher charge rate proposed for discharging conditions associated with more complex proposals.
- the flat rate fee of £115 would not cover the Council's actual costs in processing such applications and would not represent anywhere near cost recovery.
- the DOC process often requires engagement with consultations for their expert technical advice, such as the Council's Environmental Health service or Government Departments such as DfI Roads, DfI Rivers, DfC HED and DAERA NIEA. This consultation process can be very involved and time consuming for consultees and the proposal does not address income for consultees to cover their staff costs in assessing the information and advising the Council on its suitability. Officers are of the clear view that a service should only be charged where a responsive and quality service is provided. The current fee proposal does not address consultee resources and would not speed up the DOC process. Informal feedback to the Council from agents is that applicants would generally be prepared to pay a higher fee if it would guarantee a quicker decision.

3.20 Similar to the NMC fee proposals, further work should be undertaken by councils and DfI around increased cost recovery to inform more appropriate fees for DOC applications.

3.21 Officers recommend that there should be no charge for DOC applications relating to householder permissions. A fee higher than £115 should be introduced for DOC applications for Local permissions (excluding householders) with a higher fee for Major applications. A fee should be introduced per condition rather than a flat rate fee irrespective of the number of conditions. Correct adherence to the six tests for

conditions (see par. 3.14) would ensure that the system is not abused with conditions unnecessarily added.

Other application types

3.22 In addition, DfI is asking for views on whether fees should be introduced for the following application types, which are currently not charged.

- Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) – the Council receives about 130 applications for works to trees each year. Officers are concerned that the introduction of a fee could deter tree owners from making such applications or to not undertake necessary tree maintenance works because of the cost of making an application. Therefore, it is recommended that there continues to be no fee payable for an application for works to a protected tree (i.e. a tree subject to a TPO or within a Conservation Area).
- Proposal of Application Notices (PANs) – legislation requires applicants for Major development to submit a PAN to the Council that sets out the applicant's proposals for Pre-Application Community Consultation. Councils have 21 days to assess the proposals, advising of any necessary further steps. There are both administrative and professional costs associated with the assessment of PAN applications and an appropriate flat-rate fee could be introduced to recover typical costs.
- Pre-Application Discussions (PADs) – the Council already charges for PADs (as a discretionary service) and has been doing so since 2017. It similarly charges for Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) – a project management tool used to support the efficient and timely handling of more complex planning applications. BCC would not want to see standardisation of such costs across all councils as the resources attributed to such discussions and how each PAD is treated will be at the discretion of each Planning Authority.

3.23 The DfI consultation also asks if there are any other application types that currently do not attract a planning fee for which councils recommend that charging is introduced. Officers advise that fees could also be introduced for the following application types:

- EIA screening – where an applicant asks the Council to give a formal ‘screening’ opinion as to whether a proposal is ‘Environmental Impact Assessment’ (EIA) development. Applications for EIA development are required to be supported by an Environmental Statement and normally only relate to very large-scale and complex development proposals. The EIA screening process invariably involves engagement with internal and external consultees and can be a complex and time-consuming technical process to complete.
- EIA scoping – where it is accepted that a proposal is ‘EIA development’ and the applicant asks the Council to give a formal ‘scoping’ opinion as to the required content of the Environmental Statement that will accompany the planning application. Similarly, the EIA scoping process invariably involves engagement with internal and external consultees and can be a complex process.
- Discharge of planning obligations contained in a Section 76 planning agreement (MDPA) – there is currently no charge for the Council assessing information required by a Section 76 planning application, such as the submission and approval of a Travel Plan, open space management plan or Employability and Skills Plan. It is similar to the process of discharging conditions and should be charged.

3.24 Applications for Listed Building Consent and Conservation Area Consent (DCA) are historically not charged for in NI, England and Wales. Like applications for works to trees, it is assumed that the reason is not to deter applicants from making such important applications. Nevertheless, the processing of these applications does have costs implications for the Council. Further targeted consultation should take place with a range of stakeholders should DfI consider introducing planning fees for Listed Building Consent and Conservation Area Consent applications.

Other matters

3.25 It is proposed that councils should be able, if they so wish, to set their own fees for Non-Material Change and Discharge of Condition applications. This recognises that the costs associated with the processing of such applications will vary from council to council, particularly for a large built-up urban area such as Belfast where issues such as land contamination are prevalent.

- 3.26 The Council would express its disappointment that DfI did not carry out any pre-consultation with councils ahead of publication of the consultation. As can be seen from this report, whilst the principle of charging for NMC and DOC applications is accepted, there are a range of concerns about the specific proposals and factors that will need to be considered. These could have been addressed, and more developed proposals consulted on, had there been prior engagement with councils and wider development industry (planning agents, architects and developers).
- 3.27 For the reasons set out in this report, it is considered that the proposals to charge for NMC and DOC applications should be developed further before charging is introduced.

Consideration by the Planning Committee

- 3.28 The Planning Committee noted the report at its 11th November 2025 meeting. During the discussion there was particular support for the waiving of fees for Discharge of Condition applications for householder proposals. In addition, the Planning Committee agreed that DfI should be asked to consider increasing fees for retrospective applications, to act as a deterrent to those who may consider carrying out development or works without the necessary permission or consent. This could also lead to reduction in unauthorised development or works, reducing complaints and lessening the pressure on the Council's planning enforcement function.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.29 The NI Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee reports (2022) recognise the financial unsustainability of the NI planning system. Planning Authority costs typically outstrip planning income through planning fees by a significant margin. The introduction of charging for Non-Material Change and Discharge of Condition applications is welcomed in principle, however, the proposals do not represent actual cost recovery. Further work is required by councils and DfI, with input from consultees and the development industry, to refine the proposed charging model for these and all other application types.

Equality or Good Relations Implications /
Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.30 No adverse impacts have been identified."

The Committee agreed to the Council's response to the consultation, as set out in the report, including the additional comments provided by the Planning Committee (summarised at paragraph 3.28 of the report).

Review of Building Control non-statutory charges

The Committee considered the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

The purpose of this report is to consider the review of charges for non-statutory functions delivered by Building Control. Part 11 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 allows the council to charge a fee for a service that is not a statutory provision that the council is required to provide to the person, providing the cost does not exceed the costs of the provision.

- 1.2 The charges of fees are in the line with the Corporate Pricing Framework, Financial Regulations and the Scheme of delegation.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

Agree the set of charges and fees for non-statutory services provided by Building Control. A list of the fees is detailed in Appendix 1. It is recommended that the additional fees come into effect from 1st April 2026, in line with the budget setting process and will be reviewed after 12 months.

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 Members will be aware that some fees for statutory services in Building Control are set by the Department of Finance others such as licensing are set through the Licensing Committee and referred to Strategic Policy and Resources. As part of the budget setting process officers are required to review charges and fees for services provided that are not part of the Council's statutory functions.
- 3.2 Building Control's management team reviewed all services provided and whether fees were charged and the reason why some services were provided with no chargeable fee.
- 3.3 A benchmarking exercise was carried out across all local councils in Northern Ireland and some councils in Scotland and England. In most cases councils charge for the non-statutory functions, whereas none have been charged in Belfast.

- 3.4 Following the benchmarking exercises, the fees for non-statutory services are proposed to be revised with the introduction of some charges and an increase in others, as set out below.
- 3.5 Building Control currently charge a fee for the services below but would propose a fee increase.
1. Building Control service currently charges £30 for a property enquiry. This charge does not cover the cost for the provision of the service, based on an analysis of time spent by staff carrying out the service. Therefore, the proposal would be to increase the charge based on the hourly rate to carry out the task to £100 per single dwelling and £100 for a commercial property consisting of one unit.
 2. Building Control currently charge an administration fee of £50 for Building Regulation applications that are withdrawn, which would include fees charged for full plan applications and building notice applications. The service propose to introduce this charge to all application types which would include, Property Certificates, Property Enquiries, Licensing applications (Entertainment, Amusement, Cinema, Petroleum, Street Trading, Pavement Café and Road Closures).
- 3.6 Building Control do not currently charge for the services below but would propose to introduce a fee.
1. Copy certificates or confirmation of postal address. There is a significant increase in the demand for copy certificates. Taking into consideration the costs incurred the Service propose to introduce a charge of £50 for both services – copy certificates and confirmation of postal address. This is in line with the charges levied by other councils.
 2. Confirmation of completion letters prior to 1994. There is no requirement to provide documentation for applications made prior to 1994, however the service receives regular requests. This would fall within the parameters of a property enquiry, with a full search being required. Therefore, a new £100 charge is proposed to match the property enquiry fee.

3. Building Control currently offer a pre-submission consultation service which provides advice and guidance prior to the submission of a Building Regulations application. This service is primarily offered to larger commercial projects, is currently free of charge, and takes time to administrate, review in advance, meet with the applicant and provide a response. The Service would receive on average approximately 30 applications per year. Based on the officer time required using the hourly rate for an administration officer and an average hourly rate for a Building Control Surveyor to provide professional technical advice a new charge of £170 per enquiry is proposed.
4. Additional or replacement set of approved drawings. This request can take a substantial amount of staff time as there is the requirement to compare the new set of drawings submitted with the approved drawings held on file, check for an acceptable match, and if so, stamp each drawing and post out. Taking the requirements to deliver this service and officers time into consideration a new charge of £80 per request is proposed.
5. Provision of specification notes for Energy Performance Certificates. The requests for these are limited but the work entailed would fall into similar criteria for the charge for a property enquiry, therefore a new charge of £100 is proposed.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.7 Based upon the suggested new fees or fee increases, an analysis of the number of applications and requests previously made, benchmarking other councils and assumptions made in relation to the levels of ongoing applications, a conservative increase of £20,000 has been added to the 2026-2027 estimates, subject to council approval of these proposed fee changes. This will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, to determine if application numbers are sustained given the changes in the charges and to evaluate the actual increase in income.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.8 There are no Equality or good relations implications from the increases in charges proposed. A rural assessment is not considered necessary.”

The Committee agreed the set of charges and fees for non-statutory services provided by Building Control. A list of the fees was detailed in Appendix 1 and noted that it was recommended that the additional fees came into effect from 1st April 2026, in line with the budget setting process and would be reviewed after 12 months.

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG)

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 To update the committee on the programme of work that council is delivering to support The Executive Office’s (TEO) strategic framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG).**

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- **Note the update on the wide range of work being delivered by council in support of TEO’s strategic framework to EVAWG; and**
- **Endorse the Women’s Night Safety Charter, to support partner organisations with its promotion and roll-out to the hospitality and entertainment sector as part of TEO’s strategic framework.**

3.0 Main Report

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Policy Context

What is Violence Against Women and Girls?

Violence against women and girls is comprised of actions and the threat of actions including:

- 1. physical, sexual, psychological and emotional violence occurring in the family including children and young people (Domestic Abuse), in the general community, or in institutions, including coercive control and stalking**
- 2. harmful sexual behaviour which is sexual behaviours expressed by children and young people that are inappropriate or abusive**
- 3. sexual harassment, bullying, and intimidation in any public or private space**
- 4. commercial and non-commercial sexual exploitation of women and girls, trafficking, child sexual abuse, so-called honour-based violence, including female**

genital mutilation, forced and child marriages, and so-called honour crimes

5. online and technology facilitated abuse [or gender-based violence] including cyberstalking, cyber flashing, sexual harassment, grooming for exploitation or abuse, image based sexual abuse and abuse through emerging technologies such as 'internet of things' devices
6. workplace sexual harassment ranging from sexual jokes or comments to unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favours and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature
7. financial abuse such as controlling a woman's or girl's access to their money, taking loans or credit cards in their name, or using their money without their permission
8. everyday harm caused by everyday misogyny, sexist jokes and language, and discrimination which contributes to an atmosphere in which the threat of violence, specific or general is consistently in women's minds.

3.2 The Executive Office's Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls

In 2021, the Northern Ireland Executive directed that a Strategy to End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) be developed, and the Executive Office (TEO) is leading on this whole of government, whole of society approach.

TEO led the development of a co-designed Strategic Framework which sets the agenda for all of government and society to address the whole range of gender-based violence, abuse and harm which is disproportionately experienced by women and girls, and which is rooted in gender inequality. The framework is ambitious, long term, and wide reaching. The Vision is: *A changed society where women and girls are free from all forms of gender-based violence, abuse, and harm, including the attitudes, systems, and structural inequalities that cause them.* There are six outcomes organised under the four themes of 1) prevention; 2) protection and provision; 3) justice system; and 4) working better together:

- Outcome 1: Changed attitudes, behaviours and culture - Everyone in society understands what violence against women and girls is, including its root causes, and plays an active role in preventing it.

- Outcome 2: Healthy, respectful relationships – Everyone in society is equipped and empowered to enjoy healthy, respectful relationships.
- Outcome 3: Women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere – Organisations and institutions across government and society embed the prevention of violence against women and girls in all that they do, so that women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere.
- Outcome 4: Quality frontline services, protection, and provision for victims and survivors of violence against women and girls – Provision of high-quality services for women and girls who are victims and survivors of violence against women and girls.
- Outcome 5: A justice system which has the confidence of victims, survivors and the public in its ability to address violence against women and girls – In the context of violence against women and girls, a justice system that is trauma informed, considers the needs of people who come into contact with it, gives victims and survivors a voice and a place in the process, holds perpetrators to account, while challenging and supporting them to change and has the confidence of the public.
- Outcome 6: All of government and society working better together to end violence against women and girls – A whole system approach with collaboration and cooperation by default across central and local government, statutory bodies, and with, within and between the community, voluntary, trade unions, employers, business and other sectors.

The council is supporting TEO with the implementation of its strategic framework for EVAWG. This works comprises several separate workstreams as set out in sections 3.3-3.5. In addition, the council is also delivering, supporting, endorsing or signposting a range of activities to support women's safety and the campaign to end violence against women and girls both internally and externally within the Belfast district. This work is detailed at section 3.6.

3.3 Regional Change Fund

The council administers a regional funding programme on behalf of TEO with eight specialist delivery organisations receiving a share of £1.2 million up to 31 March 2026. There is a possible uplift of £50-£75K per group to be complete in year (process not yet confirmed).

- Youth Action
- NSPCC
- Women's Aid
- White Ribbon
- WRDA
- Nexus
- Barnardo's
- Relate NI

3.4 Local Change Fund

The council also administers a smaller grant programme (budget of £255,000) through the Central Grants Unit for projects which equip third sector groups in Belfast to achieve the prevention outcomes of the EVAWG Strategic Direction which are detailed below. Every project must contribute to changed attitudes behaviours and culture; and may contribute to the other two outcomes:

1. Changed attitudes, behaviours and culture - Everyone in society understands what violence against women and girls is, including its root causes, and plays an active role in preventing it.
2. Healthy, respectful relationships – Everyone in society is equipped and empowered to enjoy healthy, respectful relationships.
3. Women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere – Organisations and institutions across government and society embed the prevention of violence against women and girls in all that they do, so that women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere.

The grants (which include three separate tiers – up to £5k, £15k and £25k) provide funding up to 31 March 2026 to support 27 local groups to deliver events, projects or programmes of activity aimed at EVAWG within the communities they support. At its meeting on 5 August, the People and Communities committee agreed the proposed approach to allocate any additional Momentum fund, Local Change Fund grant support and additional in-year allocations for the Regional Change Fund on the understanding of receiving further funding from TEO (demand £1,251,422 greatly exceeded the available budget). However, at the time of writing there has been no confirmation or letter of offer received from TEO.

3.5 Belfast Mobilisation Programme

The Belfast Mobilisation Programme (budget of £110,000) enabled immediate and urgent action to raise awareness of the new EVAWG Strategy. This funding (agreed by People & Communities in December 2024) facilitated an expansion of existing good work by council and communities, in addition to new activity within the 2024/25 financial year. The diverse programme reached over 1,000 participants across

65 sessions with a number of extremely successful projects, including training for council officers and local community organisations; high profile area events; safety awareness sessions for women and girls; targeted training and support for people working in hostels or with female who are rough sleeping and a bystander conference for leaders in sport to explore how men can help end violence against women and girls. While this programme has been very successful, many of the participants were keen to continue their involvement. An evaluation of the programme to date notes:

- 95% of respondents felt that participation had increased their knowledge of what violence against women and girls is.
- 89% responded that the programme has given them a better understanding of the underlying causes of violence against women and girls; and
- 91% feel that participation has increased their confidence about what they can do to help end violence against women and girls.

Given the success of council-led initiatives, TEO has indicated that it wishes to support an extension of the Momentum Programme for 2025/26. A Programme of activity is currently being developed and is expected to be brought to the People & Communities Committee for final approval as soon as possible once the Letter of Offer has been received from TEO.

- 3.6 Ending Violence Against Women and Girls is included as a priority within the council's 3-year Corporate Plan 2025-28. The Deputy Chief Executive and Strategic Director of Corporate Services, and Strategic Director of Place and Economy have both been appointed as champions for women's safety and EVAWG. The Council has been delivering, supporting, endorsing and signposting a range of activities to support women's safety and the campaign to end violence against women and girls. This includes a range of internal staff based training and external interventions amplifying the council's leadership role within the city, and is detailed below:

- Onus Workplace Charter on Domestic Violence (Platinum level) this comprises a Workplace Policy on Domestic Violence and Abuse, associated network of trusted colleagues, regular trusted colleague training and support, and general awareness raising training, communications and signposting to additional support outside of work.
- International 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign – this year the council's

campaign begins on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (Tuesday 25 November) and ends on Human Rights Day (Wednesday 10 December). Corporate HR has organised a series of Raise Your Voice workshops, including one specifically for male colleagues. All sessions aim to promote allyship and support safer communities for everyone.

- **White Ribbon Pledge** – an annual commitment to Belfast being recognised as a Safe City and creating a safer society by challenging harmful behaviours, promoting equality and respect, and fostering a community where everyone feels safe and valued. The pledge is that ‘together we pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls’. The Lord Mayor, Chief Executive and Director of HR will sign the Charter on 2 December 2025.
- **Gender Action Plan** – the council’s 2024-27 Plan contains actions that supplement domestic violence training and awareness raising across the city, annual funding of the International Women’s Day rally and march in the city (organised by Reclaim the Agenda), and delivery of a partnership research project with Queen’s University to improve design of public spaces.
- **Onus Safe City Award (assessed annually)** – Domestic Abuse Policy and support for staff is integrated within a much wider cohesive and co-ordinated approach to addressing both domestic and sexual abuse and violence against women and girls across the Belfast City Council area.
- **Community Safety – 2025/26 Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership Action Plan** - Delivery of a range of specific projects and activity that addresses issues related to violence against women and girls, including but not limited to funding for Belfast Area Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnership Programme, additional Safer Neighbourhood Officer patrols, safety awareness classes within our community centres and funding for safer socialising kits which include bottle covers to prevent drink spiking.
- **Late Night Transport** - At September’s SP&R meeting, the committee agreed to provide funding to support a one-year pilot scheme extending hours for late-night transport in Belfast which will contribute towards reducing the potential for violence against women and girls on late night transport on their way home from socialising in the city centre.

- **Safer Socialising** - as part of EVAWG Foundational Action Plan, Hospitality Ulster have partnered with TEO, PSNI, SIA, Youth Work Alliance, Health and Social Care NI, Department of Justice, SOLACE, Translink, Tourism NI and the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland to establish a Safer Socialising Steering Group (SSSG), which will coordinate a range of NI-wide initiatives, including the rollout and oversight of the [Women's Night Safe Charter](#). Members are asked if they are content to agree to endorse the Charter, which has been signed by 10 Councils across NI, to support its promotion and roll-out to the hospitality and entertainment sector as part of the TEO's strategic framework.
- **Entertainment Licensing current work and Best Practice Signposting** – The Building Control Licensing team actively promote the 'Ask for Angela' initiative when engaging with hospitality premises that apply for or have an entertainments licence. This may include discussing the scheme with licensees and managers during renewal inspections and asking bar staff if they are aware of the scheme when during performance inspections are being carried out at night. The SSSG are currently reviewing a range of safer socialising initiatives including 'Ask for Angela' which is led by HU in partnership with the PSNI. As soon as the group have finalised their recommendations, Building Control Licensing officers will proactively promote and signpost to any updated scheme. Under entertainments licensing the building control licensing team assess event management plans including the health and welfare and medical provisions proposed to keep people attending outdoor concert events safe, when often there is considered to be a high risk of harm and vulnerability due to drugs and alcohol, often particularly for young women and girls. Officers from the council's community safety and the alcohol enforcement team work in conjunction with licensing and event promoters and provide support to vulnerable people on the ground before, during and after outdoor concerts. For indoor nightclubs and dance music venues the licensing team references conditions within the safer dancing appendix of the council's Rules of Management for Indoor Places of Entertainment which have the aim of helping keep people attending indoor dance events safe from drink/drug related harm.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.7 TEO currently provides funding to enable council's management and administration of the Regional and Local Change Fund Projects to March 2026. As outlined in section 3.4, further in-year funding may be received from TEO to allocate additional Momentum fund, Local Change Fund grant support and additional in-year allocations for the Regional Change Fund. However, at the time of writing there has been no confirmation or letter of offer received from TEO. The Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership Action Plan is funded by the Joint Committee of the Department of Justice and the NI Policing Board. A number of workstreams have been incorporated within relevant corporate work programmes and utilise existing staff and resources. Specific funding has been allocated to the late-night transport pilot scheme.

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

The Executive Office's Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and Action Plan has been screened for Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Implications."

The Committee:

- Noted the update on the wide range of work being delivered by the Council in support of TEO's strategic framework to EVAWG;
- Endorsed the Women's Night Safety Charter, to support partner organisations with its promotion and roll-out to the hospitality and entertainment sector as part of TEO's strategic framework;
- Agreed to write to the Executive Office to suggest the inclusion of Unite the Union onto the Steering Group; and
- Agreed to write to Hospitality Ulster to request information on what work was being undertaken to support the implementation of the Charter in the sector.

Age Friendly Employer Pledge

The Committee was reminded that, in 2012, the Council had provided the initial leadership to explore Belfast becoming an Age Friendly City and, in May 2012, the Lord Mayor had signed a declaration committing Belfast to this process by joining the World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities.

The Committee was advised that the Health Ageing Strategic Partnership (HASP) had been working collaboratively to ensure Belfast was an Age Friendly City. It was responsible for the development and implementation of the city's Age Friendly

Plan on behalf of the Council and the wider community planning partners. In the third Age Friendly Plan 2023 – 2027, partners were focusing on four thematic areas to address infrastructure, social inclusion, health and well-being, and financial security for older people.

It was reported that Age Friendly Belfast was a key workstream in the Belfast Agenda. It recognised Belfast's older population with its diverse range of abilities and needs, along with the contribution older people make to their families, their communities and the economy.

The Committee was reminded that the Reference Group on Older People had supported the development of the Age Friendly Belfast Plan which included a commitment to promote Age Friendly employers within the city. The Council's Age Friendly Coordinator, who was also the lead officer on the Reference Group for Older People, had asked that the Council consider adopting the Age Friendly Employer Pledge.

Age Friendly Employer Pledge

The Age Friendly Employer Pledge was for employers who recognised the importance and value of older workers; were committed to improving work for people in their 50s and 60s (and beyond) and were prepared to take action to help them flourish in a multigenerational workforce. The Council currently had 1060 employees who were aged 50 and above – 42.9% of the workforce.

Currently over 450 employers had signed the pledge, which included other council's such as Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, Ards and North Down Borough Council, Manchester City Council and more. The Age Friendly Employer Pledge (see Appendix 1 for more information) was a nationwide programme for employers that:

- Identified a senior sponsor for age-inclusion in the workforce and publicly state their commitment to the pledge;
- Ensured age was specifically named within their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies;
- Take action to improve the recruitment, retention and development of workers over 50 from one of the following areas:
 - Create an age friendly culture
 - Hire age positively
 - Be flexible about flexible working
 - Encourage career development at all ages
 - Ensure everyone has the health support they need

The Committee was reminded that the Council had in place flexible working opportunities for all staff which were regularly advertised, there was regular staff support, opportunities for training or e-learning sessions on interview skills and selection techniques and that a comprehensive Health and Wellbeing programme in place covering menopause, yoga, musculoskeletal issues, addiction, stress awareness.

The Committee was advised that signing the Pledge signified that the Council would commit to take action in at least one of the above areas every year and report back to the Centre for Ageing Better.

The Director of Communications, Marketing and External Affairs had been nominated by CMT to be the Council's senior sponsor for age-inclusion in the workforce should this proposal be agreed by the Committee.

The Committee noted the contents of this report and agreed to the Council signing up to the [Age Friendly Employer Pledge](#).

Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition.**

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- I. Note the update on the Belfast Regeneration Place Based Growth Proposition, including the completion of the Business Case for Place-Based Investment which has been forwarded to UK Government for consideration.**
- II. Note the update on ongoing strategic engagement with the UK Government in Westminster, and the Northern Ireland Executive.**
- III. Approve attendance of Elected Members as set out in the report at the Scottish Cities Alliance roundtable, as part of advocacy and engagement activities to support the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition.**
- IV. Note the continued role for Members in terms of political party engagement at local, MP and ministerial level.**

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Members will recall that an update was brought to this Committee in April 2025 and the City Growth & Regeneration Committee in June and September 2025 on the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition and the development of a full five-part business case to underpin the ask. which sets out the case for enhanced regeneration funding in line with other UK cities, aligned to a clear growth proposition underpinned by regeneration priorities for the city.**
- 3.2 As previously reported, the Place Based Growth Proposition sets out the compelling case for Belfast but notes that there**

are significant levers required for the city to realise its growth potential. It notes that due to a combination of Regeneration and place based funds not being applicable to the devolved administrations, and Northern Ireland receiving relatively lower allocations from funds operating on a competitive basis, results in Northern Ireland having amongst the lowest spend on regeneration and local growth per head of population, compared to Scotland, Wales and English regions – nearly half the regional average spend per capita. This outcome is not reflective of the need for regeneration in Belfast relative to other cities in England, Scotland or Wales or Northern Ireland more broadly. Arguably the need is greater in a Northern Ireland context. A number of specific regeneration funds available in the rest of the UK have not been available in Northern Ireland which has led to a clear deficit and a missed opportunity for growth and positive economic, regeneration, social and environmental outcomes.

- 3.3 The wider context for seeking enhanced powers and funding was outlined previously to the Committee. The English Devolution White Paper, published in December 2024, envisions a fundamental change of the relationship between Whitehall and local government in England – with the intent of tackling regional inequality by transferring authority and funding over key policy areas and funding, such as economic development, housing, planning, transport and skills. There is now a presumption in favour of devolution on foot of this White Paper and with the creation of new Strategic Authorities this means funding and legislative powers will be further devolved in other UK cities. The transfer of additional funding and power to these Strategic Authorities across the whole of England will allow Councils to set and deliver on priorities that better respond to local needs and drive growth. Increased funding pots and flexibilities are to be afforded to those Strategic Authorities that progress within the devolution framework, with single-pot integrated settlements over 30 years and access to consolidated funding pots covering local growth, place, housing, and regeneration, non-apprenticeship adult skills and transport. Strategic Authorities designated at the Established Mayoral level of devolution will receive Integrated Settlements. By way of example, West Midlands Combined Authority will receive £388.6m for 2025-26 and Greater Manchester will receive £630m for 2025/26. Other areas include the North East, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Liverpool City Region and Greater London Authority, where the process for determining the value of the integrated settlements has been published but not the funding allocations currently.

- 3.4 In addition, the spending review, June 2025, the Government set an ambition to deliver around 300,000 social and affordable homes through the new £39bn Social and Affordable Homes programme. At this stage it is uncertain if comparable funding will be allocated to the Devolved Administrations via the Barnett Formula, however it is understood that it will not. Homes England, the government's housing and regeneration agency, has recently started working more closely with Combined Authorities which reflects Homes England remit to include a range of regeneration activities i.e. wider than just housing delivery. Between 2018 – 2023 Homes England has supported the development of 186,413 new homes, unlocked land with the capacity for a further 392,000 homes and invested £11.1bn. The recently announced Land Fund (BIL) which is a £1bn capital programme, is targeting unlocking 40,000 new homes and up to 200,000sqm employment floorspace.
- 3.5 Major regeneration schemes that are being funded by Homes England include a UK Government approved £121m funding package to bring forward new homes, public realm and commercial space at Forth Yards, a 50-acre water frontage brownfield site in Newcastle. Funding will allow for site remediation, ground works and infrastructure activity, fixing complex land issues in advance of procurement process to appoint a private sector delivery partner. The business case was developed by Homes England, working in partnership with Newcastle City Council, North East Mayoral Combined Authority and Network Rail. Homes England has also just announced a regeneration scheme they are supporting with Plymouth City Council and City College Plymouth with £18.4m grant funding from their BIL Fund which includes transforming the listed Civic Centre for residential use, alongside the College Campus. it is to pay for a programme of remediation work to bring the building to a point where residential units can be fitted out and delivered by a private developer. Additional funding for this wider regeneration scheme has come from other public sector sources including the Levelling Up Fund and Future High Streets Fund, as well a Council funding. The purpose of BIL funding is to deliver housing led brownfield infrastructure and land projects but is only available in England.
- 3.6 It is clear that Belfast is already facing a regeneration deficit in both powers and funding and could be left even further behind if there are not commensurate levels of funding as with other core cities. This could make it even harder for the city to attract the resources needed to unlock demand and growth.

3.7 The Growth Proposition seeks to secure regeneration funding for Belfast from UK Government and sets out asks for a Regeneration, Housing and Infrastructure Fund seeded by the Government focussed on potential priority areas to transform Belfast. It also seeks capacity (revenue) funding to further regeneration priorities, in line with similar funding received by the Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and Strategic Authorities in England. This includes:

- Housing Led, Mixed Use Regeneration including measures to address dereliction
- Improved infrastructure, connectivity, public realm, place making, public and green spaces
- Unlocking Major Regeneration Schemes

3.8 Development of the Proposition has been informed through significant engagement with a range of cross-sector stakeholders and in line with the Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) Stocktake findings which received political and stakeholder endorsement.

4.0 Main Report

4.13 Belfast Business Case for Place-Based Investment

As noted to Committee in April 2025, the Place Proposition was to be supported by a full five part business case. This is now completed and outlines the strategic, economic, commercial, financial and management case to support the request to Westminster. The business case sets out how BCC has spent the last 18 months laying the groundwork to develop the proposition and establish the conditions for successful delivery. This has included stakeholder engagement with elected representatives and business, investor and local communities, and builds on more than 10 years of wider community and stakeholder engagement through the Belfast Agenda and BCCRIS. The recommendations have been informed through previous engagement with Members, Belfast MPs, Executive Ministers and engagement with BCC officers, senior officials from DoF, DfI and DfC and representatives from local development, business and local communities to inform the priority areas, and to assist with quantifying the ask.

4.2 The business case includes a comprehensive evidence base to provide insight about Belfast's economic, demographic, housing, business, labour market and commercial property performance. The analysis recognises the city's strategic role within the wider region and its function as the capital city of Northern Ireland. The proposal builds on the success

of the Belfast Region City Deal, and targets the city's legacy of physical regeneration challenges, and the wider 'regeneration deficit' that has seen Belfast struggle to match the power and dynamism of the English and Scottish Core Cities. This proposition sets out a compelling case for change and notes that unlike its peers, Belfast has lacked the means and resources to correct what could be seen as 'regeneration deficit'. Public spending on 'regeneration' has been about one half of its English counterparts, while decision-making remains fragmented and difficult. It notes that there are significant opportunities to be gained from an uplift in place-based regeneration and that this is best addressed by public-sector led investments which can provide the leadership and confidence to the private sector and strategic stakeholders.

It outlines how BCC is seeking to equip itself with the ability and responsibilities to drive growth and investment in the city and is seeking to establish a new City Regeneration Fund (CRF) designed to drive catalytic change - focusing on people and city living, delivering active and sustained travel, developing green and climate resilient public realm, unlocking stalled major redevelopment schemes, addressing dereliction and vacancy and taking a multi-agency approach to place making and city management.

- 4.3 Critically, the proposition is based on an evidence-led understanding of market failures and a shared vision for the future. The business case highlights that the proposed areas of focus provide value for money and deliverability. Conservatively based economic analysis shows that the proposal will achieve a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of at least 1.5 (as assessed against MHCLG criteria and indicates that £1 public expenditure returns £1.50- £2 in benefits achieved). However, it notes HM Treasury has recognised that the current place-based appraisal approach inadequately captures the wider economic impacts associated with regeneration activity. Therefore, it suggests that this understates the dynamic impact that the Fund could have on the wider economy and anticipates long-term benefits will be transformational for the wider region.
- 4.4 The proposal builds on established systems and existing work streams undertaken by BCC and its partners. This includes the strong governance and administrative structures already in place, and a Regeneration Framework which can prioritise investments and activities. It proposes that the current governance structures in place to support the City Regeneration Fund provide a mechanism for supporting the CRF.

- 4.5 It recognises the incredibly difficult financial conditions across the United Kingdom but highlights that this proposal is about unleashing potential and growth and is a statement of intent for the future of the whole of Northern Ireland. It notes that our asks mirror arrangements in other parts of the country, and requests:
- A £250m City-Wide Infrastructure, Housing and Regeneration Fund - seeded by the UK Government and supported in the long term by greater business rates retention. This would be targeted on delivering housing led regeneration, green urban infrastructure and placemaking and unlocking strategic regeneration schemes. To address the 'regeneration deficit', we would ask that this be provided on the same basis as a City Deal, that is over and above the Northern Ireland Block Grant settlement.
 - £1m Capacity (revenue) funding per annum for three years – to provide the support needed to building house capacity .
- 4.6 The Proposition, and the business case is premised as a Barnett Bypass. It will not affect the core settlement and highlights that Council are committed to working in partnership with the Executive if successful through a new model of collaboration. It is not seeking to 'unpick' the current core settlement via Barnett but seeks to ensure that Belfast receives comparable funding to other UK cities on foot of recently announced funding of Strategic Mayoral Authorities via Home England regeneration funding. The Proposition and business case highlight that a successful Belfast is a successful Northern Ireland. This has been demonstrated via the Innovation & Inclusive Growth Commission, the BRCD and extensive economic analysis and empirical evidence. It is important to highlight that Belfast's city region geography like Birmingham and Manchester's, benefits from a central urban area with a higher density of economic activity. As such Belfast is highly attractive to knowledge based economic activity which is highly productive and which delivers prosperity and opportunity through the region
- 4.7 In order to develop the full model business case specimen projects were identified. Projects were identified on the fundamental basis of growth output. Given that the Proposition is predicated on delivering growth projects identified were on the basis that they were catalytic in nature and had the ability to deliver the expected growth. The Regeneration Framework as previously agreed by Committee assisted in drawing down on specimen projects for inclusion. This approach allows for some degree of

agility to permit the inclusion of other schemes going forward if they can deliver similar economic growth outcomes. The specimen schemes included:

- A Housing Led Regeneration Programme including BCC seed sites, wider viability support for housing-led regeneration, H.O.U.S.E (Homes over upper spaces for everyone, aimed at reactivating vacant spaces on upper floors for retrofit delivery)
- Unlocking Major Developments including Tribeca, Waterside, Dunbar Street and the The Sixth
- A Bolder Vision including Belfast Streets Ahead public realm, High Street Investment Fund, Under the Bridges, Inner North West Placemaking and Castle Street and Environs.

4.8 As updated at PLCF in November, the Business Case has been recently completed and submitted to UK Government for consideration. This is in line with advice on the need to ensure the compelling case is with Government in advance of the Chancellors Budget Statement on 26 November 2025. It is recognised that this submission is in the backdrop of a time of fiscal constraint. The Mayoral Combined Authorities in England have however been successful in securing investment because they have built a clear growth story. The business case articulates Belfast's growth proposition.

4.9 Advocacy & Engagement

Work has continued on engagement and advocacy activities to support the Proposition, including engagement with NI Executive and Westminster at official and political level. As noted to Committee in April 2025, a joint Ministerial meeting with Ministers for Finance, Economy, Infrastructure and Communities has now taken place. This meeting was held in late September 2025 and follows a meeting with the Minister for Finance in April 2025 which was facilitated by the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership. The feedback from Ministers was positive and noting the case for Belfast as the Regional Economic Driver.

4.10 As previously noted by the City Growth & Regeneration Committee engagement has included attendance at the Labour Party Annual Conference 2025. The conference took place in Liverpool from 28 September – 1 October 2025. This provided an opportunity to engage with key Labour MP's and officials, in pursuing the case for change as set out in the Place Based Growth Proposition.

- 4.11 Following submission of the Business Case to Government work on a wider communication and engagement plan, with supporting messaging documents aligned to the business case findings, is advancing. Continued support from Members in advocating for this Proposition, notably through party political channels, will be very important to raise visibility for this Proposition within NI Executive and Westminster at local, MP / MLA and Ministerial level.

4.12 Scottish Cities Alliance

The Scottish Cities Alliance have issued an invitation for Council to participate in a roundtable discussion with city leaders from Scotland and Wales to discuss the English devolution white paper, and response from cities in devolved nations. The invitation is for the attendance of the Lord Mayor, and as Belfast City Council are the lead Authority for the BRCD the invite was extended to Council's nominated Elected Member who would Chair the BRCD Council Panel when BCC host meetings. It is understood that the Scottish Cities Alliance are considering inviting the other BRCD Councils.

- 4.13 The session will focus on how to respond to the pace and scale of English devolution to ensure city regions in the devolved nations remain competitive for investment and growth including best practice in demonstrating the strength of partnership working within existing and established governance models which can ensure the UK Industrial Strategy supports balanced growth across all nations and regions. It will consider how the devolved nations capitalise on their strong established brand to compete for investment alongside Mayoral Strategic Authorities at events such as UKREiiF as well as opportunities for collaboration across shared sectoral strengths. Political leaders from all eight Scottish cities will attend, Cardiff Capital Region have also indicated that their political leaders will attend. This event will take place on 21 January 2026 in London. Committee approval is sought for Elected Members attendance and travel.

5.0 Financial and Resource Implications

- 5.1 Financial impact directly associated with the proposition and business case recommendations will be brought back to Committee in due course following consideration by UK Government.

Costs including travel and subsistence for the Scottish Cities Alliance roundtable at the time of preparing the report for Committee are estimated at £500 per person.

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

6.1 None associated with this report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations as outlined in the report.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Physical Programme Update

The Director of Property and Projects submitted for the Committee’s consideration the following report:

“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 requests for stage movement approvals under the Capital Programme.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to –

- **Capital Programme Movements –**
 - **St George’s Market – New Stalls – Note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £433,840 be allocated.**
 - **Open Spaces and Streetscene (OSS) Machinery Replacement Programme 2025/26 – Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £336,231.**
 - **Workshop Plant Replacement - Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £120,000.**

- Wilmont House H&S works – Agree that ‘Wilmont House Health & Safety Works’ is moved immediately to *Stage 3 – Committed* due to the condition of the building, 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.
- Fernhill House H&S works – Agree that ‘Fernhill House Health & Safety Works’ is moved immediately to *Stage 3 – Committed* due to the condition of the building, 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.
- Colin Active Travel (formerly Colin Greenway) – 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.
- Depot Charging Scheme - Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

Physical Programme

- 3.1 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.

Capital Programme - Proposed Movements

- 3.2 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
St George's Market – New Stalls	Replacement of market stalls in St George's Market.	Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £433,840
Open Spaces and Streetscene (OSS) Machinery Replacement Programme 2025/26	Rolling programme to replace grounds maintenance machinery which is beyond its lifespan.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £336,231
Workshop Plant Replacement	To replace workshop plant which exceeded 10 plus years and no longer fit for purpose.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £120,000
Wilmont House H&S Works	Remedial works to be carried out to ensure the building is made safe for further surveys to enable renovation works.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed
Fernhill House H&S Works	Remedial works to be carried out to ensure the building is made safe for further surveys to enable renovation works.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed
Colin Active Travel Phase 1 (formerly Colin Greenway)	Development of active travel routes within the Colin Area to connect residents to key services, amenities and employment opportunities.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed
Depot Charging Scheme	Improvements to electric vehicle (EV) charging provision on Council depots.	Add as Stage 1 – Emerging

3.3 St George's Market – New Stalls

Members will recall that in November 2024 this project was moved to **Stage 3 – Committed** and held at **Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk** pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return. It was also agreed that an update was to be brought back to Committee along with the final

budget allocation and confirmation that this is within the affordability limits of the Council. This project involves the replacement of market stalls in St George's Market. The current stalls are over 18 years old and many are in a poor state of repair. Members are asked to note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £433,840 be allocated.

3.4 Open Spaces and Streetscene (OSS) Machinery Replacement Programme 2025/26

This project was moved to the Capital Programme at Stage 2 – Uncommitted in September 2025, to replace grounds maintenance machinery to maintain service provision across the Council's estate. As per the three-stage approval process, the outline business case has been completed and the project can now progress to delivery stage. The list of machineries to be procured under the programme for 2025/26 is attached at Appendix 1. Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £336,231. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

3.5 Workshop Plant Replacement

This project was added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging in September 2025, with the aim to replace workshop plant which exceeded 10 plus years of working wear and tear and no longer fit for purpose. In order to meet the demands placed upon the service, these workshop plant and equipment need to be replaced immediately. This includes replacement of single girder overhead crane, GVC/MOT roller brake tester and others. Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £120,000. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

3.6 Wilmont House Health & Safety Works

Members will recall that in November 2024, the Committee received a detailed update on Council heritage assets including Wilmont House and agreed that the project be added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging. The building current state of internal disrepair has meant only a visual inspection was conducted, mainly due to restriction of safe access around the internal areas. A high-level feasibility study for remedial works was carried out to

ensure the building is made safe for further renovation works. A series of immediate health and safety works are required. Members are asked to agree that 'Wilmont House Health & Safety Works' is moved immediately to Stage 3 – Committed due to the condition of the building, 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.

3.7 Fernhill House Health & Safety Works

In November 2024, Members received a detailed update on Council heritage assets including Fernhill House and Courtyard and noted that both the main House and the Courtyard buildings are on HED's 'At Risk' register. In September 2025, the Council agreed that the £948k underspend be committed to Fernhill Capital Works. The project is currently in the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging and the business case is being developed. A high-level feasibility study for remedial works was carried out with evidence and recommendations required to proceed with essential 'make safe' works that will allow safe access and future decision-making on the long-term use of Fernhill House. Implementing these initial stabilisation, health and safety works, we can secure the building for further evaluation and preserve the opportunity for longer term restoration of a property of both historic and cultural importance. Members are asked to agree that 'Fernhill House Health & Safety Works' is moved immediately to Stage 3 – Committed due to the condition of the building, 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.

3.8 Colin Active Travel Phase 1 (formerly Colin Greenway)

Members will recall that in November 2021 the 'Colin Greenway' project was moved to Stage 2 – Uncommitted under the Connectivity/ Access to the Hills theme. The project involves the development of active travel routes within the Colin Area to connect residents to key services, amenities and employment opportunities, including recent major public investments in amenities such as the Transport

Hub, Belfast Rapid Transport (BRT) and Páirc Nua Chollann. The project aims to make walking/ cycling routes more direct to incentivise people to use them. The active travel routes identified will be delivered on a phased approach. The order of delivery will be agreed with DfI once designs have been completed. Members will note that the development of Active Travel Routes has broad support from several key stakeholders & partners including DfI, DfC, BCC, TEO Urban Villages Initiatives, NIHE, and the local community including Colin Neighbourhood Partnership (CNP). DfI have agreed to explore a partnership delivery with BCC by proposing to fully fund the active travel routes which form part of their Belfast Cycle Network. The proposal is for BCC to act as the lead delivery partner delivering the BCN routes within the Colin area. Members are asked to agree that this partnership project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed, 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.

3.9 Depot Charging Scheme

In October 2025, the SP&R Committee has approved the submission of an application for funding under the Government’s Depot Charging System. The Depot Charging Scheme supports the uptake of zero emission HGVs, vans, and coaches by part-funding the installation of charging infrastructure at fleet depots. The scheme covers 75% of eligible costs incurred and 25% will be the Council’s counterpart. The project which aims to improve the EV charging on Council sites will support the fleet transition and overall decarbonisation of Council fleet. Members are asked to agree that the project is added to Stage 1 – Emerging to allow the business case to be developed and funding application to be submitted.

3.10 Financial & Resource Implications

Financial Implications –

St George’s Market – New Stalls – capital budget allocation of up to £433,840 in which £250,000 is profiled for 2025/26 and the remaining £183,840 for 2026/27.

OSS Machinery Replacement Programme 2025/26 – capital allocation of up to £336,231.

Workshop Plant Replacement – capital allocation of up to £120,000.

The Director of Finance has confirmed that these are within the affordability limits of the Council.

Resource Implications – Officer time to deliver.

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

All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process .”

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the recommendation to move the Fernhill House Health and Safety works project to Stage 3 until the Irish Language Policy call-in had been resolved.

On a vote, eleven Members voted for the proposal and three against and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee:

• **Capital Programme Movements –**

- **St George’s Market – New Stalls** – Noted that a satisfactory tender return had been received and that the Director of Finance had confirmed that the project was within the affordability limits of the Council and agreed that a maximum of £433,840 be allocated.
- **Open Spaces and Streetscene (OSS) Machinery Replacement Programme 2025/26** – Agreed that the project be moved to *Stage 3 – Committed*, with a maximum allocation of up to £336,231.
- **Workshop Plant Replacement** - Agreed that the project be moved to *Stage 3 – Committed*, with a maximum allocation of up to £120,000.
- **Wilmont House H&S works** – Agreed that ‘Wilmont House Health and Safety Works’ be moved immediately to *Stage 3 – Committed* due to the condition of the building, 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.
- **Fernhill House H&S works** – Agreed to defer consideration of the recommendation to move the project to Stage 3 until the Irish Language Policy call-in had been resolved.
 - **Colin Active Travel (formerly Colin Greenway)** – Agreed that the project be 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.
 - **Depot Charging Scheme** - Agreed that the project was added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.

Asset Management

The Committee:

- i) **Barnett Demesne – Deed of Surrender and New Lease with Add Venture Northern Ireland Limited**
 - Approved the Deed of Surrender and entering into a new 35-year lease with Add Venture Northern Ireland Limited.
- ii) **Barnett Demesne - Deed of Surrender and New Lease with Belfast Activity Centre**
 - Approved the Deed of Surrender and entering into a new 35-year lease with Belfast Activity Centre.
- iii) **Car Parking – New Agreement for existing ESB Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Points**
 - Approved entering into rolling 12-month agreements with the ESB for the continued use of space for electric vehicle car charging points at Glenburn Road, Hope Street and Little Victoria Street Car Parks.

The Committee noted that the previously agreed report on the development of a policy framework to clarify guidance on any future display of materials in all Council assets, including community centres, would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee for consideration.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Contracts Update

The Committee:

- Approved the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1);
- Approved the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2); and
- In relation to the 'Provision of Sharps Boxes Services' contract, agreed that a report be submitted to a future committee to outline the volume of usage and resources of the issue, together with the work being undertaken with community organisations.

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Email filtering to remove spam and malware in emails	Up to 3 years	£150,000	S McNicholl	Without a filtering solution like this BCC would receive a large number of spam and malware emails. This would increase the risk of a cyber attack	N	N	N
Urban Meadows Creation Works – in relation to a Notice of Motion	Up to 1 year	£50,000	S Leonard	Required under a Notice of Motion to create 4 new urban meadows across the city	N	Y – P&C Oct 25	N

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
The repair, deployment, filling and storage of 20 beacons	Up to 36 months	£172,000	J Girvan	A supplier is required to carry out these works prior to the delivery of the annual Beacon programme on July 11th.	N	N	N
Fairground rides and entertainment package for events	Up to 4 years	£480,000	D Sales	Service required to support wide range of Council events held throughout the year. May also be used to support Fleadh requirements as well.	N	N	N
Provision of fuels; Diesel, Gas Oil, Kerosene & Ad Blue	Up to 3 years	£500,000	D Sales	Required to fuel various machines, plant items and buildings throughout the Council's estate	N	N	N
Collection, treatment and recycling of hard plastics	Up to 4 years	£650,000	D Sales	Service required to support recycling of hard plastics from household recycling centres by our waste management team.	N	N	N

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Provision of Sharps Boxes Services	Up to 3 years	£90,000	D Sales	Specialist and suitable certified contractor to provide a sharp boxes service. Service includes supply of sharps/ needle boxes to designated street and parks locations and safe removal/ disposal of same.	N	N	N
Public protection software for the provision of a Case Management Solution for NI HMO.	Up to 3 years	£85,000	P Gribben	For the continued use of the current public protection software system for NI Housing of Multiple Occupation 'HMOs'. It is a regional service. BCC provide the service, collect all the fees and licence HMOs for all Councils in NI. All Councils have licences and access to the system.	N	N	N

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason	Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Pest control services across BCC sites	Up to 1 year	£80,000	N Largey	A STA is recommended with Termapest to regularise this off contract spend until insourcing project is complete. This is estimated to be completed within 6 to 12 months; STA to cover up to 12 months as open tender exercise will take up to 6 months to complete. No fixed term contract will be created with Termapest as part of this STA so spend with Termapest will cease once insourcing project is complete.	Termapest Ltd	11.	N	N
Support and maintenance of E-Bravo tendering solution	Up to 2 years	£111,146	S McNicholl	Annual license for the continued use of E-Bravo to support the Council's procurement teams and publishing tenders electronically. Exploring options about delivering through e5 financial system	Bravo Solutions (Jaggaer)	3.	N	N

				and their procurement module.				
Tricostar Case Management solution	Up to 3 years	£46,304	P Gribben	The current system delivers functionality which is required in Legal Services to manage case files along with associated documents / correspondence. There is no other supplier who can offer the license and support requirements for this solution	Tricostar Software Ltd	3.	N	N

Equality and Good Relations

Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting of 10th November

The Committee approved the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 10th November, including:

Presentation from Law Centre - Welcome Information Programme

- The Shared City Partnership noted the presentation and recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it noted the presentation.

Presentation from International Organisation for Migration

- The Shared City Partnership noted the presentation and recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it noted the presentation.

Update from Partnership Members

- Updates from members were noted in the minutes for further information.

Good Relations Verbal Update

- The Shared City Partnership agreed to note the update and recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that they also agreed and noted the and agreed the verbal update recorded in the minutes.

PEACEPLUS – Secretariat Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee noted the contents of the report.

Peace Plus Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee noted the contents of the report.

Peace Plus Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update

- Members noted the contents of the report and agreed:
 - Extended delivery timeframe to 31st March, 2028 for Lot 1 – Language and Cultural Access of the CCD5 Multiculturalism to Interculturalism project
 - Morton Community Centre, as the initial location for a Welcome Hub and to consider nominations for the Civic Mentor element of the CCD2 – Community Connections project; and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed the recommendations and noted the contents of the report.

Community Regeneration and Transformation Thematic Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee noted the contents of the report.

Any Other Business

- There was no further business.

Equality Screening and Rural Needs
Outcome Report Quarter 2 2025-26

The Committee was reminded that the Council had a duty to have, under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998:

- Due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity in relation to the nine equality categories; and
- Regard to the desirability of promotion good relations

In addition, under section 1 of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016:

- Due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services.

It was reported that the Council had a process to carry out equality screening and rural needs assessment of new and revised policies. This allowed any impacts related to equality of opportunity, good relations or rural needs to be identified and addressed.

The Committee was advised that an equality screening and rural needs impact assessment template had been completed by the relevant officer, in collaboration with the Equality and Diversity Unit. On a regular basis, the Unit collated all completed templates into a screening outcome report which was published onto the Council's website along with the relevant completed templates. The current screening outcome report for Quarter 2 2025-26 was attached at [Appendix 1](#).

The Committee noted the Quarterly Screening Outcome Report which would be published on the Council's website.

Operational Issues

Minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum of 13th November

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum of 13th November, 2025.

Requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality

The Committee approved the recommendations as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE
Multi-Ethnic Sports & Cultures Northern Ireland (MSCNI)	10 January 2026	MSCNI 10th Anniversary & Launch of Northern Ireland Sports, Cultures and Neighbourhood Stories Awards (NISCANS Awards) The NISCANS Awards aim to shine a light on local heroes, community champions, and organisations who have helped welcome individuals and families who have migrated to NI from diverse backgrounds, contributing to inclusion, cohesion and a shared sense of belonging. Awards, cultural performances followed by dinner and entertainment. Numbers attending – 100	C & D	Current rate free as charity

Department of Education N.Ireland/ Ireland	12 May 2026	Creative Connections Shared Island Pilot Programme– Celebration Day to celebrate the work of young people, Teachers and Creative Practitioners and showcase the value of cross border collaboration in Education. Speeches, showcase of work, entertainment followed by lunch. Numbers attending – 230	A & D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Cregagh Wanderers Football Club	22 May 2026	Cregagh Wanderers FC 20th Anniversary Celebration – Formal dinner with presentations and light entertainment. Numbers attending – 200	C	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Northern Ireland Screen	3 June 2026	Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund USA 250 reception at the Celtic Media Festival – coinciding with the Celtic Media Festival, Ulster Scots Broadcast Fund would like to celebrate it's 15-year anniversary and showcase the work they have funded for broadcasters including BBC NI and RTE with a drinks reception with light catering, speeches and showreels played. Numbers attending – 200	A, B & C	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
The Church of Ireland	28 June 2026	Opening Gala Dinner for the 19th meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC-19). The council, which includes Anglican bishops, other clergy, and laity, meets every 2-3 years in different parts of the world. This dinner followed by speeches will see attendees from over 40 countries. Numbers attending – 180	A & B	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Queen's University Belfast (QUB)	2 July 2026	QUB International Summer School Farewell Event – Drinks reception followed by dinner, speeches and awards to celebrate around 100 international students who will have been studying in Belfast for 3 weeks prior to event. Numbers attending - 100	A & B	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>

Heritage Network	28 September 2026	Heritage Network Conference Dinner following main conference day in the assembly buildings. The event is expected to attract 250+ delegates from across the community heritage sector in the UK. Reception, dinner, presentations and cultural performances. Numbers attending – 300	A & B	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
ImageNation NI	17 October 2026	Belfast Diwali 2026 – Indian celebration event with dinner and cultural performances to mark the festival of Diwali. Number attending – 400	D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Gertrude Star Flute Band	31 October 2026	Gertrude Star 65th Anniversary Dinner – drinks reception, dinner, speeches and presentations followed by flute band performance and live music to end the evening. Numbers attending 150	C	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>

Chairperson