

Public Document Pack

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



**Belfast
City Council**

5th February, 2026

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet in the **Council Chamber, City Hall, Belfast on Monday, 9th February, 2026** at 6.00 pm, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. **Summons**
2. **Apologies**
3. **Declarations of Interest**
4. **Minutes of the Council (Pages 1 - 6)**
5. **Official Announcements**
6. **Request for Deputation - UK Shared Prosperity Fund/Local Growth Fund - (NICVA)**
7. **Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Pages 7 - 42)**
8. **Minutes of the People and Communities Committee (Pages 43 - 52)**
9. **Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Pages 53 - 74)**
10. **Minutes of Licensing Committee (Pages 75 - 82)**
11. **Minutes of Planning Committee (Pages 83 - 90)**

12. **Minutes of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee (Pages 91 - 96)**
13. **Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee (Pages 97 - 106)**
14. **Minutes of Standards and Business Committee (Pages 107 - 108)**

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall
on Thursday, 8th January, 2026 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Lord Mayor, Councillor Kelly (Chairperson); The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Doherty; Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers; and Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower, Bradley, Brennan, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Collins, de Faoite, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey, Long, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, McAteer, McCabe, McCallin, McCann, McCormick, McCusker, McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKay, McKeown, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Meenehan, Murphy, Murray, Nelson, Ó Néill, Smyth, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported on behalf of Councillor Flynn.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Groogan, Duffy, P. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly, McCabe and Verner declared an interest in relation to the item 'Minutes of Shared City Partnership' within the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, in that their employers were in receipt of PEACEPLUS funding. Councillor Beattie also declared an interest in relation to the same item, in so far as it related to the Community Recovery Fund, as he was associated with a group/organisation which had applied for or received funding.

Councillor de Faoite declared an interest in relation to the items 'Planning Information' and 'Requests for use of the City Hall' within the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, in that he was on the Board of Governors of Forge Integrated Primary School.

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in relation to the item 'Draft Public Health Agency Partnership and Engagement Strategy 2025-2030' within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, in that he was employed by the Public Health Agency.

Councillor Murray declared an interest in relation to the items 'Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann' and 'Contracts Update' within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, in that he was employed by SOS N.I. who were a delivery partner of the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann.

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Councillor Maghie declared an interest in relation to the item 'Physical Programme' within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, in that she was a member of a club which had been referenced within the report in respect of the Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26.

Councillors Beattie, Black, Bradley, Canavan, Doran, Groogan, M. Donnelly and Verner declared an interest in relation to the item 'Community Support Plan - Large Grant Funding Programme' within the minutes of the People and Communities Committee, in that they were associated with organisations which had applied for or received funding.

As the above-mentioned items did not become the subject of discussion or debate during proceedings, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor Long declared an interest under the item 'Draft Amenity Byelaws' within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, in that his wife was the Minister for Justice, however, was not required to leave the meeting.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor Kelly),
Seconded by Councillor Smyth, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the meetings of the Council of 1st and 22nd December, 2025, be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

The Lord Mayor congratulated Mr. Noel Liggett, District Master of Ballynafeigh LOL No 10, who had been awarded as a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) as part of the New Year Honors list for his services to the community in South Belfast.

The Lord Mayor also congratulated Council employee, Ms. Vivienne Fullerton, Lead Registrar, who had been awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) as part of the New Year Honors list for her services to Local Government.

The Lord Mayor advised the Council that Ms. Eimear Henry, Creative and Strategic Lead for Belfast Stories, would soon be leaving the Council and thanked Ms. Henry for her service and dedication to the role.

The Deputy Lord Mayor thanked the Council team, and its partners, for their efforts and work in helping the city secure the title of a European City of Sport for 2026. The Deputy Lord Mayor highlighted the importance of sport across the city from grassroots participation to elite performance.

Councillors Long and R. Brooks paid tribute to Councillor McAteer for all her work throughout 2025 in her role as High Sheriff, and wished the incoming High Sheriff, Alderman McCoubrey, well in the role for the year ahead. Councillor McAteer thanked the Members for their kind words and wished Alderman McCoubrey well in the role.

Alderman Lawlor acknowledged a recent tribute by the Hanwood Trust to its late former Chair, Mr. Brian Rea CBE JP, who had named a room within the Hanwood Community Resource Centre in his honour.

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Alderman Lawlor extended his congratulations to former Deputy Lord Mayor and High Sheriff, Mr. Tom Haire, who had been awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) as part of the New Year Honors list for his services to Local Government and to the community in Belfast. At the request of Alderman Lawlor, the Lord Mayor agreed to send a letter of congratulations to Mr. Haire on his award.

Alderman Lawlor acknowledged the 50th anniversary of the Kingsmills massacre on 5th January and commended the courage of survivor Mr. Alan Black and the victims' families in their campaign for justice.

Councillor Smyth extended his condolences to the families and friends of the two people who lost their lives in the city centre before Christmas. He also highlighted the issue of homelessness within the city centre and the need for a collective approach from the voluntary and statutory sectors to help address this issue.

Councillor de Faoite congratulated Lisnasharragh constituent Mr. Sean McFarlane, founder of local biotech company Biomarx, on the news that Biomarx had raised £700,000 in pre-seed funding to progress the development of a diagnostics platform focused on lung cancer. At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the Lord Mayor agreed to write to Mr. McFarlane to congratulate Biomarx on the funding raised.

Councillor de Faoite also extended his condolences to his party colleague, and former Councillor, Ms. Mary Muldoon on the recent passing of her sister. At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the Lord Mayor agreed to send a letter of condolence to Ms. Muldoon on behalf of the Council.

Councillor Collins extended his condolences to the family and friends of local boxer Mr. Paul McCullagh Jr., who had recently passed away. At the request of Councillor Collins, the Lord Mayor agreed to send a letter of condolence to the family of Mr. McCullagh Jr. on behalf of the Council.

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Brennan,
Seconded by Councillor Black,

"That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th December, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted."

Hardship Programme 2025/26 –
Response from the Department for Communities Minister

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Collins,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth,

"That the decision under the heading 'Hardship Programme 2025/26 - Response from the Department for Communities Minister' be amended to provide that the Council writes to the Minister for Communities to express its objection to the confirmation that the Department for Communities hardship funding, provided in 2023/24, would not be available in future years, and to encourage the Minister to look at more equitable ways to tax the profits of energy companies to help fund the service going forward."

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At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the proposer and seconder agreed that the motion be amended to provide that the Council writes also to the Minister of Education to express its concern in relation to the Education Authority's decision to increase the price of school meals, and to state its support of the campaign by trade unions for the delivery of free school meals for all children.

Accordingly, the Council agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th December, 2025, under the heading "Hardship Programme 2025/26 - Response from the Department for Communities Minister" be amended to provide that the Council writes to:

- the Minister for Communities to express its objection to the confirmation that the Department for Communities hardship funding, provided in 2023/24, would not be available in future years, and to encourage the Minister to look at more equitable ways to tax the profits of energy companies to help fund the service going forward; and
- the Minister of Education to express its concern in relation to the Education Authority's decision to increase the price of school meals, and to state its support of the campaign by trade unions for the delivery of free school meals for all children.

Draft Amenity Byelaws

Amendment

Moved by Alderman McCullough,
Seconded by Councillor McDowell,

"That the decision under the heading 'Draft Amenity Byelaws' be amended to provide that the Council agrees not to progress with any byelaws that censor imagery or content."

On a recorded vote, seventeen Members voted for the amendment and forty-one against and it was declared lost.

For (17)	Against (41)
The Lord Mayor (Councillor Kelly); Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers; and Councillors R. Brooks, Bunting, Cobain, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Ferguson, McCormick, McDowell, I. McLaughlin and Verner.	The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Doherty); and Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower, Bradley, Brennan, Canavan, Carson, Collins, de Faoite, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R. M. Donnelly, Duffy, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey, Long, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, McAteer, McCabe, McCallin, McCann, McCusker, McDonough-Brown, McKay, McKeown, R. McLaughlin, Meenehan, Murphy, Murray, Nelson, Ó Néill, Smyth, Walsh and Whyte.

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Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th December, 2025, were thereupon approved and adopted.

People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Cobain,
Seconded by Councillor Doran and

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 2nd December, 2025, be approved and adopted.

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

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

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 3rd December, 2025, be approved and adopted.

Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor Doran,
Seconded by Councillor Long and

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 10th December, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Alderman McCullough and

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 9th December, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Moved by Councillor Hanvey,
Seconded by Councillor Duffy and

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee of 15th December, 2025, be approved and adopted.

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Climate and City Resilience Committee

Moved by Councillor M. Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson and

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 11th December, 2025, be approved and adopted.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 23rd January, 2026

HYBRID MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Brennan (Chairperson);
Alderman McCoubrey;
Councillors Beattie, Black, Bunting, Cobain,
de Faoite, R-M Donnelly, Ferguson, Garrett,
Long, Maghie, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin,
Murphy, Murray, 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;
Mr. K. Forster, Director of Economic Development;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. E. McConville, Director of Communications, Marketing
and External Affairs;
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood
Services;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources;
Ms. N. Bohill, Head of Commercial and Procurement
Services
Ms. L-A O'Donnell, Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism;
Ms. K. Mullan, Fleadh Cheoil - Operations Lead;
Mr. M. McCann, City Innovation Manager;
Ms. N. Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager;
Ms. M. Higgins, Lead Officer – Community Support and
Neighbourhood Integration;
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance
Coordinator.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 19th December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 8th January, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council

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

***Hardship Programme 2025/26 –
Response from the Department for Communities Minister***

That the Council writes to:

- the Minister for Communities to express its objection to the confirmation that the Department for Communities hardship funding, provided in 2023/24, would not be available in future years, and to encourage the Minister to look at more equitable ways to tax the profits of energy companies to help fund the service going forward; and
- the Minister of Education to express its concern in relation to the Education Authority's decision to increase the price of school meals, and to state its support of the campaign by trade unions for the delivery of free school meals for all children.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Beattie, Black and I. McLaughlin declared an interest under item 3.b) Community Support Plan - Large Grant Funding Programme, in that they were associated with a group/organisation which had applied for or received funding. As the item did not become the subject of debate, they were not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor Murray declared an interest in items 3.c) Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in that he was employed for the S.O.S who were a delivery partner of the Fleadh. As the related interest did not become the subject of debate, he was not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor R-M. Donnelly declared an interest under item 6. (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, and also item 3.b) Community Support Plan - Large Grant Funding Programme, in that she was the Chairperson of New Start Education. As the items did not become the subject of debate, she was not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor de Faoite declared an interest under item 5.c) 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 9.c) Request for use of City Hall grounds for various events in 2026, Councillor Whyte declared an interest in that his employment was associated with one of the event applicants and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Presentation

Northern Ireland Water

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The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Dr. S. Blockwell, Head of Investment Management, and Mr. G. Lawther, Head of Developer Services, Metering and Billing representing Northern Ireland Water to the meeting.

The representatives provided a presentation on the following themes:

- NI Water Governance Model and vital service infrastructure overview;
- NI's Wastewater System and Wastewater Network Capacity Issues;
- Challenges for the environment and for New Connections in Belfast;
- Enquiries requiring significant capital interventions to facilitate a connection due to high polluting assets;
- Belfast Strategic Drainage Infrastructure Plan catchments and Council boundaries;
- Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive and Water Framework Directive;
- Water quality issues in Belfast Lough;
- Belfast Lough modelling confirmed environmental impacts;
- Belfast City Council's ambitions – Local Development Plan;
- Planned investment update; and
- The need for a permanent funding solution.

During discussion, the representatives answered a range of questions in relation to capital spend per head in Belfast (in comparison to capital spend in other council areas), pollution of Lough Neagh, the current funding and investment deficit and future funding models, and the impact of new planning applications on the capacity of the Wastewater Treatment Systems.

Several Members highlighted the need for clear proposals and adequate multi-year budgets, together with interventions on a broader basis to allow smaller developments to proceed.

Dr. Blockwell stated that the current focus was on base maintenance and highlighted that a permanent funding solution was required, and although short-term injections of surplus funds helped, they were not a sustainable solution for critical infrastructure. He pointed out that, because of the scale of the expenditure required in Belfast, available funds had been invested elsewhere. He advised that, without urgent change to the wastewater system, Northern Ireland faced:

- Persistent and worsening pollution;
- Severe restrictions on new housing development; and
- Reduced attractiveness for investors and slower business development.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance, and they retired from the meeting.

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided and that, where relevant, Northern Ireland Water would provide further information on the issues raised.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following eleven 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 eleven 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 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.

**Revenue Estimates 2026/27 and
Medium-Term Financial Planning**

The Committee deferred consideration of the report to allow further information to be provided on the efficiency proposals at its special meeting on Friday, 30th January. It was also agreed that reports be submitted on the Pitches Strategy and the strategic future use of Boucher Playing Fields.

The Committee agreed that the decision should not be subject to call-in, on the basis that an inability to immediately implement the decision would result in a breach of statutory duty in striking the rate by the legislative deadline of 15th February, 2026.

**Community Support Plan - Large
Grant Funding Programme**

The Committee deferred consideration of the report to allow further information to be provided at its special meeting on Friday, 30th January.

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.

During discussion, Members highlighted the need for engagement with local businesses in relation to trading and licensing requirements, the inclusion of local businesses in a food market, further information on campsites, residents' parking scheme consultations, and further engagement with the wider Bands' Forum.

The Committee:

- noted the progress to date on the development of the Fleadh Cheoil;
- agreed that an Expression of Interest exercise be undertaken in relation to a food market for local businesses; and
- agreed that a report be submitted to a future Committee in relation to Camp Site provision and licensing requirements for traders.

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City Hall Income Generation Project

The Committee was provided with an update in relation to City Hall Income Generation proposals and the introduction of the charges set out in the next phase of the project.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and:

- Agreed the revision of criteria for the use of Belfast City Hall;
- Agreed the provision of room hire fees and additional charges / recharges for event services;
- Noted that information on the impact of the closure of the front doors/gates of the City Hall, due to ground works, would be provided to the Committee; and
- Agreed to the request from the Director of the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression to undertake consultation events in the City Hall.

Update on Employees on Temporary Contracts and Agency Workers

The Committee noted the contents of the report which provided an update on the number of employees on temporary contracts, secondments and the number of agency assignees.

Organisational Reviews and Change Programme

The Committee noted the progress on the work programme for the Organisational Reviews and Change Portfolio and timescales going forward.

Communications Update - Belfast City Council use of X/Twitter

The Director of Communications, Marketing and External Affairs advised the Committee of the Council's current use of its social media corporate account on X (formerly Twitter).

Proposal

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth,

That the Committee agrees to suspend the Council's use of its social media account on X and await the outcome of the Ofcom review of the monitoring of Grok (AI assistant app), and that officer's also engage with the PSNI Cyber Crime Unit in relation to the issues raised.

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

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Accordingly, the Committee:

- Noted the information provided;
- Agreed to suspend the Council's use of its social media account on X and await the outcome of the Ofcom review of the monitoring of Grok (AI assistant app); and
- Agreed that officers engage with the PSNI Cyber Crime Unit in relation to the issues raised.

Asset Management

The Committee considered a report regarding asset related disposal, acquisition, and estates matters.

The Committee:

1. **St George's Market Unit 6 – Lease renewal** - Approved the renewal of a Lease to Fullarton Pharmacy Ltd for Unit 6 at St George's Market;
2. Agreed that a report be submitted to a future Committee on the strategic use and future provision of Dunbar link and Duncrue, subject to the wider assessment of the Council's Estate and intrinsic links to future waste and fleet commitments; and
3. Agreed that a report be submitted to a future committee on the potential for the insourcing of kerbside collection and a Materials Recovery Facility.

EV Charging Network on Council Sites

The Director of Property and Projects updated the Committee on the proposed EV Charging Network across Council sites and the proposed list of Council sites to be included within the Tender documentation.

The Committee:

- Noted and agreed the broader list of potential sites included at Appendix 1;
- Noted the updated indicative timescales under 3.2 of the report; and
- Noted the opportunity for Members to join an Energy Saving Trust EV webinar, outlined at 3.3 of the report.

Summer Community Diversionary Programme Delivery Update

The Committee considered a report on the proposed changes to the delivery of the Summer Community Diversionary Programme 2026 – 2028.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Bunting,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson,

That the Committee agrees to the following funding allocations:

July Programme – Area based Funding allocation

- North and West Belfast, including the Shankill - £150,000
- East Belfast - £100,000
- South Belfast, including Suffolk - £100,000

August Programme – Area based Funding allocation

- West Belfast - £160,000
- North Belfast - £95,000
- South Belfast, including Suffolk and East Belfast - £95,000

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

Accordingly, the Committee:

1. Agreed the delivery of SCDP as a 3-year funding model;
2. Agreed the following 3 Area Specifications and funding thresholds for the July programme:
 - North and West Belfast, including the Shankill - £150,000
 - East Belfast - £100,000
 - South Belfast, including Suffolk - £100,000; and
3. Agreed the following 3 Area Specifications and funding thresholds for the August programme:
 - West Belfast - £160,000
 - North Belfast - £95,000
 - South and East Belfast, including Suffolk - £95,000.

**Community Support Plan Funding – Financial
Impact on groups which are currently funded
through Community Capacity and Revenue Grant**

The Committee deferred consideration of the report to allow further information to be provided at its special meeting on Friday, 30th January.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Performance Improvement Plan 2026/27

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 **The purpose of this report is to obtain Committee approval of the draft performance improvement objectives and indicative actions for 2026-27 (Appendix 1) and to approve their issue for public consultation.**

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 **The Committee is asked to:**

- i. consider and agree the Council's proposed 2026-27 draft performance improvement objectives and indicative actions (Appendix 1), subject to minor edits based on feedback.
- ii. agree that the proposed 2026-27 draft performance improvement objectives and indicative actions (Appendix 1) are issued for public consultation for a period of 8 weeks. The draft performance improvement objectives are summarised below for Members:

Draft performance improvement objectives 2026-27	
Our services	We will continue to adapt and improve our services to better meet the needs of our residents and stakeholders.
Our people and communities	We will improve our local areas and provide opportunities to support our residents to become healthier and engaged.
Our place	We will create a more vibrant, attractive, and connected city (including the city centre).
Our planet	We will champion climate action; protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast.
Our economy	We will stimulate inclusive growth and innovation, help businesses to start-up and grow and create opportunities for more and better jobs and employment.
Compassionate city	We will support our most vulnerable people to make Belfast a more caring, safe, and inclusive city.

- iii. note the next steps, as outlined in paragraph 3.4 below

3.0 Main Report

Background

- 3.1 **Members will be aware that Councils have a statutory performance improvement duty that requires them to develop and consult on an annual Performance Improvement Plan, which must be published by 30 June each year.**
- 3.2 **Potential improvement areas for inclusion in the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 have been identified through**

the corporate planning and estimating process as well as a desk-based review of the evidence base. Draft improvement objectives and indicative actions are provided for Committee in Appendix 1.

3.3 We will formally consult on the draft performance improvement objectives and indicative actions using the online YourSay Belfast platform for a period of 8 weeks (16 February – 13 April 2026) and we will use a range of other communication methods to help raise awareness and encourage participation/ reach. Members will note that during the public consultation period, the Performance Improvement Plan for 2026-27 (i.e., KPIs and targets) will continue to be refined and a final draft will be brought back to Committee in April 2026 for approval.

Next steps and timeline

3.4 To ensure the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 is published before the statutory deadline of 30 June 2026, the table below sets out the timetable for finalising the plan:

Action	Deadline
SP&R Committee agree for officers to consult on the draft performance improvement objectives and proposed indicative actions.	23 Jan 2026
Council ratify Committee decision to consult on the draft performance improvement objectives and proposed indicative actions.	2 Feb 2026
Commence 8-week public consultation on the draft performance improvement objectives.	16 Feb – 13 April 2026 - TBC
The Strategy, Programmes and Partnership team continue to work with Departments to refine actions, KPIs and targets.	Feb - April 2026
CMT agree the draft Corporate Delivery Plan and the draft Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27.	April 2026
SP&R Committee agree the final draft of the Corporate Delivery Plan and the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27.	24 April 2026
Council ratify Committee decision to agree the Corporate Delivery Plan and the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27.	5 May 2026

Publish the Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26 (submit to the NIAO).	26 May 2026
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4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

4.1 All priorities are identified through the rate setting process. All agreed activity and performance targets will be reflected within Committee Plans, Departmental Plans, and programme plans, thereby ensuring that they are resourced and managed and improvement is embedded within our planning, performance, and delivery processes.

**5.0 Equality of Good Relations Implications /
Rural Needs Assessment**

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

During discussion, in response to a Member’s suggestion to include the first phase of the Leisure Transformation Programme, including Girdwood, in the draft performance objectives, the Director of City and Organisational Strategy advised that the document would be updated to reflect this, together with further details of the objectives and actions under the ‘Our Planet’ section.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations and noted the inclusion of the first phase of the Leisure Transformation Programme, including Girdwood, to the draft performance objectives.

Planning Information

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

City Innovation programme

The City Innovation Manager presented the following report for consideration:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To update Members on a number of urban innovation initiatives including the Belfast Region City Deal Contracts for Innovation programme, the Belfast Region AI Adoption programme and the way forward for the City Hall Immersive experience.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

1. Approve that, on behalf of Belfast Region City Deal partners, Belfast City Council enter into an Operational Partnership Agreement (OPA) with the Strategic Advisory Board to the value of £431,250 to deliver aspects of the planned £4.4 million Contracts for Innovation programme.
2. Approve that, on behalf of City Deal partners, Belfast City Council provide £50,000 to support an operational partnership agreement (OPA) between the Council and the Strategic Advisory Board to develop the programme business case for the £5 million AI Adoption programme.
3. To note that Belfast City Council's engagement on any specific opportunities arising from the AI programme will be managed through the Council's own Data & Analytics Board with updates being brought to Members via this board.
4. To consider the options for the future of the City Hall immersive experience from April 2026.
5. To approve the commissioning of data modelling on the growth of the city region's innovation sectors to inform future City Deal and Innovation City Belfast decision-making and initiatives.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Belfast City Region Contracts for Innovation programme

On behalf of Belfast City Region Deal (BRCD) Partners, Belfast City Council's City Innovation Office is currently designing the £4.4 million 'Contract for Innovation' programme. This three-year programme will use a modified version of the 'Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) methodology to allow the six local councils of the city region to procure Research & Development expertise to address large-scale challenges.

- 3.2 The new programme builds on the learning from the recent Augment the City project, which provided £610,000 R&D funding to Belfast Stories to develop prototypes that will help shape the design of their approach to storytelling.
- 3.3 Members are asked to note that to support the delivery of aspects of the new programme, City Deal partners have agreed to enter into an operational partnership agreement (OPA) with the Strategic Advisory Board (SIB) which has a full-time SBRI team in place and access to other technical expertise. This OPA, which will be between Belfast City Council and SIB, will be to the value of £431,250.

3.4 Belfast City Region AI Adoption programme

On behalf of Belfast Region City Deal partners, Belfast City Council are designing a £5 million AI adoption programme for the six BRCD councils. The programme, which will be subject to business case approval, will provide funding to the councils to work with AI specialist to integrate AI into aspects of council service delivery that will support organisational transformation and efficiencies.

- 3.5** Following a series of AI readiness workshops with officers from all six Belfast Region councils (alongside officers from all NI's councils who were also invited), City Deal partners now wish to develop the business case for the programme. This programme is likely to take an agile approach that would include a Discovery Phase, and then a series of alpha, beta and full deployment projects depending on the progress of each.
- 3.6** Members are asked to approve that, on behalf of City Deal partners, Belfast City Council enter into an operational partnership agreement (OPA) with the Strategic Advisory Board (SIB) which has a full-time AI team in place and access to relevant technical expertise. The business case is expected to cost £100,000 to develop.
- 3.7** SIB will contribute £50,000 for this work. Members asked to approve that Belfast City Council provide the additional £50,000.
- 3.8** The development of the programme business case and related approval process is expected to take approximately six months. Depending on the outcomes from this process, the programme is expected to go live in autumn 2026.
- 3.9** Members should note that Belfast City Council's engagement on the opportunities arising from this AI programme will be managed through the council's own Data & Analytics Board with updates being brought to Members via this board.

3.10 City Hall immersive experience

The City Hall Immersive experience, in Rooms 7, 8 and 9 of City Hall, was the result of a collaborative six-month R&D project with BT Northern Ireland. The project (to which BT contributed £1 million in R&D technology and expertise) used Augmented Reality, iPads and video displays to explore elements of the speech, geography and history of the city in new and interactive ways. When the six-month R&D collaboration ended in March 2024, Members approved a one-year extension of the project until April 2026.

3.11 The experience received overwhelming positive feedback from visitors and staff, and has proven particularly attractive to younger visitors. Key facts from the feedback include:

- The experience was used over 50,694 times.
- People stayed in the rooms 30% longer than previous.
- Visiting with partner and families increased by 25%
- Increase of 14.5% for city hall tour during the period.
- 88.4% of users would recommend City Hall as a visitor attraction.

3.12 With the extension now coming to an end, there are three main options for going forward. These include:

3.13 Option 1: Close the experience. The rooms would be returned to their previous set up. There are minimal costs associated with this.

3.14 Option 2: Retain the ‘Roadrunner’ interactive game in room 9. This item has proved popular with out of state visitors and children in particular. This would cost £23,700 for one year (or £32,400 for three years) and would require no staff supervision.

3.15 Option 3: Retain the experience as is. This option will require a number of technical changes to the system (to allow it to continue efficiently beyond its original six-month lifespan). This option would also require support from one full time member of staff. The cost for this option is estimated to be £78,000 for twelve months (including staffing costs).

3.16 Options 2 or 3 could be procured via the Department of Finance’s PSSN procurement framework.

3.17 Members are asked to consider the options for the experience going forward. Any option will need to be confirmed and in place by 31 March 2026.

3.18 Data modelling for the Belfast region innovation ecosystem

Belfast Region City Deal partners, and partners from Innovation City Belfast, have been developing a shared innovation investment proposition for the city region. This seeks to maximise the opportunities of the investments made in digital, innovation and skills by City Deal partners, and their impact on those sectors of the region’s knowledge economy with the most potential for growth through innovation. This work is mindful of UK Government’s Modern Industrial Strategy and its commitment to supporting the eight most important sectors in the economy, which is turn

will have significant implications for government's innovation funding over the next four years.

3.19 With this in mind, Members are asked to approve the commissioning of a data modelling piece that will provide fine-grain information on key sectors and subsectors of the city region economy. This will be used to inform decision-making by City Deal partners, and by Innovation City Belfast. This is expected to cost no more than £30,000.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

4.1 Resources for these initiatives have been identified within the existing departmental budgets.

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

5.1 None at present. Successful programmes will be subject to individual Equality screenings.”

The Committee:

1. Approved that, on behalf of Belfast Region City Deal partners, Belfast City Council enter into an Operational Partnership Agreement (OPA) with the Strategic Advisory Board to the value of £431,250 to deliver aspects of the planned £4.4 million Contracts for Innovation programme;
2. Approved that, on behalf of City Deal partners, Belfast City Council provide £50,000 to support an operational partnership agreement (OPA) between the Council and the Strategic Advisory Board to develop the programme business case for the £5 million AI Adoption programme;
3. Noted that Belfast City Council's engagement on any specific opportunities arising from the AI programme would be managed through the Council's own Data and Analytics Board with updates being brought to Members via this board;
4. Agreed to option 3 - *Retain the experience as is*, as outlined in 3.15 of the report for the future of the City Hall immersive experience from April 2026; and
5. Approved the commissioning of data modelling on the growth of the city region's innovation sectors to inform future City Deal and Innovation City Belfast decision-making and initiatives.

Procedure for Renaming of Streets

The Director of Planning and Building Control submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To outline the legislation, policy and procedural considerations relating to the re-naming of streets in the City.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Members are asked to note the approved procedure to be followed when a proposal to re-name a street is received and to decide whether to move forward with the renaming process for Prince Andrew Park and Prince Andrew Gardens in the absence of an application from an individual.

Should Members be minded to trigger the renaming process, it is recommended that an initial petition is not carried out but that officers work with Elected Members in the appropriate DEA to generate alternative street names to be included in the survey of persons affected by the renaming proposal.

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 The power for the Council to name streets is contained in Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1995.

3.2 This legislation contains no procedural advice regarding the naming or re-naming of streets and in this regard the procedures to be applied are covered by policy and practice.

3.3 The current policy on re-naming streets in Belfast is contained in the Street Naming and Building Numbering Policy approved by Council in February 2009 (Appendix 1).

3.4 The Council need to carefully consider any application for renaming of streets within its boundaries, as renaming of streets has profound implications on address management for the city, emergency services and the public. In practice this will primarily impact residents and any businesses owners and their tenants whose personal, business and legal documentation associated with their current address will need to be changed. This will be the responsibility of residents and local businesses.

3.5 At the Council meeting in November 2025, Members asked for a report on the process for renaming streets given that two streets within Belfast contain the name ‘Prince Andrew’; namely Prince Andrew Park and Prince Andrew Gardens.

Overview of the Procedure and key considerations

3.6 Relevant policy considerations are outlined below: -

Application

3.7 The Street Naming and Building Numbering Policy as approved assumes that an individual will make an application to rename a street.

Initial petition.

3.8 Any application for re-naming of a street is expected to be accompanied by an initial petition of not less than one third of all residents of the street showing a positive interest in changing the street name. The adopted policy sets out that a request from an individual without support of survey or signed petition will not be considered and the individual will be informed accordingly.

3.9 There is no definition of resident, or explanation of how a petition of residents would be verified, however a resident could be considered to be any person whose name appears in the current Electoral Register plus the owners or tenants in actual possession of commercial premises given that business premises would also be impacted by this name change.

Alternative names

3.10 In accordance with current practice under the street naming process, the initial application and petition would indicate what name is being proposed with a second choice of street name which would be included on the survey form.

Survey

3.10 Any application received by the Service for the renaming of a street which has the requisite support outlined above would be presented to Council seeking its approval before proceeding with the application.

3.12 If the application is approved, the opinions of persons affected by the renaming proposal would be sought. The policy states that this shall be through a survey of residents over the age of 18 and whose name appears on the current Electoral Register, requesting an indication of their support for or opposition to the proposed name change.

- 3.13 It should be noted that this does not include the owners or tenants in actual possession of commercial premises, residential landlords or residents not on the electoral register, whose views would not be taken into account, but who would be affected by any renaming.
- 3.14 If the result of the survey shows that at least two thirds of residents surveyed agree with the proposed name change then a recommendation will be placed before the People and Communities Committee for agreement of the change of name.
- 3.15 If the application is granted approval, Council will supply and erect new street name plates to replace the existing nameplates and will notify relevant stakeholders and the applicant that the street renaming has been approved.
- 3.16 Under the current policy any request or re-application to change a street name which has been refused will not be accepted until a minimum period of 2 years has elapsed.

Prince Andrew Park and Prince Andrew Gardens

- 3.17 The Council has not received an application from an individual to rename Prince Andrew Park and Prince Andrew Gardens. For information, it should be noted that there are only residential properties within the two streets, there are no commercial premises.
- 3.18 Members may decide that despite the agreed process set out in Appendix 1, and in the absence of an application from an individual to rename the two streets, the renaming process should be started for both Prince Andrew Park and Prince Andrew Gardens.
- 3.19 If this is the case, members should consider whether the requirement set out in the policy for an initial petition should be waived. The usefulness of the initial petition (built into the process to illustrate to members that the process should be triggered) should be considered and it may be that it is members may deem it unnecessary both in terms of staff resource and duplication of the survey that will ultimately be undertaken and presented to committee.
- 3.20 If the renaming process is agreed to be started for both streets, alternative names will be required to be included in the survey undertaken. As these alternative names will not be included in an initial application, it is proposed that officers work with elected Members from Botanic DEA (where the two streets are located) to determine alternative street names alongside residents.

Next Steps

3.21 If members agree to start the renaming process for the two streets, a further report will be presented to a future People and Communities Committee detailing the results of the initial petition (if required) and outlining the proposed first and second alternative street names. If that report is agreed, the final survey will be undertaken and the results presented to a further committee.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.22 There may be financial and resource implications if it is decided that an application is not required to change the name of Prince Andrew Park and Prince Andrew Gardens and if Council Officers are tasked with undertaking the initial petition of residents. If the renaming is ultimately approved, Council will supply and erect new street name plates to replace the existing nameplates.

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

3.33 **None.”**

The Committee noted the approved procedure to be followed when a proposal to re-name a street was received and agreed to consult with residents on whether to move forward with the renaming process for Prince Andrew Park and Prince Andrew Gardens in the absence of an application from an individual. The Committee also noted that a report on the consultation would be brought to a future Committee for consideration.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Physical Programme Update

The Committee considered the undernoted 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 along with updates on capital letters of offer and contracts awarded.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to –

- **Capital Programme Movements -**
 - **IT Programme—Digitising Audio-Visual (AV) Technology in the Council Chamber** - 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.
 - **Sydenham 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.
 - **Staff Cycle Racks Installation** - Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.
- **Floral Hall H&S Works**– note the previous health & safety works undertaken on the Floral Hall and agree the second phase of health & safety works is now undertaken with a budget of £565,000 and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.
- **Belfast Stories** – note the key conditions within the Contract for Funding from the Department for the Economy (DfE) for the project.
- **Procurement process for 2026/27 Non-Recurrent Programme, Fleet Programme and Externally Funded Projects** - agree that any necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated for any Physical Programme projects in 2026/27 including Fleet Replacement Programme, non-recurrent programme and externally funded projects as required with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.

- Capital Letters of Offer – to note the update in relation to capital letters of offer.
- Contracts awarded in Q3 2025/26 – to note the update in relation to contracts awarded.

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
IT Programme— Digitising Audio- Visual (AV) Technology	Upgrade to digital Audio- Visual (AV) solution in the Council Chamber	Move to Stage 3 – <i>Committed</i>
Sydenham Greenway	To develop a feeder path through Alderman Thomas Patton Playing Fields and connect to the Sydenham Greenway.	Move to Stage 3 – <i>Committed</i>
Staff Cycle Racks Installation	Installation of new cycle racks in Cecil Ward Building, City Hall and other premises to improve provision.	Move to Stage 2 – <i>Uncommitted</i>

3.3 IT Programme— Digitising Audio-Visual (AV) Technology in the Council Chamber

The current analogue AV rack-mounted controller hardware used in the Council chamber is at end of life with no direct replacement available. Transitioning to a digital AV solution is recommended, this will require replacing underfloor cabling, microphones, and associated hardware. The project aims to

maintain reliable, high-quality audio-visual capabilities for council meetings and public engagement, and as such aligns with service improvement and efficiency through digital transformation and innovation. The project is part of the overall IT Programme/ Digital Strategy and a business case has been submitted. Members are asked to 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. A contract will be awarded based on the most economically advantageous tender received and full commitment to deliver.

3.4 Sydenham Greenway

Members will recall that 'Sydenham Greenway' project was moved to Stage 2 – Uncommitted on the Capital Programme in November 2021. This partnership project with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) aims to develop a greenway/ feeder path through Alderman Thomas Patton Playing Fields and connect to the Sydenham Greenway which will be delivered by DfI. The Greenway will run from Victoria Park along the Belfast – Bangor Railway line to Holywood Exchange. DfI have provided match funding for the project and announced that it is part of the DfI signature Active Travel schemes. As per the three-stage approval process, the outline business case has been completed. Members are asked to 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. A contract will be awarded based on the most economically advantageous tender received and full commitment to deliver.

3.5 Staff Cycle Racks Installation

This project was added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging in October 2025. It includes the installation of new cycle racks in City Hall and Cecil Ward Building and upgrading cycle parking facilities in 9 Adelaide and Duncrue. BCC is committed to reducing transport related greenhouse gas emissions through its operations and across the city and promoting travel options that promote health and wellbeing, leading by example as an employer, an organisation delivering services, and as a civic leader. Members are asked to agree that project is moved to Stage 2 – Uncommitted to allow the options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.

3.6 Floral Hall H&S Works - roof installation

This project was moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* on the Capital Programme in December 2024 to deliver a series of immediate health and safety works due to the deteriorating condition of the Floral Hall building. Currently the building has been cleaned and all hazardous elements removed. However, as there is no roof covering over any part of the building, it is fully exposed to weather and natural elements which presents a very high potential for the building fabric to degrade further. In 2024, Members noted that the initial investment was mainly for Phase 1 H&S works and agreed that a further tender figure be brought back for further phases. Members are asked to note that a tender has been received for the roof works for £565,000. This will make the building watertight and allow for exploration of further opportunities for the building. Members are asked to agree Phase 2 of the Health & Safety works at the Floral Hall, that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree to a budget £565,000 being allocated to this project.

3.7 Belfast Stories

Belfast Stories is the Council's flagship project under the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) and is due to open in 2030. Positioned as a tourism anchor, Belfast Stories is set to deliver significant economic and social impact for Belfast and beyond, helping to regenerate the city centre and connect the tourism offer to the neighbourhoods. In December 2025, Members will recall that they were advised that the Contract for Funding (CFF) had been received from Department for Economy (DfE) for £65m and was under review across a number of council departments prior to acceptance. Overall, it is noted that the CFF is a standard City Deal document and what Council would expect having been involved in City Deal documents over a period of time. Members are asked to note several key conditions within the Contract for Funding including:

- The period of assistance started on 13 January 2026 and runs until 31 May 2032. Any costs not processed by this end date will be ineligible for reimbursement.
- The Council must bear any budget overruns as the Accountable Body/ Lead Partner.
- The funding can only be used for the approved purposes to achieve the agreed outputs and key performance indicators. Any changes must be agreed with DfE.
- The Council must ensure robust project governance structures including compliance to project monitoring and evaluation, and reporting arrangements.
- Council must underwrite ongoing operating costs.

3.8 Approval to Procure 2026/27

Members are asked to agree that any necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated for any Physical Programme projects in 2026/27 including the Fleet Replacement Programme, non-recurrent programme and externally funded projects as required with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.

3.9 Capital Letters of Offer

Members are asked to note the update in relation to capital letters of offer in Q3 2025/26 at Appendix 1.

3.10 Contracts Awarded

Members are asked to note the award of tenders for capital works including services related to works in Q3 2025/26 at Appendix 2.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

Financial Implications –

Floral Hall H&S Works – £565,000 for Phase 2 of the works. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

Resource Implications – Officer time to deliver.

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

The legislation requirements have been met including screening.

All physical projects are designed for people and are inherently inclusive and accessible.”

The Committee:

• **Capital Programme Movements –**

- **IT Programme—Digitising Audio-Visual (AV) Technology in the Council Chamber** - 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;

- **Sydenham 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;
- **Staff Cycle Racks Installation** - Agreed that the project be moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course;
- **Floral Hall H&S Works** – noted the previous health and safety works undertaken on the Floral Hall and agreed the second phase of health and safety works be now undertaken with a budget of £565,000 and that the Director of Finance had confirmed that this was within the affordability limits of the Council;
- **Belfast Stories** – noted the key conditions within the Contract for Funding from the Department for the Economy (DfE) for the project;
- **Procurement process for 2026/27 Non-Recurrent Programme, Fleet Programme and Externally Funded Projects** - agreed that any necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated for any Physical Programme projects in 2026/27 including Fleet Replacement Programme, non-recurrent programme and externally funded projects as required with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver;
- **Capital Letters of Offer** – noted the update in relation to capital letters of offer; and
 - **Contracts awarded in Q3 2025/26** – noted the update in relation to contracts awarded.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Contracts Update

The Head of Commercial and Procurement Services provided an update in relation to contracts and competitive tenders.

During discussion, the Strategic Director of Place and Economy undertook to provide further information in relation to the existing contract with Oxford Innovation for the Innovation Factory to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd January, 2026**

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
- Approved the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (**Table 3**).

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)
Medical Services to support the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann.	Up to 2 years	£700,000	K Forster	Reported at Oct 2025 SP&R meeting with duration and potential value now confirmed. Tenders currently being evaluated. Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, taking place 2-9 August 2026 (active bid for 2027), is expected to attract 750,000+ additional visitors over and above the existing civic population and normal tourist numbers expected at that time of year. The Council is therefore seeking suitably qualified and experienced	N	N	N

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd January, 2026**

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)
				supplier(s), to provide medical and first aid services at this event.			
Upgrade the existing audio-visual solution in the Belfast City Hall Council chamber.	Up to 3 years	£235,050	S McNicholl	The current AV solution and associated hardware used for these meetings is end-of-life and we are recommending replacing the current analogue solution with a modern digital one. £225,000 Capital + £10,050 Revenue	N	N	N
Campsite(s) for the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann.	Up to 2 years	Income based contract	K Forster	As part of the Fleadh programme campsite(s) are required to accommodate the number of visitors. The Council is therefore seeking suitably qualified and experienced supplier(s), to set up and manage campsites. Planning applications	N	N	N

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd January, 2026**

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)
				<p>underway for the identified sites.</p> <p>Costs will be required (£value TBC) for site set up and management; however, aim is to recover majority of costs through charging to customers.</p>			
Supply of standardised audio-visual equipment for meeting and conference rooms	One off Purchase	£200,000	P Gribben	<p>The majority of the equipment is over 10 years old and struggles to meet the audio and visual requirements of modern remote and hybrid meetings. The adoption of a consistent approach to the management of AV equipment is a strategic move to enhance the council's hybrid meeting capabilities and standardise audiovisual solutions across all</p>	N	N	N

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd January, 2026**

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)
				meeting spaces			

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)
Construction Information database	Up to 3 years	£40,000	P Gribben	This is an online portal giving access to construction-based information. There is only one provider of this service.	Allium UK Holding Limited	3.	N	N

Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Original Contract Duration & Value	Modification required	SRO	Description	Supplier
Oxford Innovation for Innovation Factory	Up to 6 years & £91k	Additional 12 months and £15,804	K Forster	Extension to existing contract in line with contract with Oxford Innovation for Innovation Factory which finishes in March 2027. The value of	KPMG

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd January, 2026**

Title of Contract	Original Contract Duration & Value	Modification required	SRO	Description	Supplier
				the work will be dependent on our requirement throughout the duration of the OI contract and any issues that may arise which we require support with.	
Provision of a Home Security/Assessment and Repair Service for Older & Vulnerable People	Up to 5 years & £650k	Additional 12 months and £100,000	S Toland	<p>The project is subject to annual funding from the PHA, BCC and the PCSP.</p> <p>The PHA have advised the Council that they wish to review the current model for the delivery of the service. The current contract is due to expire in October 2026, however, we need to wait for the PHA review before awarding a new contract. The review is expected to be completed during FY26/27 and a replacement tender will be considered in light of any proposed changes to the existing delivery model.</p>	Bryson Energy
Provision of Temporary Resources - Neutral Vendor Approach	Up to 2 years & £8m	Additional 4 months and £7.6m	C Sheridan	<p>It has not been possible to progress the procurement for a temporary agency provider until December 2025. Consequently, the remaining duration of the current agency contract does not allow for sufficient planning and implementation of a new contract, potentially with a new supplier. To ensure an effective implementation including contractual compliance assurance, system configuration, training and transfer of agency workers, a 4-month extension is required.</p>	Matrix SCM Ltd

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd January, 2026**

Title of Contract	Original Contract Duration & Value	Modification required	SRO	Description	Supplier
				<p>£5m of £7.6m covers overspend under the current contract. Reasons link back to wider resourcing issues as report to members on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>£2.6m to cover forecasted spend on the 4-month extension.</p>	

Equality and Good Relations

Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting

The Committee approved the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on the 12th January, including:

Good Relations Action Plan Quarter 3 Update

- The Shared City Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the contents of the report.

PEACEPLUS – Local Community Action Plan Secretariat Update

- The Shared City Partnership Members noted the contents of the report, specifically the process for tolerances and the relevant percentage approvals by Project Managers, Programme Manager / Good Relations Manager and Programme Board, and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also notes and agrees the content of the report.

Peace Plus Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report

Peace Plus Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report

Community Regeneration & Transformation Thematic Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd January, 2026**

Workshop - Good Relations Audit Strategy and Action Plan

- The Shared City Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that they also note the contents of the report, agree the contents of the new Good Relations Audit and 2026/2027 Good Relations Action Plan for issue to The Executive Office, and approve the Good Relations Strategy to undergo a public consultation exercise via the Council's Your Say Platform. It was also agreed that the Partnership would hold a further consultation session on 4th February to further consider the Draft Good Relations Strategy

Operational Issues

**Minutes of the Party Group
Leaders Consultative Forum**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum of 15th January, 2026.

**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
Belfast Chamber	19 February 2026	Governor of Bank of England Business Lunch - A 2 course Lunch with speeches and a fireside chat with Bank of England Governor, Andrew Bailey. Numbers attending – 100	B	£450
Visit Belfast	5 March 2026	Great Neighbourhood Days Out direct engagement evening session between neighbourhood tourism providers and group-travel organisers with presentations and networking. Numbers attending - 65	A & B	£450
East Belfast Community Development Agency	26 March 2026	Inspire Celebration Event – an annual celebration of young people in East Belfast with awards and showcase performances. Numbers attending – 150	D	Current rate free as registered charity

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd January, 2026**

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE
Wheelworks Arts	31 March 2026	Create Against Hate NI: Activities Toolkit Public Launch - Launch of resources developed to guide adults to help young people address issues such as hate crime, foster inclusion, and support the integration of new communities in Belfast. Numbers attending - 100	D	Current rate free as registered charity
NOW Group	2 June 2026	NOW Group Participant Graduation 2026 is an annual celebration event recognising the achievements of participants through the support of NOW group over the previous year Numbers attending – 312	D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
MW Advocate Ltd	24 June 2026	Summit of the Cities 2026 will bring together leaders and delegates from all 12 cities across the island of Ireland to celebrate their history, share ideas, forge partnerships, and accelerate practical action on the issues shaping urban life with panel discussion and speeches. Numbers attending – 300-400	B	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Queens University Belfast	7 July 2026	Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) International Conference on Supercomputing Reception – Standing reception with speeches and catering Numbers attending – 180	A	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Business in the Community	25 November 2026	2025 Environment and Climate Report Launch brings together 200 sustainability professionals to recognize the 150 organisations who took part in the report which aims to improve environmental efforts in a range of sectors.	B & D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd January, 2026**

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE
		Numbers attending – 200		
Community Sport Network	7 December 2026	20th Anniversary Celebration event with gala dinner and reception followed by presentations which will showcase how sport and physical activity have been used as inclusive, non-political tools to support positive outcomes for individuals, communities and wider society. Numbers attending – 200	C & D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
2027				
Albertbridge Accordion Band	4 September 2027	Albertbridge Accordion Band's 70th Anniversary – Reception followed by performance and concluding with meal and speeches to celebrate community band formed in 1957 and honour founding members now in early 80s. Numbers attending – 150	D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>

**Request for use of City Hall grounds
for various events in 2026**

The Committee:

1. Authorised the use of City Hall grounds on the dates noted in the report; and
2. Authorised the following events to take place on the basis of submission of an event management plan and risk assessment to ensure delivery of a safe public events:
 - Yom HaShoah Holocaust Memorial Event – 12th April, 2026
 - Belfast Photo Festival – 1 June 2026 – 30th June, 2026
 - Action Cancer Breast Foot Forward Walk – 5th June, 2026
 - Féile Rock's Pride Concert – TBC

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Public Art – 2 Royal Avenue (Councillor de Faoite to raise)

In response to the request from Councillor De Faoite, following conversations with the partner organisations in the LGBT+ Hub, for the consideration of public art in the form of a mural on the tower at the Bank Square entrance of 2 Royal Avenue, the Committee agreed a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed would be brought back to the Committee.

Chairperson

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People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 13th January, 2025

MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Cobain (Chairperson); and Councillors Abernethy, Black, Bower, Brooks, Bradley, Bunting, Canavan, Collins, M. Donnelly, R-M Donnelly, Doran, Flynn, Garrett, Magee, Maghie, Murray, McKeown and Verner.

In attendance: Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services; Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services; Mr. S. Leonard, Director of Open Spaces, Resources, Fleet and Transport; Mr. J. Girvan, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services; and Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 2nd December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 8th January.

Declaration of Interest

Councillor R.M. Donnelly declared an interest under item 2.b. 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls - Regional Change Fund Letter of Offer Extension 2025/26' in that she was employed by an organisation in receipt of funding under the terms of the fund. She left the meeting whilst the matter was under consideration.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the report associated with the following two 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 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.

**People and Communities Committee,
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The Committee was advised that the content of the 'restricted' reports and any associated discussion should be treated as 'confidential information' and that such information could not be disclosed as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

'Bad Debt' Write Off

The Committee agreed, in accordance with Section M12 of the Council's Financial Regulations, to write off an outstanding debt in the sum of £9,500.

**Ending Violence Against Women and Girls –
Regional Change Fund Letter of Offer
Extension 2025/26**

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services reported that The Executive Office (TEO) was in the process of developing the next delivery plan in support of its Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Framework (EVAWGSF). The delivery plan would, subject to ministerial approval, encompass a two year period, from April 2026 to March 2028. He informed the Committee that it was anticipated that the Regional Change Fund would be extended over that period and, accordingly, TEO had requested that the existing arrangement for the disbursement of funding and monitoring arrangements between TEO and the Council would be extended over that period to enable the implementation of the new delivery plan.

The Committee noted the receipt of the request from TEO and agreed that the Council would support the delivery of the EVAWGSF through the continuation of the existing Regional Change Fund contracts and to provide multi-annual funding up to March 2028; and then manage a collaborative process to consider regional provision and identify any additional need for future regional investment. In addition, the Committee:

- noted that the overall Regional Change Fund delivery budget was expected to total a sum of £1,200,000 per annum, however, there existed a potential for that fund to increase, should additional extra need for investment be identified and budget secured;
- noted that, subject to the approval of a business case and budget, TEO would seek to issue the Local Change Fund and Regional Change Fund Letters of Offer to the Council in 2026; and
- accepted the planned extension to the 2025/26 Letter of Offer for the Regional Change Fund to mitigate against any risks to business continuity of programme delivery, noting that that extension was for a period of three months to ensure business continuity and provide security for staff currently in place.

Matters referred back from the Council/Motions

Vital Role of Trees – Update

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 4th February, 2025, it had adopted the undernoted motion, which have been moved by Councillor Abernethy and seconded by Councillor Maghie.

“This Council recognises the vital role of trees in enhancing the health and well-being of people and communities, addressing climate change, and supporting biodiversity; commits to raising awareness among residents about these benefits and to actively support efforts to plant and protect the right trees in the right places and for the right reasons, ensuring that everyone can share in the benefits trees provide; and, will commit to exploring how we can educate and raise awareness of trees, the role they play in all our lives across Belfast.

In addition, the Committee agrees that officers would submit a report which would provide the following:

- an update on the Tree Strategy, including the ‘One Million Trees’ initiative;
- seek to identify sites within the Council’s estate where additional trees and plant could be maintained; and
- an outline as to how communities and electoral areas could become involved further in the life of trees in our city.”

Accordingly, the Committee considered the undernoted report:

The Belfast Tree Strategy

- 3.3 **The Belfast Tree Strategy was produced with the aim of managing and improving the city’s tree-scape over the next 10 years, focussing on protecting, enhancing, and expanding the Council’s woodlands, hedges, and trees, connecting people to nature, and ensuring that they continue to be a major asset to everyone who lives in, works in, and visits Belfast city.**
- 3.4 **After an extensive public consultation exercise which involved a public questionnaire and the facilitation of five public workshops at locations across the city, the Belfast Tree Strategy was launched on the 5th October 2023 at Belfast Botanical Gardens.**
- 3.5 **The Tree Strategy set out 37 key actions which will be delivered over the life of the Tree Strategy, and aligned with the key actions, a commitment was given to undertake an independent review of the Tree Strategy after year one and thereafter, once every 3 years until 2033.**
- 3.6 **In December 2024 the Council completed its first independent review/audit of the Belfast Tree Strategy. The audit process was designed by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) to help stakeholders responsible for the planning and management of urban trees and forests, and to ensure trees and forests are accounted for and well-integrated into relevant planning, management and governance activities at the local level. The audit of the Tree Strategy included a scorecard of which**

Belfast scored a total of 42 points out of 50 which is 'Very Good' (71-85%) The next independent audit will be undertaken in 2027.

- 3.7 Tree canopy cover across Belfast averages 18.6%, as measured by Google satellite data. This ranges from 20.8% in urban and suburban areas, to 15.0% in rural areas. The Ward with the highest tree cover in Belfast is Bellevue, with 43.9% tree cover and the lowest is Ardoyne with just 4.6%. The average tree canopy cover for Northern Ireland is 11.8%. The council's woodland team will direct attention to increasing tree canopy cover in areas across the city highlighted within the Tree Establishment Strategy.
- 3.8 An increase in canopy cover will contribute to Belfast's emission reduction targets – 66% reduction by 2025; 80% by 2030; 100% by 2050. The existing trees in Belfast already store around 319,000 tonnes of carbon and sequester more than 8,890 tonnes of carbon annually (equivalent to approx. 1% of the City's annual emissions) with associated values of around £290 million and £593,000 respectively. These trees also trap and remove over 210 tonnes of air pollution annually at a value of nearly £7.5 million from reduced healthcare costs (largely from Sycamore, Beech and Ash which have a large canopy). The IUCN Urban Alliance suggests a tree a 30% tree canopy target and the Tree strategy has adopted this as the target for the city.
- 3.9 As part of the stakeholder exercise on the Councils Belfast Tree Strategy, there was a clear and recurring theme from members of the public, quote:

"A volunteer drive would be fantastic to engage the community in the drive to increase trees, as well as a scheme to teach people how to plant trees in their own gardens safely."
- 3.10 In collaboration with the climate team, the council has recently appointed a woodland officer for a fixed period to assist the council's Woodland team in establishing a 'community champions and a tree planting volunteer' network, engaging with local communities across the city with the objective of having tree planting volunteers throughout the city. With a particular focus on areas identified with the lowest tree canopy cover this scheme will look to provide volunteers with the resources and skills to plant trees within community settings.

One Million Trees initiative

- 3.11 The Belfast One Million Tree initiative was a strong call to action when it was launched in December 2020. It got everyone thinking about trees, their importance, especially in supporting the city to deliver its climate targets and objectives. The ambitious project

was inspired by an original idea from the Belfast Metropolitan Residents' Group and is a collaboration between public, private, and voluntary sector partners. The initiative was part of the Northern Ireland-wide 'Forests of our Future' project with the aim of improving the city's resilience to climate change and enhance the quality of life for its residents.

- 3.12 Public consultation and engagement, followed by the launch of the Belfast Tree Strategy in October 2023, has shown that the city needs to be more sophisticated and targeted in its approach. Rather than focusing purely on a target number of trees, our goal is now to increase overall tree cover in the city – from 18.6% to 30% (set by IUCN Urban Alliance) – taking in woodlands, hedges and trees. To achieve the 30% canopy target will require increased tree planting and the one million trees initiative has an important role to play in this regard. It will also require a strong focus on managing our existing stock for example dealing with extreme weather conditions and managing the impact of diseases like ash die back.
- 3.13 Since the inception of the One Million Trees initiative in 2020 161,240 new trees and 2,761m new hedgerows have been planted, and 6,285 people have been engaged in the programme across the city, including schools, sports and community organisations. This has been achieved in collaboration with external partners and organisations such as the Belfast Hills Partnership, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Woodland Trust.
- 3.14 However, in terms of the Council's own estate council officers are finding it increasingly difficult to identify suitable areas to undertake 'large scale' tree planting. Locations suitable for large scale tree planting going forward are necessary if the city is to meet both the ambitions of the One Million Trees initiative and achieve 30% canopy cover by 2050. Whilst the council will continue to plant new trees and hedges where it can within its own estate, it should be emphasised that the One Million Trees is a city-wide project. We now need more engagement with other landowners to identify and develop sites that would permit larger scale tree planting opportunities. The Nature Towns & Cities initiative provides an opportunity for Council to engage with partners on this and similar initiatives to support both programmes. Officers will begin these conversations with the relevant stakeholders in 2026.

The management of street trees on behalf of the Department for Infrastructure

- 3.15 The council has been managing the city's street tree population on behalf of the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) for the past four decades. During this time, this partnership has delivered over

seven thousand new street trees and has ensured their establishment and ongoing maintenance within the greater Belfast Area.

3.16 The Council has been receiving 'professional fees' to cover the management of DfI street trees, however over recent years this has put an increasing strain on existing resource capacity within the councils Woodland unit, due primarily to the introduction of the Belfast Tree Strategy and the delivery of the councils 37 key actions over the next 10 years. The council has secured additional funding from the DfI to recruit three new Woodland officers on a fixed term basis and in addition to this, has increased its income generation to cover the management of the new Woodland officers. This will allow the council to continue to work on the management of street trees and sustain this ongoing and successful partnership.

Biodiversity

3.17 We want to create a sustainable, nature-positive city – it's a key goal in our own Corporate Plan, as well as the Belfast Agenda community plan. This will protect our environment and wildlife, help to combat climate change, encourage people to spend more time outdoors to boost health and wellbeing, and improve the appearance and vibrancy of our city. It also compliments other projects including:

- securing £850,000 of funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Nature Towns and Cities Initiative to co-design plans for nature recovery in Lagan Valley Regional Park and the Belfast Hills.
- receiving £472,000 of funding from DAERA Challenge Fund towards the development of a Nature Recovery Network across Belfast, alongside £100,000 set aside to support biodiversity work £50,000 already set aside from council towards four wildflower meadows city-wide.
- being selected as one of 50 finalists for Bloomberg Philanthropies' Mayors' Challenge for our project to reimagine the city's alleyways as new shared community assets for neighbourhoods.
- 23 of our parks already carry the Green Flag accreditation for quality and good park management.
- exploring new and emerging opportunities to enhance the city's blue and green infrastructure as agreed in the Local Development Plan.

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The Committee noted the information which had been provided within the report, together with a range of Members' comments in relation to the matter.

Department for Infrastructure Roads Service
Draft Road Noise Action Plan 2023 to 2028

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an overview of the Department for Infrastructure's draft Road Noise Action Plan for 2023/28. In addition, the Committee adopted a Council response to an associated consultation exercise in the matter and agreed that it be submitted in advance of the closing date of 22nd January, subject to further amendment, if any, by the Council at its meeting on 2nd February, 2026.

Blackstaff Residents' Association
Request re: John Stewart Bell

The Committee considered correspondence which had been received from the Blackstaff Residents' Association requesting that consideration be given to erecting a metal arch incorporating the wording 'John Stewart Bell Entrance' over the Olympia Drive entrance to Olympia Leisure Centre. The Members were reminded that, at its meeting on 10th October 2017, the Committee had acceded to a request to rename that particular entrance to the centre in honour of John Stewart Bell. That decision had been taken after consultation with the local community and in recognition of Mr. Bell's achievements as a world-renowned physicist; and to mark his links to the Village area. Accordingly, a plaque had been erected at the site, however, the residents' association was now requesting that a more fitting and permanent tribute be erected.

The Committee agreed, in principle, to support the request subject to a further report being submitted for consideration that would outline, amongst other things, planning considerations and projected costs. It was noted that the report would provide also an overview of the corporate policies and processes which oversaw the consideration of such ad hoc requests.

Operational Issues

Proposals for Dual Language Street Signs

The Committee agreed to erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at Delhi Street, Lagmore Downs and Rosetta Avenue.

Off-Street Car Parking

The Committee noted the progress which had been achieved to date in respect of the Draft Belfast Off-Street Parking (Public Car Parks) Order 2026. The Committee noted also several updates which related to city centre off-street car parks, debt recovery matters relating to unpaid Penalty Charge Notices and a graduated approach to parking enforcement.

St. Patrick's Day Parking

Arising from discussion, a Member reminded the Committee that, on St. Patrick's Day 2025, forty-seven individuals had received fines for parking in Council-managed off-street car

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parks. That was despite the fact that the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) had opted not to enforce parking penalties on individuals who had been fined for parking in its on-street carparks on that date. He indicated that the situation had caused confusion, given that the date was a bank holiday, and he proposed that the Council consider providing free parking in its off-street carparks on St. Patrick's Day in 2026.

The Committee was reminded that such a proposal, if approved, would result in a loss of income to the department and that Members were unaware of the actual extent of that loss. It was suggested that the Committee might defer consideration of the matter to enable a report to be considered outlining how such a loss of income could be offset from within a departmental underspend.

After further discussion, it was agreed that a report be submitted to the meeting in February outlining how off-street car-parking charges might be waived on St. Patrick's Day 2026, subject to the identification of an appropriate underspend from within the departmental budget to offset any loss of income.

It was agreed also that a letter be forwarded to Translink requesting that consideration be given to providing additional services along arterial routes on St. Patrick's Day to cater for service users and to encourage additional use of public transport on that date.

City Protection Role in Planning

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 4th November 2025, it had agreed that a report be submitted for consideration that would outline the current staffing and capacity levels relating to the Environmental Health Service, particularly regarding roles associated with responding to planning consultations; and that the report would include also reference to the role of the Building Control Service in enforcement matters.

Accordingly, the Director of City Services outlined the main aspects of a report in this regard and, after discussion, the Committee noted the information which had provided, together with a range of Members' comments in relation to the matter.

Alleygate Delivery – Update

The Committee noted an amendment to the location of an alleygate in Rosetta Park.

Requests for Annual Funding 2026/27

The Director of Open Spaces, Resources, Fleet and Transport outlined the principal aspects of a report which sought approval for funding allocations to be included within the estimates of expenditure for 2026/27, subject to approval by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee as part of the rate-setting process. The requests are set out below:

• **Belfast Hills Partnership (BHP)**

The Committee was reminded that the Council had, since 2011, supported the BHP by providing annual funding in the sum of £36,900. The Director highlighted that the Partnership had indicated that was operating under increasing budgeting constraints which BHO had sought to address by cutting operating costs and securing additional funding. He

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added that both Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council had indicated that that it would increase its contribution to BHP by 30% in 2026/27. Accordingly, it was recommended that the Committee authorise a contribution to BHP in 2026/27 in the sum of £47,970, which represented an increase of 30 per cent.

The Committee adopted the recommendation and agreed that an annual funding contribution of £47,970 be provided within the departmental estimates for the Belfast Hills Partnership in 2026/27.

- **Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (KNIB)**

The Committee was reminded also that, since 2014, the Council had provided annual funding to KNIB in the sum of £55,000. The Director reported that KNIB had advised that its current financial model was no longer sustainable and, accordingly, a request had been made that the Council consider increasing its contribution in 2026/27 by 10 per cent, which represented an increase £10,250, bringing the annual contribution to £65,250.

The Committee agreed that an annual funding contribution of £65,250 be provided within the departmental estimates for 2026/27 for Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful.

- **Belfast Healthy Cities**

The Committee was informed that Belfast Healthy Cities had requested funding in the sum of £81,294 for 2026/27, which remained unchanged from the amount which had been provided in 2025/26.

The Committee agreed that an annual funding contribution of £81,294 be provided within the departmental estimates for 2026/27 for the Belfast Healthy Cities. The Committee agreed also to accede to a request from Belfast Healthy Cities that a letter of endorsement be provided by the Council to assist in its application to partake in Phase VIII of the European Healthy Cities Network.

Item Raised in Advance

Bin Collections over the Christmas Period

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor R.M. Donnelly requested that a report be submitted to a future meeting that would outline the reasons for a number of missed bin collections which had been reported over the Christmas period, particularly with regards to the north and west of the City.

The Committee agreed that a report be submitted in this regard. Arising from discussion, it was agreed also that an invite be extended to representatives of Bryson Recycling to attend a future meeting to discuss recent delays which had been encountered in the provision of collection services across Belfast.

Chairperson

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City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 14th January, 2026

MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor I. McLaughlin (Chairperson); Alderman Lawlor; and Councillors Black, Bunting, de Faoite, S. Douglas, Duffy, Groogan, Hanvey, Lyons, McAteer, McCabe, McCallin, McCormick, McKay, R. McLaughlin, Meenehan, Nelson and Ó Néill.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy; Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development; Mr. K. Forster, Director of Economic Development; Ms. L. Toland, Senior Manager, Economy; Ms. L. O'Donnell, Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism; and Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported on behalf of Councillor McDonough-Brown.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 3rd December, 2025 were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 8th January, 2026.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor McCabe declared an interest within the item 'Events Update' in relation to the St. Patrick's Day update, in that her employer was contracted to deliver activity as part of the programme. Councillor McCabe left the meeting whilst this matter was under consideration.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following two 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 items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt

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information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Members were also reminded that the content of 'restricted' reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as 'confidential information' and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

Future City Centre Vacancy Programme

The Director of City Regeneration and Development submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided an update on the Future City Centre Vacancy and Dereliction Programme and set out proposed parameters for the Homes on Upper Spaces for Everyone (HOUSE) Programme.

The Director highlighted the significant impact that vacancy and dereliction had across the city and stated that the Vacancy toolkit had been developed as a proactive, Council led suite of interventions to address the rising levels of dereliction and support social, economic and environmental growth. She reminded the Committee that the toolkit included the Vacant to Vibrant City Centre and Citywide Schemes, strategic investments and a citywide housing-led regeneration scheme.

She reported that, in order to address vacant upper floor spaces within the city, Council officers had been working on the development of a HOUSE programme, which would aim to help address this issue by repurposing vacant spaces for residential use. The Committee was provided with an overview of the work that had been undertaken in relation to the development of the proposed HOUSE programme and the associated business case, which included research and data analysis, consultation and engagement, and the potential delivery model.

The Director recommended that, subject to funding, a capital grant scheme be developed and that the HOUSE programme operate as a pilot within the city centre with the potential to expand citywide at a later stage. She outlined the proposed parameters of the programme and provided the Committee with information in respect of potential cost requirements, benefits and outcomes, estimated returns and potential future funding.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin,

Resolved – That the Committee agrees that a report be brought back on the potential for the HOUSE Programme to deliver an intermediate rent model, including information on viability and advice from Legal Services.

During discussion, in response to a Member's question, the Director advised that further consideration would be given in regard to the parameters limiting the maximum number of units that could be supported through the scheme.

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In response to further Members' questions, the Director advised that further information would be brought back to the Committee in relation to the potential for the Council to utilise the recently acquired asset on 33-39 Royal Avenue as a demonstrator project for the scheme, and the potential for a larger adaptive reuse strategy in respect of converting vacant commercial office space for residential use.

A Member also requested that a report be submitted to a future meeting which would outline potential interventions that could be brought forward to address vacant and derelict sites and buildings on Castle Street, as part of the wider regeneration plan for the area.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the progress on the vacancy and dereliction programmes that had been undertaken under the workstream of the Future City Centre Programme;
- ii. agreed the parameters and the progression of the proposed Homes On Upper Spaces for Everyone (HOUSE) Programme as the next delivery workstream of the Vacant to Vibrant Toolkit, which would include actively seeking funding to deliver the proposed pilot project;
- iii. agreed that a report would be brought back on the potential for the HOUSE Programme to deliver an intermediate rent model, which would include information on viability and advice from Legal Services; and
- iv. agreed that a report would be brought back in relation to vacant sites and buildings on Castle Street as part of a wider regeneration plan for the area.

Local Growth Fund Update

The Director of Economic Development provided the Committee with an update on the Local Growth Fund and the potential implications for the Enterprise Support Service (Go Succeed).

The Director advised the Committee that, following the update provided at its meeting in December, 2025, the Council had received formal confirmation that the level of Local Growth Fund resources available to support the programme delivery element of Go Succeed, from April 2026, would be reduced.

The Committee was provided with an update in relation to the work currently being undertaken to explore options to help minimise the impact on service delivery, and the ongoing engagement between Councils and the Department for the Economy in respect of future funding for the service.

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During discussion, the Director and the Senior Manager, Economy, answered a number of questions from the Members in relation to the future funding of the service.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the update on Local Growth Fund (LGF) which focused on the potential implications for the Enterprise Support Service (Go Succeed); and
- ii. agreed to support the ongoing work to explore opportunities to secure continued support for the Enterprise Support Service, which would take account of the changes in the external funding environment and the pressures on existing budgets.

Request to Present

Belfast One BID

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the pending ballot for the third term of the Belfast One BID (Business Improvement District).

The report also outlined a request for Belfast One BID to present, in advance of the ballot, at its next meeting on 11th February, 2026.

The Committee:

- i. noted the update on the pending ballot for the third term of the Belfast One; and
- ii. agreed to receive a presentation from Belfast One BID at its next meeting to enable officers to submit the Council's votes in the ballot in advance of the deadline on 5th March, 2026.

Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

Department for Infrastructure (DfI)
Correspondence - Belfast Cycle Network
Ravenhill Road Scheme

(Councillor Smyth attended in connection to this item.)

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) in response to the Committee's request for an update on the Belfast Cycle Network's Ravenhill Road Scheme. The response advised that, due to amendments to the extent of the scheme and further consideration of certain elements of the design along the route, the design period had been longer than originally anticipated, and that statutory consultation process was expected to commence in early 2026, subject to the satisfactory conclusion of discussions on a small number of remaining issues.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Groogan,

“That the Committee agrees to write to the DfI to request an update on the Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge; request that, should any trees be felled as part of the Ravenhill Road Scheme, all trees removed are replaced with semi-mature trees at a ratio of three new trees for every one tree felled; seek assurance that the Department would deliver a pedestrian crossing at the Ardenlee Avenue junction on the Ravenhill Road as part of the Ravenhill Road Scheme; request that double yellow lines be installed on the corners of the streets off the Ravenhill Road, as part of the Ravenhill Road Scheme, to help prevent obstructive parking; and request engagement with the Council in respect of the potential for the Department to support the installation of lighting infrastructure within Ormeau Park.”

At the request of Councillor R. McLaughlin, the Committee agreed that the motion be amended to provide that it requests DfI to engage with Council in respect of the potential for the Department to support the installation of lighting infrastructure within all Council Parks.

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor Smyth addressed the Committee in relation to the DfI response. Councillor Smyth highlighted that the scheme presented an opportunity to deliver a safe, sustainable and family friendly route within the city. He highlighted that, as part of the consultation stage, it was vital that the Department engage with local schools and young people to promote safe and active travel through the scheme.

Further Proposal

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to write to DfI to request that it proactively engage and consult with local schools, as part of the Ravenhill Road Scheme’s consultation process, to ascertain how best the scheme could promote safe and active travel for children to school.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- i. noted the response received from DfI on the Belfast Cycle Network’s Ravenhill Road Scheme; and
- ii. agreed to write to DfI to:
 - request an update on the Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge;

- request that, should any trees be felled as part of the Ravenhill Road Scheme, all trees removed are replaced with semi-mature trees at a ratio of three new trees for every one tree felled;
- seek assurance that the pedestrian crossing at the Ardenlee Avenue junction on the Ravenhill Road would be delivered as part of the Ravenhill Road Scheme;
- request that double yellow lines be installed on the corners of the streets off the Ravenhill Road, as part of the Ravenhill Road Scheme, to help prevent obstructive parking;
- request engagement with the Council in respect of the potential for the Department to support the installation of lighting infrastructure across all Council Parks; and
- request that the Department proactively engage and consult with local schools, as part of the Ravenhill Road Scheme's consultation process, to ascertain how best the scheme could promote safe and active travel for children to school.

Positioning Belfast to Compete

Events Update

The Director of Economic Development submitted the following report for the Committee's consideration:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide

- **post event information on the 2025 Belfast Maritime Festival and planning update for 2027**
- **post event information on the Christmas Lights Switch and Animation programme**
- **update on the St Patrick's Day Celebrations planning**
- **update on Lord Mayors Day**
- **update on the Events Action Plan**
- **update on America 250**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to

- **Note the contents of the Maritime Festival post event evaluation and future dates.**

- Agree support for Sail Training in the lead up to 2027 Maritime festival
- Agree Titanic Memorial arrangements and associated expenditure
- Note the contents of the Christmas programming & post event evaluation
- Note upcoming workshop on festive lighting planning
- Note the planning update on St Patrick's Day & Lord Mayor's Day
- Note the update on the Events Action Plan
- Note the update on America 250 and approve funding allocation

3.0 Main report

3.1 Maritime Festival

The Maritime Festival continues to be a Distinctly Belfast experience, the event location lends itself to the integration of the many heritage assets on the Maritime Mile. The heritage sites were given the opportunity to share marketing opportunities, additional programming or discounts as part of the overall event programme. This year's programme increased the creative ambition yet again by continuing to align with our 10-year Cultural Strategy, engaging an array of creative organisations with the vast majority of festival participants from the Belfast area.

On Saturday 5 and Sunday 6 September, 57,000 people of all ages enjoyed a celebration of Belfast's rich maritime past and innovative future along the Maritime Mile – from Sailorstown/ City Quays to HMS Caroline. Up to 40,000 attended on Saturday, with particularly wet and windy weather affecting Sunday attendance, resulting in less than half of the attendance on the same day of the 2023 event.

The wider festival was organised by Belfast City Council's Events team, in partnership with Maritime Belfast Trust, which delivered specific festival activity on the Slipways.

The festival was successful in securing £30,000 from Tourism NI (TNI) international events fund. The event was coordinated and implemented through a governance structure consisting of three working groups – marcomms, production/logistics and creative. Dashboard reports were presented to a programme board with senior representatives from Belfast City Council, Belfast Harbour, DfC and Maritime Belfast Trust. All groups met on a monthly basis creating the opportunity to further enhance partner collaboration and strengthen the creative festival profile.

3.2 Maritime Festival: Programming

Queens Quay hosted Science Street, a space for hands-on learning and discovery – from marine biology and climate change to biodiversity. Close by was Kids Cove, where younger visitors enjoyed arts and crafts, circus and dance and pirate play time. ‘Maritime Presents Festival of Fools by the Sea’ was held at the Arc, a mix of live street circus, theatre and walkabout animation. Close by the Nomadic, the Hamilton Dock Maritime Village celebrated past and future with immersive technology, interactive exhibits and boat building exhibitions.

A music programme & funfair was held at the historic Slipways with an extended Saturday evening programme including the headline Act ‘Hothouse Flowers’ delivered in partnership with Maritime Belfast Trust. The Slipways Street Food Market was also located here, with local and regional producers showcasing and selling their goods supported by DAERA, through the NI Regional Food Programme (NIRFP).

To complement the musical offering at the Slipways, there were three further performance spaces along the Maritime Mile, extending from Donegall Quay, to the Soundyard, and finally as far as HMS Caroline/Titanic Distillers.

New to the programme for 2025, was ‘City Sensations’, an Accessible & Inclusive programme of activities held on the Antrim side of the river in the recently developed City Quays Gardens. This engaging area offered a diverse range of entertainment and opportunities to get involved, including captivating on-stage performances, interactive games and activities, and music learning stations for all to enjoy. Between City Quays and the footbridge, DRIFT, a legacy project from 2024, was located at Donegall Quay. This unique floating installation provided a number of workshops and was in situ from the Bank Holiday weekend 23rd to 25th August with activities, from Friday 29th August to Friday 5th September and after the duration of the Festival for one or two days.

A Community Co-design project engaging Sailortown Regeneration, The Met and Passers-by provided programme enhancements in the form of public art, theatre or performance. There had also been ongoing engagement across the industry to showcase local offerings in conjunction with the overall festival programme.

Our media partner Bauer Media Group was on site across the weekend with prizes, games and giveaways.

Two naval vessels had to withdraw at short notice due to operational notice, and the Spanish Galleon 'Andalucia' withdrew the week prior due to strong winds and difficult weather in the Irish Sea. Despite this, the 'Granuaile' provided a spectacle on Queens Quay, and Sailability operated from the marina, offering accessible sailing, educational tours and animating the river. Ship recruitment remains a priority area of work for 2027 with a number of influencing factors under consideration.

As part of our sustainability approach, Visitors attending the Belfast Maritime Festival were encouraged to walk, cycle, take the Glider from Belfast city centre directly to the Titanic Quarter, or travel by train to Titanic Quarter Halt. Cycle parking was available outside Titanic Belfast and at Belfast Bike docks at the SSE Arena.

3.3 Maritime Festival: Marketing and Communications

The brand identity chosen for the 2025 event was determined in line with the TNI International Events Funding criteria and agreed TNI/BCC/VB brand playbook targeting Active Maximisers: Young families wanting inspirational and educational experiences for their children and Culture Connection Seekers: lovers of the arts, history and the outdoors.

BCC Marketing and Communications and Visit Belfast developed a regional and out of state campaign with the initial press release issued to the public on 6 August 2025.

Visit Belfast hosted the festival landing page for all collateral and content relating to the festival and promoting any shared marketing opportunities for partners and stakeholders.

The campaign was rolled out on outdoor, radio, digital channels and social media platforms, promoting visitbelfast.com as the call to action with the following statistics recorded:

Format	Impacts
ROI Outdoor	4,770,000
ROI Radio	5,262,100
ROI Digital Publisher	1,251,312
NI Radio	4,240,000
NI Outdoor	2,321,832
Social Media Organic	458,658
Social Media Paid	3,774,634
Influencer	987,687
E-zine	221,134
Web Impacts	2,700,000
Total	25,987,357

Website: The Maritime Festival landing page hosted by Visit Belfast had 101K page views (+77.7% event-on-event increase and 2.79m impressions (+120.9% event-on-event increase). There was a 13.3% organic conversion rate with 13% of all Hot House Flowers ticket purchases originating from the Visit Belfast landing page.

Organic social media: Visit Belfast issued six posts spanning pre-event, weekend live, and post-event recap, core themes being Sunday Sessions and Hidden Gems of the Mile. Corporate Communications issued eight posts (four Instagram and four Facebook) spanning pre-event, weekend live, and post-event recap, with a focus on activities and free family fun Partners such as Maritime Belfast Trust and others added to the organic social reach for this year's event.

Paid social media: Visit Belfast - Targeting Republic of Ireland (ROI) audiences (25–60) using user-generated content (UGC) across Meta and TikTok, positioning the event as a must-see Belfast experience (Adults aged 25–60 in Dublin, Drogheda, Dundalk, motivated by live music, nostalgia, and short cultural breaks). Council Corporate Communications targeted all adults in Belfast positioning the event as family-friendly and inclusive to the Belfast, Greater Belfast and local towns via Facebook and Instagram boosts.

With respect to email marketing, Visit Belfast distributed an e-zine to NI and ROI database with an impact of 221,134 while Council issued an email to their events database (circa 2k) with 39.63% display rate and 4.33 click through rate

Council's Marketing and Communications team ran a local campaign for T-sides in addition to adshels and adshel live digital screens across city centre. The festival was also advertised online with Belfast Telegraph and Daily Mirror/Belfast Live online with click-through rates recorded considerably higher than the UK average. The BCC festival brand identity reflected the overall programme and was coordinated to maintain a family-friendly audience as well as expanding the appeal to a broader audience demographic.

Visit Belfast's creative for their outdoor campaign used photography and messaging to highlight live music, nostalgia, and short cultural breaks. Their outdoor campaign ran in ROI (with an impact of 4,770k) and NI (with an impact of 2,322k). They also ran radio ads impacting 5262k in ROI and 4,240k in NI.

3.4 Maritime Festival: Key Facts and Figures

Key findings from the Economic Impact Report and Visitor Survey from the 2025 Maritime Festival shows a growth in out of state visitors evidence from the independent research survey illustrates that 21% were staying in accommodation away from home, up from 14% in 2023.

However, the inclement weather on the Sunday affected numbers attending. While 40,000 were recorded on Saturday, this fell to 17,000 on Sunday.

The report findings for the event include:

- The estimated direct spend (based on 57,000 visitors) was £988,476.49 excluding accommodation (£1,326,839.26 in 2023)
- 21% were staying in accommodation away from home (up from 14%)
- 91% gave the Maritime Festival event an overall rating of 8-10, (up from 74% in 2023) including 24% who rated it as '10 - Extremely good'.
- 94% of visitors said that the Maritime Festival improves the reputation of Belfast as a place to visit.
- 94% agreed that there should be more events like this in Belfast.
- 61% said they would definitely or very likely visit similar events in the future [2023: 60%]
- 92% visited other tourist attractions at this time.
- 50% said that they would be likely to revisit the Maritime Mile over the coming year.
- 63% agreed that the Maritime Mile has its own unique cultural and historical identity.
- 63% believe the role of the creative industry sector is important or very important in the conservation, enhancement and promotion of heritage of the Maritime Mile.

3.5 The Maritime Festival in 2027

Planning is underway for the 2027 event taking into account any lessons learned an options paper was discussed with delivery partners including Belfast Maritime Trust, DfC and Belfast Harbour to consider future dates for the 2027 festival, particularly bearing in mind the impact of the Fleadh event on planning and delivery.

The Maritime Programme board has considered this and has proposed to host the next edition of the Festival in early June (6-8) 2027. This date takes into consideration coordination with the Fleadh, potential weather impacts and availability schedules for ship recruitment

Previous iterations of the Maritime festival have been held in May with 2021 being the first year the event moved to September due to the pandemic

This allows for an 18-month planning cycle from January 2026.

3.6 Sail Training

Members are asked to note that Officers would like to revisit support for Sail Training as a means of both providing this unique opportunity to local youth – as has been the case until recently for almost two decades; and additionally incentivise vessels to attend the maritime festival as part of a sail training programme.

Sail Training Ireland is a charity (CRN 20079406) that funds the development of young people from all backgrounds and abilities from the island of Ireland, by providing them with access to youth development training programmes on board Tall Ships and other sailing vessels.

Sail Training Ireland are the National Sail Training Organisation (NSTO), as recognised by Sail Training International. They organise 30 voyages per year across numerous vessels. Engaging Sail Training Ireland via a Service Level Agreement assist with the objectives above.

Members are asked to approve officers entering into an SLA, with the recognised NSTO on the island of Ireland. It is anticipated that the value of this agreement will be circa £15-20,000 from the Maritime budget.

3.7 Titanic Memorial

Belfast City Council, via the City Events team, is responsible for the hosting of the Titanic Memorial event at City Hall each year. The event, hosted by the Lord Mayor, marks the anniversary of the sinking of the Titanic, and involves a memorial in the garden, followed by a small reception for Belfast Titanic Society and their guests. The total cost is circa £2,500 to cover hospitality, PA and dressing

Members are asked to note and approve this expenditure

3.8 Christmas: Post Event Information

On Saturday 15 November 2025, the Council's Christmas Lights Switch On was presented by Cool FM. Opening the show were the Sandy Row Falcons, leading into festive performances from Donegall Road Primary School, The O'Hara Sisters and BA Collective. With a wicked twist to this year's programme Avenue Arts Academy give us a

spellbinding performance, Jolene O'Hara joined local West End/TV actress/singer Rachel Tucker to perform. Belfast lit up in spectacular style as the Lord Mayor and champion boxer Lewis Crocker led the countdown to Christmas, unveiling City Hall's dazzling Christmas lights and streetlights for all to enjoy. Ticketing services and ticket scanning on the evening was managed by Visit Belfast.

2 Royal Avenue opened Winters Den on Saturday 15th November with a softer switch on experience for those with sensory requirements or additional needs.

Winter's Den – 2 Royal Avenue

In 2025, Winter's Den at 2 Royal Avenue delivered a programme of sustainable, community focused festive activities designed to enhance the city centre experience during the Christmas period. Winter's Den 2025 recorded the highest visitor numbers since the opening of 2 Royal Avenue in 2021. A total of 51,489 visitors attended the venue during the festive period, with approximately 28,000 visits taking place during the opening hours of Santa's Post Office.

Christmas Animation Programme

MayWe successfully delivered a free Christmas Animation Programme across Belfast city centre, bringing festive cheer and entertainment to locals and visitors alike. Nineteen events were delivered in Grand Central Station, Belfast City Hall, Cornmarket, Donegal Place, Writer's Square and 2 Royal Avenue.

Christmas Music Programme

43 live music events took place, involving 156 artists, at the front of Belfast City Hall, Belfast Grand Central Station, St George's Market and various sites/stores in the City Centre.

Circa 10,000 attended this event. Council received no complaints and there were no recorded accidents.

Derig and debriefing is currently underway for the festive lighting scheme and a planning workshop will be facilitated with members in due course with regards to 2026 provision.

3.9 Christmas: Key Marcomms / Survey Stats

Council delivered a digital media campaign in partnership with Visit Belfast and Bauer Media with online advertising to promote the Switch On. Council directed people to www.belfastcity.gov.uk/christmas URL, where the event information was displayed prominently on the page, BCC

social platforms communicated messaging and promoted the switch on both pre and post event. Promotion took place across digital platforms and via key partners including Visit Belfast, BID One and Bauer Media.

City Matters reached nearly 160,000 homes in early November, supported by a press release promoting ticket sales and the event. Media Partner Baur campaign featured interviews on Downtown and Cool FM with the Lord Mayor and Rachel Tucker. Both stations amplified the promotion with trails, competitions, live reads, and outdoor broadcasts, while Cool FM's Breakfast team, Pete, Paolo, and Rebecca, compered the Switch On Event. Media coverage was secured on Belfast Live, Belfast Telegraph, News Letter, Belfast Media Group, Yahoo UK, 4NI, Belfast Times, UTV, Cool FM and Downtown.

Visit Belfast offered box office and visitor servicing, as well as related marketing activity such as digital screen display, social and digital campaign.

Socio-Economic Survey Results

In excess of 10,000 citizens and visitors gathered to enjoy the event. The event was free and ticketed via Visit Belfast.

The geographical breakdown of tickets booked through Visit Belfast revealed

- 51% of visitors were from the Belfast City Council area,**
- 45% were from elsewhere in Northern Ireland.**
- 2% were visitors from ROI**
- 2% outside the UK and Ireland**

The overall estimated direct spend for the Belfast Christmas Lights Switch On event excluding accommodation was £178,141.

75% surveyed said they were supportive of Belfast City Council's preference to source local talent for stage acts.

66% gave the Belfast Christmas Lights Switch On event an overall rating of between 8 and 10, including 27% who rated it as '10 - Extremely good'.

3.10 Additional Christmas Animation and Music Programme.

The Winter's Den at 2 Royal Ave, which commenced on the evening of the Switch On, continued throughout December with a varied programme of entertainment aimed at primarily a family audience.

A music programme curated by Snow Water and additional animation facilitated by Maywe brought festive cheer across

the city centre from 20th November to 21st December. Activities took place at key locations including City Hall, Grand Central Station, Writers Square, St George's Market, Donegall Place, Royal Avenue, and Cornmarket. The city came alive with vintage-style swing dancing and Christmas-themed circus performers, creating unforgettable performances for visitors. A dazzling fire show in Writer's Square added excitement and dramatic flair to the Cathedral Quarter, while Trim the Velvet energised St George's Market with high-energy Irish dancing.

Belfast's status as a UNESCO City of Music was celebrated through a beautifully curated programme featuring brass bands, soloists, choirs, harpists, carol singers, Ní Music Prize winners, and special showcases. During the festive season, musicians and bands serenaded shoppers and revellers with free gigs and pop-up performances across the city.

3.11 St Patrick's Day 2026

A number of multi-year agreements are now in place with regards to the delivery of St Patrick's Celebrations allowing for earlier planning and programme development for the 2026 event. The budget is currently the same as 2025 - £300,000 and it will be supplemented by Good Relations funding for the parade element - £20,000.

In 2025, a number of parade specific procurement exercises took place and began the 1st year of three-year contracts with Luxe, Circusful and Beam Creative to deliver on parade floats, professional performers and community engagement respectively. In 2026 Council Officers will continue to work with 'creative' contractors on the 2nd year of their contracts.

2026 will also be the second year of the Council's contract with Belfast TradFest to deliver a spectrum of city centre musical performances.

St Patrick's Day 2026 will be the final year of Féile an Phobail's three-year contract to deliver their successful city-wide Trad-trail programme.

3.12 St Patrick's Day: 2026 Programming

In the lead-up to St. Patrick's Day and the day itself, a series of activities will be delivered across the city in collaboration with Council and curated partners, enhancing the festive atmosphere including:

TradTrail, delivered by Féile an Phobail will feature performances from the best local and national trad musicians,

offering free music performances in bars, restaurants, hotels and visitor attractions across the city from early March.

St. Patrick's Music Festival will take place March 13 – 17 as part of Belfast UNESCO City of Music's St. Patrick's Day celebrations. At the heart of this programme is a diverse, cross-cultural and cross-traditions celebration in honour of St. Patrick. From headline concerts and relaxed workshops, the fun and grace of set and céilí dancing, reflective pilgrimages, and free St. Patrick's Day Festival Village at Cathedral Quarter, everyone is invited to the city to enjoy a variety of indoor and outdoor traditional arts events. Sunday 15 March will see the Pipe Band Extravaganza take place in grounds of City Hall from 12pm - 2pm.

A stellar line-up of musicians are confirmed on the bill including the legendary voice behind the timeless anthem "Caledonia", Dougie MacLean, Belfast harper Ursula Burns, RTÉ Radio 1 Folk Singer of the Year 2022 Muireann Nic Amhlaoibh Band, Planxty's Andy Irvine, experimental smallpiper Brighde Chaimbeul, celebrated harper Michael Rooney, sean nós dancer Becky Ní Éallaith, uilleann piper Mick O'Brien, and many more. Writers Square will host Tradfest's Main Stage Area, Belfast Cathedral Car Park will house the Food Village while Saint Anne's Square provide the Acoustic Stage and The MAC - Indoor Céilí & sessions

Seachtain na Gaeilge, presented by Conradh na Gaeilge – will take place from the 1-17 March. Their aim is to amplify and to broaden participation through accessible family-friendly and community-centred events, all of which aim to raise awareness of the Irish language, which will feature a headline event - Irish Cultural and Family Celebration Day 'Spraoi Cois Lao' – Custom House Square Saturday 7 March 2026 from 1pm-4pm.

The St. Patrick's Day Parade will be held on Tuesday the 17 March 2026. Starting at Belfast City Hall it will provide an accessible family-friendly experience of cultural celebration. The large-scale parade will be curated and delivered by the Council Events team with animation and participation from professional, voluntary and community organisations. Participants from a range of backgrounds and from the North, South, East and West of the city will come together to join the procession of floats (with additions from 2025) to champion inclusion and diversity within the city.

Event Officers will continue to work with Good Relations and wider units across Council to identify opportunities to enhance the cultural offering and connect communities into how they can be associated and engaged with the St Patricks

Day Celebrations. Officers have engaged with the Belfast Bands Forum and further programming will be developed in partnership with them in the coming months.

There will be engagement on opportunities to profile the hosting of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in August 2026.

3.13 St Patrick's Day: Alignment to Belfast's Cultural Strategy / Events Action Plan

The 'City Imagining Strategy' approved by Council has a focus on supporting developing local arts and cultural organisations, through funding, commissioning and capacity building. In this regard, there has been engagement with local arts, voluntary and community organisations to create props and to coordinate performances of varying nature for example Circusful and Streetwise to enhance the overall production of the parade and highlight the local arts and culture within Belfast.

Members are advised that ongoing future developmental approaches will be explored and recommendations made through the development of the 5 Year Events Action Plan which will be brought back to Committee for consideration in due course. This will include addressing holistically the challenges and opportunities in relation to city events in their current form. For example, we know that the St Patrick's Day Celebrations in particular requires consideration of a multi-year planning approach.

3.14 St Patrick's Day: Marketing and Communications

Under the theme of 'Celebrating Together' an integrated marketing and PR campaign began in October 2025 with headline announcements, building to a full programme launch in February 2026.

The goal of the marketing and communications campaign will be to generate widespread positive media coverage across broadcast, print and online media, plus strong interest and engagement on social media. Coverage will engage major print and digital outlets including BBC, UTV, Cool FM, Q Radio, the Belfast Telegraph, Irish News, and Belfast Live.

Council will develop a digital and outdoor advertising campaign from February 2026 to promote the events taking place under the St Patrick's Celebrations umbrella. The advertising campaign will target online advertising, radio and outdoor promotion in the form of adshells, impact wraps, digital hubs, adshel lives and bus T-sides. The campaign will direct people to belfastcity.gov.uk/stpatricks where the event information was displayed prominently on the page.

3.15 Lord Mayor's Day

The Events team are liaising with the Lord Mayor's office to identify and agree a date in early May 2026 for this and will develop a programme for delivery in the coming months.

3.16 Events Action Plan Update

Belfast City Council is developing a new Events Action Plan to shape how the city supports, delivers and promotes events over the next five years. The Plan will provide a shared framework to strengthen Belfast's reputation as a leading city for distinctive, inclusive and high-impact events that contribute to cultural life, tourism, community pride and the wider economy.

The Council is working with Festivals and Events International (FEI) to develop the Plan, drawing on local expertise and insight from across Belfast's culture, tourism and festivals and events ecosystem. As part of this process, FEI have undertaken a series of workshops and conversations with key partners and stakeholders, Elected Members and the creative sector, to better understand current strengths, challenges and future opportunities. An online Public Survey was developed and available on Yoursay up to 19 December. This engagement will ensure the action plan reflects a shared vision for the city's future as both a festival city and a world class events destination.

It is anticipated that recommendations and next steps on the action plan will be brought to March committee.

3.17 America 250

On 4th July 2026, the USA will celebrate 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Many Ulster-Scots people helped create this document that shaped the future of the United States of America. To mark this significant anniversary, DfC are leading on development work to highlight this unique contribution. The Ulster Scots Agency have shared proposals for activity aligned to;

- Flagship concert to mark the 250th anniversary to take place in July
- Sister cities conference to take place in Assembly Buildings in May

Ulster Scots Agency are seeking funding of up to £50,000 from BCC to support their plans, this would be match funding against provision from DfC. This proposal would align with the Council's Language Strategy Action Plan, which provides for supporting events which promote Ulster Scots.

Officers are also exploring other opportunities to support America 250 celebrations, including through the Fleadh Cheoil.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

Financial resources for City events will be met from within existing departmental budgets, with the exception of request for funding from the Ulster Scots Agency to support America 250 celebrations which will be funded through existing budgets in support of the Language Strategy Action Plan commitments.

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

The cultural strategy, A City Imagining has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNA). Specific initiatives as required will be subject to a further equality screening.”

The Senior Manager for Culture and Tourism highlighted the update contained within the report in respect of the Maritime Festival, Sail Training for local young people, the 2026 Titanic Memorial event at City Hall, Christmas programming and festive lighting, St Patrick's Day, Lord Mayor's Day, the Events Action Plan and America 250 activity.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Ó Néill,
Seconded by Councillor Duffy,

Resolved - That the Committee agrees that a report be brought back on the potential to extend, by one year, Féile an Phobail's contract to deliver the city-wide Trad Trail programme as part of the St. Patrick's Day programme.

During discussion, a number of Members raised issues in relation to America 250, including the need for any planned activity to have language as a central theme, acknowledge historical links to the slave trade and the anti-slavery movement, acknowledge the impact of the colonisation of North America on Indigenous peoples, and recognise the Irish role and contribution to the development of the United States of America.

In relation to the update provided on Sail Training for local young people, a Member highlighted the importance of access to the youth development programmes being extended to local youth from disadvantaged backgrounds.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 14th January, 2026**

During further discussion, Members also requested that the Committee receive an update in relation to New Year's Eve and regular updates on the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- i. noted the update on the Maritime Festival; Christmas programming; the upcoming festive lighting planning workshop; the 2026 St Patrick's Day and Lord Mayor's Day; the Events Action Plan; and America 250;
- ii. approved that the Council enter into a Service Level Agreement with Sail Training Ireland to support Sail Training for local young people in the lead up to the 2027 Maritime Festival, including associated expenditure of approximately £15-20,000;
- iii. approved arrangements for the Council's Titanic Memorial Event at City Hall, including associated expenditure up to £2,500;
- iv. approved funding up to £50,000 for the Ulster Scots Agency to support 'America 250' activity, subject to matched funding from the Department for Communities;
- v. agreed that a report be brought back on the potential to extend, by one year, Féile an Phobail's contract to deliver the city-wide Trad Trail programme as part of the St. Patrick's Day programme; and
- vi. agreed that regular updates be provided on the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann and an update be provided on New Year's Eve.

Strategic and Operational Issues

**Department for Communities Consultation
on Disability and Work: A Strategy for Northern
Ireland - Council Response**

The Committee considered a report which provided an overview of the Department for Communities' (DfC) draft Disability and Work Strategy for Northern Ireland and outlined a draft response to the DfC consultation on the draft strategy.

The Committee:

- i. noted the main highlights of the Department for Communities' Disability and Work Strategy for Northern Ireland; and
- ii. approved the draft Council response to the consultation, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, subject to Council ratification at its meeting on 2nd February, 2026.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 14th January, 2026**

**Minutes of the Zoo Long-Term Financial
Sustainability Group - 10th December 2025**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Zoo Long-Term Financial Sustainability Group of 10th December, 2025.

Chairperson

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Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 21st January, 2026

MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Doran (Chairperson); Aldermen McCullough and Rodgers, and Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Bradley, T. Brooks, Bunting, Carson, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, D. Douglas, McAteer, McCann, McDowell, McKay, McKeown and Smyth.

In attendance: Mr. K. Bloomfield, HMO Manager; Mr. K. McDonnell, Solicitor (Regulatory and Planning); and Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies for inability to attend were received.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 10th December 2025, were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 8th January.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Non-Delegated Matters

Quarter 3 (2025-26) statistics on the public level of engagement with the HMO website and proposed advertising campaign for January - February 2026

The HMO Manager presented the following report to the Committee:

- “1.1 Members at their November 2025 meeting requested that officers provide statistics on the public level of engagement with the HMO section on the Council’s website on a quarterly basis
- 1.2 To highlight a publicity campaign commencing on the 26 January 2026 to coincide with the commencement of the letting season for students looking new accommodation for the 2026/27 academic year.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1. The Committee is requested to note the engagement with the HMO section via the website during quarter 3 of the financial year 2025/26.
- 2.2 The Committee is requested to note an advertising campaign scheduled to coincide with the commencement of the student letting season for the academic year 2026/27.

Key Issues

- 3.1 From 15 September (launch of Know your rights booklet) – 31 December 2025 the HMO section of the Council's website received the following level of engagement.

Webpage	Views
NIHMO	4,879
Know your rights: A guide for HMO tenants	288
Information for tenants	183

- 3.2 A social media advertising campaign with a primary target audience of students looking for new accommodation for the September term and a secondary audience of landlords, education establishments and parents will commence on the 26 January 2026 for a 2-week period.
- 3.3 The strap line “*Students: check before you rent - If the house is an HMO, make sure it's licensed.*” will front the campaign.
- 3.4 The campaign will also focus on the obligations the HMO licence holder has to maintain the property during the term of the tenancy, building on recent articles in ‘City Matters’.
- 3.5 Officers will also use boosted social media adverts, website pop-ups / banners, a press release and an article on Interlink.
- 3.6 The messaging will also be relayed by Officers to Landlords Association for Northern Ireland (LANI), student bodies, higher education institutions and Northern Ireland Council for inclusion on their website / social media channels.

Financial & Resource Implications

3.7 The funding of the advertising campaign is meet from HMO licence fee income and does not place a financial burden on the rate payer.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

3.8 There are no issues associated with this report."

The Committee noted the recommendations.

Restricted Item

The information contained in the reports associated with the following item 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 item as, due to the nature of the item, 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 also reminded that the content of 'restricted' reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as 'confidential information' and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

HMO Review of Licence Scheme Charges

The HMO Manager outlined a review of Licence Scheme Charges.

After discussion, the Committee agreed:

- i. to the increase of the HMO Licence Application Fee to £62 per person, per annum, effective from 1 April 2026, this being the amount necessary to cover only the cost of processing the application.
- ii. to the increase of cost of varying an HMO as follows –

Licence Variations	
Item	Cost
Addition of a new managing agent.	£250
Addition of a new occupant	£310 for each new occupant + £125 inspection fee (per visit)

- iii. that a paper is also presented to SOLACE in February 2026 to confirm SOLACE agreement and confirmation that all SOLACE members will also take papers to their respective Council Committee in February / March 2026; and
- iv. to write to the Department for Communities Minister regarding the pending funding gap that will be created by the conflict between the Houses in Multiple Occupation (Fees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 and the Provision of Services Regulations 2009.

Delegated Matters

**THE COMMITTEE DEALT WITH THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN
PURSUANCE OF THE POWERS DELEGATED TO IT UNDER
STANDING ORDER 37(d)**

Licences Issued Under Delegated Authority

The Committee noted a list of applications for licences which had, since its last meeting, been approved under the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

**Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licences
Issued Under Delegated Authority**

The Committee noted the applications that had been issued under the Scheme of Delegation during December 2025.

**Application for a New Licence to operate a
House of Multiple Occupation for 65 Tates
Avenue**

The Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Manager presented the details of the application to the Committee.

He outlined that the property had had the benefit of an HMO licence, issued by the Council, with a start date of 20th January, 2021, and an expiry date of 20th January, 2026, in the name of Mr. Sam Shepherd.

The Committee was advised that ownership of the property transferred to "Remark Group Ltd." with an assignment date of 28th June, 2023. Mr. S. Shephard was a director of the Remark Group Ltd. In accordance with Section 28 "Change of ownership: effect on licence" of the 2016 HMO Act, the licence in the name of Mr. S. Shephard ceased to have effect on the date of transfer.

An application for a new HMO licence was received from Remark Group Ltd on 30th September, 2025. The property was inspected on 17th October, 2025, at which time it was vacant.

**Licensing Committee,
Wednesday, 21st January, 2026**

The HMO Manager outlined that, pursuant to the 2016 Act, the Council could only grant a licence if it was satisfied that:

- a) the occupation of the living accommodation as an HMO would not constitute a breach of planning control;
- b) the owner, and any managing agent of it, were fit and proper persons;
- c) the proposed management arrangements were satisfactory;
- d) the granting of the licence would not result in overprovision of HMOs in the locality;
- e) the living accommodation was fit for human habitation and—
 - i. was suitable for occupation as an HMO by the number of persons to be specified in the licence, or
 - ii. could be made so suitable by including conditions in the licence.

The Committee was advised that, as it was a new application, the Council's Planning Service was consulted. It had confirmed that a Certificate of Lawful Existing Use of Development "CLEUD" was granted on 24th June, 2021.

It was reported that the NIHMO Unit had consulted with the Environmental Protection Unit in relation to daytime noise; the Public Health and Housing Unit in relation to rubbish accumulation/filthy premises; and the Enforcement Unit in relation to litter and waste and all had confirmed that there had been no relevant enforcement action required in respect of any of the issues in the HMO in the last 5 years. Officers were not aware of any other issues relevant to the fitness of the applicant or manager.

For the purposes of Section 12(2) of the 2016 Act, the Council had determined the locality of the accommodation within Housing Management Areas (HMA) "HMA 2/08 Edinburgh St" as defined in Council's Local Development Plan Strategy "2023 Strategy" which had been formally adopted on 2nd May, 2023. It was reported that Legal Services had advised that there was a clear requirement in section 8 of the 2016 Act upon the Council to be satisfied that the granting of a licence would not result in overprovision.

The officers had had regard to:

- a) the number and capacity of licensed HMOs in the locality; and
- b) the need for housing accommodation in the locality and the extent to which HMO accommodation was required to meet that need.

To inform the Council in its consideration of the above provisions, the Council had taken account of the 2023 Strategy given that "Nurturing sustainable and balanced communities was a fundamental aim of the LDP's housing policies." In particular, the Council had considered Policy HOU10, which stated:

"Within designated HMAs, planning permission will only be granted for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and/or flats/apartments where the total number of HMOs and flats/apartments combined would not as a result exceed 20% of all dwelling units within an HMA."

**Licensing Committee,
Wednesday, 21st January, 2026**

The Committee was advised that, on the date of assessment, 25th November 2025, 48% of all dwelling units in policy area HMA 2/08 Edinburgh St were made up of HMOs and (intensive forms of accommodation) flats/apartments, which in turn exceeded the 20% development limit as set out at Policy HOU10. There were 175 (27%) licensed HMOs with a capacity of 650 persons in that HMA.

The Committee was advised that the fact that the use of the property as an HMO was permitted for planning purposes was a relevant consideration in determining whether the granting of the licence would result in overprovision.

The HMO Manager reminded the Committee that there was a need for intensive forms of housing and, to meet that demand, HMOs were an important component of the housing provision. HMOs, alongside other accommodation options within the private rented sector, played an important role in meeting the housing needs of people who were single, who had temporary employment, students, low-income households and, more recently, migrant workers and asylum seekers.

He explained that, in assessing the number and capacity of licensed HMOs, as well as the need for HMO accommodation in the locality, officers could not be satisfied that the granting of the HMO licence would not result in overprovision of HMO accommodation in the locality of the accommodation for the purpose of section 8(2)(d) of the 2016 Act.

The Committee was advised that no objections had been received in relation to the application. The accommodation had been inspected on 30th October, 2025, at which time it complied with the physical standards for a 5 person HMO.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. S. Shephard to the meeting. He advised the Committee that, as a landlord, the decision to refuse the HMO licence would halve his net worth as the house was all that he owned. He was a local businessman who had paid himself £6,000 per annum for the last five years and the HMO was a small nest egg for his family. He stated that he had been advised to move the property into a Limited Company and that he had not realised that it would result in a problem with his HMO licence. He provided details of a recent case from September 2024, where the High Court granted licences to 12 HMOs in similar circumstances and he requested that the Committee would treat him fairly and in the same vein as that applicant. He stated that the error had been an oversight by his property agent and his solicitor. He also argued that the overprovision test surely did not apply, as it was not a new application, rather, it was an existing HMO in the area, and, even if it did, he disagreed with the figures provided to the Committee.

In response to a Member's query, the HMO Manager explained that the cases to which he was referring did not have the same background. He outlined that those cases related to applications whereby the owner had applied and had been granted licences by the Housing Executive for a number of properties, prior to the 2016 Act being implemented, and in the other cases an error had been made by Council officers regarding applications made and granted in the wrong name as, at that time, the Council did not require the applicant to submit proof of title to confirm ownership, which was completely different to Mr. Shephard's case, in which the licence ceased to have effect pursuant to section 28 of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

**Licensing Committee,
Wednesday, 21st January, 2026**

on the date that he transferred the property from himself to a Limited Company to which he was a Director.

He reminded the Committee that the requirement for the submission of a proof of title before an application was to be considered valid was approved by the Licensing Committee in December 2024 and came into operation on 1st April 2025.

Moved by Councillor McCann,
Seconded by Councillor McKay and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to refuse the application as, in accordance with Section 12 of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, it could not be satisfied that the granting of the HMO licence would not result in overprovision of HMO accommodation in the locality of the accommodation, as determined under section 8(2)(d) of the Act.

Chairperson

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Planning Committee

Tuesday, 20th January, 2026

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson); Aldermen Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers; Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Bell, Brennan, T. Brooks, Carson; Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey, Magee, McCabe, McCann and Whyte.

In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control; Mr. K. McDonnell, Solicitor (Regulatory and Planning); Mr. E. Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management), Mr. D. O'Kane, Planning Manager (Plans and Policy) Ms. C. Reville, Principal Planning Officer; Ms. L. Walshe, Principal Planning Officer; Mr. N. Hasson, Senior Planning Officer; and Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 9th December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 8th January, 2025.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Committee Site Visit

The Committee noted that the previously scheduled site visit had not taken place and would be rescheduled.

Notifications from Statutory Bodies

Abandonment at Bradford Square

The Committee noted the proposed abandonment at Bedford Square.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 20th January, 2026**

Planning Appeals Notified

The Committee noted the appeals decisions.

Planning Decisions Issued

The Committee noted the planning decisions issued in December, 2025.

Live Applications for Major Development

The Committee noted the list of live applications for major development.

Committee Decisions that have yet to issue

The Committee noted the list of Committee decisions which had not yet been issued.

Miscellaneous Reports

Local Applications subject to NIW Objections

The Committee agreed to delegate to the Director of Planning and Building Control those Local planning applications to which NI Water had objected.

Section 76 Monitoring Report

The Acting Development Planning and Policy Manager provided the Committee with an overview of the Section 76 Monitoring Report and key information around financial developer contributions.

The Committee noted the outcomes of the annual S76 Monitoring report for 2020/21 to 2024/25 and the intention to publish the summary document and accompanying online map viewer on the Council's website.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 20th January, 2026**

Planning Applications previously considered

**LA04/2024/2077/F - Proposed change of use
from office space (B1) and storage or
distribution (B4) to Bowling Alley, Restaurant,
Indoor Golf, Children's Soft Play, VR Zone &
Amusements, Smoking Area, Car Parking
and Associated Site Works. Proposal
includes changes to elevations. (Amended
Plans Received). - Adelaide Business Centre 2-6
Apollo Road**

The Principal Planning Officer summarised the application and explained that the application had been approved by the Committee at its meeting in August, 2025 and that, subsequently, six late objections had been received which raised the following issues:

- Road safety;
- Conflict with existing right of way;
- Parking;
- Access;
- Contaminated land; and
- Community consultation.

She reported that four late letters of support had been submitted and that correspondence had been received from Carson McDowell Solicitors on behalf of Agnew's Trade Centre which clarified that the previous objection, referred to in the case officer report, should have referenced the northwestern corner of the site rather than the northeastern corner and the agent had subsequently submitted a rebuttal of the aforementioned objection and a revised ground floor plan which removed the superseded site layout from the drawing.

She explained the key points raised in objection and stated that officers were content that the objections had been addressed, she added that neither DfI Roads nor Environmental Health had offered any objection to the application.

She stated that, having regard to the Local Development Plan and all material considerations, it was recommended that the application be approved.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. J. Mawhinney, MBA Planning, on behalf of Issac Agnew Ltd., to the meeting.

In objection to the application, Ms. Mawhinney outlined the following key facts with regard to issues of parking and incompatibility of uses:

- The extent of Agnew's right of way had not been detailed within the report and that it had an unfettered right to pass through without restriction;
- That it was incorrect that Agnew's was restricted in its access arrangements through its planning permission;

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
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- The vehicle tracking analysis was incorrect and should have evidenced that there was a pinch point on the northwestern corner;
- The case officer report incorrectly asserted that there was no evidence that the proximity of the proposed leisure facility and HGV movements would increase the likelihood of vehicular-pedestrian conflict; and
- There was no objective evidence to support the assertion that the shortfall of 40no. spaces could be met by on-street parking.

In conclusion, she stated that Agnew's had clearly demonstrated the conflict between its permitted operation and the proposed development, that harm was not mitigated by the proposed site layout or conditions sought to be imposed, and that right of way restrictions could not simply be disregarded. She asked the Committee to refuse the application.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. L. McCausland, Agent, Mr. C. O'Hara, Tetrattech Roads Consultant, and Mr. I. McNeill, Architect, to the meeting on behalf of the applicant.

Ms. McCausland stated that the proposal had been unanimously approved by the Committee at its meeting in August, 2025 and that, since then, objections had been received from one objector, Issac Agnew Ltd. which was located to the rear of the application site. She added that support for the proposal had been received from Blackstaff Residents' Association and members of the public from the local community.

She stated that, in response to the objections, the application had been amended, that a re-consultation had been carried out and highlighted that the application before the Committee had been recommended for approval with no objection from any statutory consultees.

She explained that Agnew's current site layout had not been built in accordance with or was operations as approved site layout from its own planning permission which would create potential conflict with existing and proposed land uses.

She stated that the objection in relation to right of way was a civil matter and not a planning matter. She added that objections related to parking layout had been considered by planning officers and that the applicant had removed all spaces along the eastern boundary to facilitate Agnew's operations with its own planning permission.

She informed the Committee that the revised ground floor plan demonstrated that the proposal did not seek to introduce any obstruction or impinge upon the right of way and demonstrated that Agnew's existing transporter movements would not be impacted upon by the proposal.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other issues that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

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LA04/2025/0605/F - Erection of a four storey building to create 29no. short-term let accommodation units with ancillary roof-mounted solar panels - 341-345 Albertbridge Road

The Committee deferred consideration of the application in order to undertake a site visit.

Planning Applications

LA04/2024/1836/F - Proposed development of new walking trails linking Black Mountain Shared Space Project building (approved under LA04/2022/0853/F) on the Ballygomartin Road with the Upper Whiterock Road and Moyard Parade. Proposal to include gated accesses, stockproof fencing, seated areas, information signage, landscaping and associated site works. - Lands between Ballygomartin Road and Upper Whiterock Road and to the west (rear) of Moyard Parade and New Barnsley Crescent

The Senior Planning Officer summarised the application and highlighted the following key issues for consideration:

- Principle of development;
- Design;
- Impact on rural character;
- Residential amenity;
- Contamination;
- Green infrastructure;
- Open space;
- Natural environment;
- Impact on landscape (Area of High Scenic Value (AHSV) and Belfast Hills);
- Impact on trees;
- Archaeology;
- Access;
- Community Cohesion and good relations;
- Healthy Communities; and
- Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).

He reported that the development had been designed to provide access to the Belfast Hills for local communities and to link with the wider path network which would improve the network of green infrastructure and improve access to open space.

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He stated that the proposal was not considered to be visually intrusive and would have no significant detrimental impact on rural amenity or environmental quality.

He reported that there had been no objections had been received from statutory or non-statutory consultees and that final comments were outstanding from the NIEA Regulation Unit which was currently reviewing the submitted Generic Quantitative Risk Assessment in respect of contaminated land.

He stated that, having regard to the Development Plan and material considerations, it was recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other issues that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

LA04/2025/1693/F - Spectator fencing around pitch perimeter (1.2m high), 2 no. ballstop systems (20m x 6m high), and spectator hardstanding. - Existing soccer pitch at Falls Park (approx. 50m east of No. 47 Norglen Drive), Falls Road

The Senior Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the application and highlighted the following key issues for consideration:

- Principle of development;
- Impact on amenity; and
- Impact on the character and appearance of the area.

He informed the Committee that there had been no requirement for consultation and no third-party objections had been received.

He stated that, having regard to the Development Plan, relevant planning policies and other material considerations, it was recommended that the proposal be approved.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other issues that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

LA04/2025/1694/F - The installation of 7 x Ballstop Systems @ 30m x 12m high. - Woodlands Playing Fields, Finaghy Road North

The Senior Planning Officer summarised the application and highlighted the following key issues for consideration:

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- Principle of development;
- Impact on amenity; and
- Impact on the character and appearance of the area.

He informed the Committee that there had been no objection from consultees and that one neutral comment had been received and addressed within the case officer report.

He stated that, having regard to the Development Plan, relevant planning policies and other material considerations, it was recommended that the proposal be approved.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other issues that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

LA04/2025/1695/F - Extension to existing spectator fencing on site, new ball stop system along with pedestrian and vehicular access gates. New kerb line and drainage along car park boundary. - Existing soccer pitch at Dixon Playing Fields (approx. 50m north-east of No. 100 Orby Road), Grand Parade

The Principal Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the application and highlighted the following key issues for consideration:

- Principle of development;
- Impact on amenity; and
- Impact on the character and appearance of the area.

She informed the Committee that there had been no objection from Environmental Health and that no third-party objections had been received.

She stated that, having regard to the Development Plan, relevant planning policies and other material considerations, it was recommended that the proposal be approved.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other issues that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

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**LA04/2025/1696/F - Installation of 2 No. ballstop
systems @ 30m x 6m (high). - Existing soccer
pitches at Clarendon Playing Fields (approx.
130m south-west of No. 5 Abbeydale Court),
Abbeydale Gardens**

The Principal Planning Officer summarised the application and highlighted the following key issues for consideration:

- Principle of development;
- Impact on amenity; and
- Impact on the character and appearance of the area.

She informed the Committee that due to the minor nature of the application, consultations had been deemed unnecessary and that no third-party objections had been received.

She stated that, having regard to the Development Plan, relevant planning policies and other material considerations, it was recommended that the proposal be approved.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other issues that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

Chairperson

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Monday, 19th January, 2026

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE BELFAST WATERFRONT AND ULSTER HALL LTD. SHAREHOLDERS' COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Hanvey (Chairperson);
Alderman Copeland; and
Councillors Bell, Bower, Brennan,
R. Brooks, Canavan, Ferguson, Flynn,
McCabe, McCann, McCormick, McDowell,
McKay, Ó Néill, Verner and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. K. Forster, Director of Economic Development;
Mr. C. Campbell, Divisional Solicitor;
Mr. R. McConnell, Chief Executive, Belfast Waterfront
and Ulster Hall Ltd.;
Mr. I. Bell, Director of Finance, Risk, and Corporate
Services, Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.;
Ms. S. Wylie, Chairperson, Belfast Waterfront and Ulster
Hall Ltd. Board of Directors; and
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported on behalf of Councillor Collins.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 15th December, 2025, were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 8th January, 2026.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Presentation

International Association of Convention Centres (AIPC)

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Mr. Sven Bossu, Chief Executive of the International Association of Convention Centres (AIPC).

Mr. Bossu provided the Committee with background information on the AIPC, which was the industry association for professional convention and exhibition centre

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managers. He stated that the AIPC represented over two-hundred members across sixty countries worldwide and was committed to the encouragement and recognition of excellence in convention centre management, while at the same time providing the tools to achieve high standards through its research, education, networking, quality standards and awards.

Mr. Bossu provided the Committee with an overview of the economic outlook in relation to the event industry. He stated that the industry was expected to grow substantially between 2026-2035, particularly across the corporate meetings and association conference and meetings market segments.

He outlined the impact of convention centres on the local economy, economic and knowledge development, sustainability, city development and technology, and advised that the International Convention and Exhibition Centre (ICC) Belfast had achieved the Gold Level of the AIPC Quality Standards. It was reported that this certification had covered ten key areas, from customer service to community relations, and that the external audit had highlighted the expectational clarity and quality of ICC Belfast's submission.

Mr. Bossu concluded his presentation by highlighting the role of ICC Belfast on the global stage as an engaged member of the APIC. He reported that, through ICC Belfast's engagement and active participation, it had positioned itself on the global stage with a connection to a global network of senior convention centre leaders, which had a significant impact in relation to marketing, perception and reputation.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Bossu for his presentation and the Committee noted the information provided.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the report associated with the following two 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 item as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Business Plan

The Director of Economic Development submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided an update on the Belfast and Waterfront Hall (BWUH) Ltd. five-year Business Plan 2025-30. The report advised that, following its

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee
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approval of the BWUH Ltd. five-year Business Plan in June, 2025, the BWUH Ltd. Board had reviewed and revised the plan to reflect progress and future strategic plans, and include financial forecasting up to March 2031.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. S. Wylie, Chair of the BWUH Ltd. Board, to her first meeting of the Shareholders' Committee.

The BWUH Ltd. Board Chair, Chief Executive and Director of Finance, Risk, and Corporate Services presented an update on BWUH Ltd's:

- **Annual Performance for the year ending March, 2025** - financial figures for Quarter 4 of 2024/25, conference and delegate targets, economic impact, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), team and wellbeing, and environment and the economy;
- **Annual Financial Plan** – draft annual forecast up to 2031, economic impact targets and regional impact;
- **Annual Business Plan** – key priorities and key target metrics;
- **Annual Equality Statement** - BWUH Ltd.'s commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion through its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy; and
- **Annual Planned Maintenance and Refurbishment Plan.**

During discussion, the BWUH Ltd. Board Chair, Chief Executive and Director of Finance, Risk, and Corporate Services answered a wide range of questions from the Members in relation to sustainability, engagement with the local community, the updated Business Plan, targets and reporting.

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided within the presentation and approved the updated BWUH Ltd. Business Plan to March, 2031.

**Extension of Belfast Waterfront and
Ulster Hall Ltd. Operating Contract**

The Committee was reminded that, following its decision in December, 2025, to defer consideration of the option to extend the contract with BWUH Ltd., a Committee workshop was held on 13th January, 2026, which provided Members with further information on a range of matters in relation to the contract extension and governance arrangements.

The Director of Economic Development submitted for the Committee's consideration an updated report on the option to extend the contract between the Council and BWUH Ltd., for a further five years to 2031, for the operation of the Waterfront Hall, Ulster Hall and International Convention Centre (ICC) Belfast.

The report also outlined recommended amendments to the following clauses within the Shareholders' Agreement:

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee
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- **clause 7.1.13** (*entering into any arrangement, contract or transaction outside the normal course of its business or otherwise than on arm's length terms, or where the annual consideration to be paid by the Company under the contract exceeds £100,000*) and **clause 7.1.14** (*giving notice of termination of any arrangements, contracts or transactions of a value of more than £100,000 per annum, which are material in the nature of the Company's Business, or materially varying any such arrangements, contracts or transactions*). That those clauses be amended to provide that the value of the contract thresholds be increased from £100,000 to £140,000 to align with inflation (over the contract period), and that this would be reviewed and increased with inflation annually thereafter; and
- **clause 7.1.21** (*agreeing to remunerate (by payment of fees, the provision of benefits-in-kind or otherwise) any new key employee of, or consultant to, the Company at a rate of or in excess of £50,000 per annum. This consent will not be required if any key employee is replaced and the replacing employee receives a remuneration package in an amount which is no more than 110% of their predecessor*). That the clause be amended to provide that the threshold for remuneration for new employees be increased from £50,000 to £75,000 to align with the Council's salary grading and inflation, and that this would be reviewed and increased in line with the National Joint Council (NJC) Pay Awards annually thereafter.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Brennan,
Seconded by Councillor McCann,

“That the Committee approves the option to extend the duration of the current operator contract with Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. for a further five years, commencing on 3rd June, 2026, subject to the insertion of a clause within the contract that continuation beyond three years should be on the basis of meeting agreed targets.”

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

During discussion, the Strategic Director for Place and Economy and the Divisional Solicitor advised that further advice would be brought back to the Committee in respect of an appropriate provision being made within the contract.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- approved the option to extend the duration of the current operator contract with Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. for a further five years, commencing on 3rd June, 2026, subject to the insertion

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee
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of a clause within the contract that continuation beyond three years should be on the basis of meeting agreed targets; and

ii. agreed to amend the following clauses of the Shareholders' Agreement:

- clause 7.1.13 and clause 7.1.14 be amended to provide that the value of the contract thresholds be increased from £100,000 to £140,000 to align with inflation (over the contract period), and that this would be reviewed and increased with inflation annually thereafter; and
- clause 7.1.21 be amended to provide that the threshold for remuneration for new employees be increased from £50,000 to £75,000 to align with the Council's salary grading and inflation, and that this would be reviewed and increased in line with the National Joint Council (NJC) Pay Awards annually thereafter.

Chairperson

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Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 15th January, 2026

MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor M. Donnelly (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor P. Doherty);
Alderman McCoubrey;
Councillors Anglin, R. Brooks, T. Brooks,
Collins, P. Donnelly, S. Douglas,
Ferguson, Groogan, Lyons, Magee,
McCann, Meenehan, Murray and Walsh.

In attendance: Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;
Ms. M. Quigley, Adaptation and Resilience Advisor;
Ms. C. Shortt, Monitoring, Learning & Reporting Officer; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor Bell.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 11th December 2025 were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 8th January.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor T. Brooks declared an interest in Item 2a, UPSURGE EU Horizon Project Update, in that she was employed by Queen's University Belfast, but she advised that she did not feel it was necessary to leave the room for the item.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following item 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 item 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 content of 'restricted' reports and any discussion which takes place during closed session must be treated as 'confidential'

**Climate and City Resilience Committee,
Thursday, 15th January, 2026**

information' and no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

UPSURGE EU Horizon Project Update

The Adaptation and Resilience Advisor provided the Committee with an update on the development of a scientific and environmental demonstrator site in Lower Botanic Gardens, following the successful award of funding from the Horizon 2020 EU 'UPSURGE' Project. The project focused on testing nature-based solutions in 5 demonstrator cities across Europe, with the aim of sharing learning and good practice on pollution alleviation, citizen health and climate resilience.

During discussion, a Member requested that the 24 partner organisations be shared with the Members.

After discussion, the Committee noted:

- i. that the £0.73 million UPSURGE project had been testing nature-based solutions (NBS) with the aim of renaturing urban space in five demonstrator cities across Europe (Belfast, Breda, Budapest, Katowice and Maribor);
- ii. the project specifically supported the CPP's ambition to become a nature positive city under the Belfast Agenda and was a key priority in the Corporate Annual Delivery Plan and the Performance Improvement Plan;
- iii. a demonstrator site established at Lower Botanic Gardens in partnership with Queens University, Friends of the Field and Friends of Botanic had been testing nature-based solutions;
- iv. four satellite sites (Waterworks, Musgrave Park, Belvoir Community Garden and Knocknagoney Community Garden) had been selected alongside the main demonstrator site, to replicate best practice across the city with capital works to be completed by the end of February 2026;
- v. a Place Lab Action Plan had been developed with partners and engagement had taken place with citizens on five key themes related to nature-based solutions: Eco-sensitisation, Social Benefits, gender based NBS, Economic Opportunities, and Political Capital;
- vi. innovative sensor-based technologies had been used to track the impact of the nature-based solutions on environmental parameters such as soil and air quality;
- vii. officers planned to review the next steps and lessons learned from the demonstrator project and would develop a costed plan for the ongoing monitoring, maintenance and sharing of the learning in line with the grant funding agreement. Consideration would also be given to future learning for the Council's policy frameworks and the choice of suitable locations for demonstrator projects of that type.

Carbon Disclosure Project 2025 Results

The Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer explained that Belfast had actively participated in the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) since its first annual submission in July 2021. She explained that the CDP was a global non-profit organisation which operated an independent environmental disclosure system, encouraging cities to manage their environmental impacts and enhance transparency. She outlined that Belfast's submissions had focused on key themes such as waste, transport, energy, emissions, climate risk, adaptation, and mitigation. The city had consistently demonstrated its commitment to environmental transparency by making its submissions public each year. Starting with a B ranking in 2021, Belfast had achieved an A ranking in 2022, which it had gone onto maintain through 2025. She highlighted that the recognition placed Belfast among the top cities globally for bold leadership in climate action and transparency.

The Members were advised that Belfast's high rankings in the CDP were attributed to its ambitious sustainability initiatives and projects. Those included the Belfast Net Zero Carbon Roadmap, UPSURGE, the Belfast Tidal Defence Project, the Retrofit Hub, and the Local Development Plan. She added that recent efforts, such as the Climate Action Plan, Local Area Energy Plan, UP2030 Net Zero Neighbourhoods, Solar PV installations, and the establishment of the Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership, had further solidified its position in the Leadership band.

The Committee noted the 2025 CDP award of A- status to Belfast and agreed its support for the annual submission by Belfast through the internationally recognised carbon and climate reporting framework.

Public Body Reporting - Mitigation Report

The Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer presented the following report to the Committee:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 To share the information that was submitted to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in relation to the Mitigation Report required under the Climate Change Act, Public Body Reporting on the 31st October 2025.**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note that:**

- i. BCC is required to submit mitigation report to DAERA as part of the public body reporting requirements under the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022;**
- ii. the mitigation report including the amounts and sources of the council's greenhouse gas emissions and a statement of the council's proposals and policies**

for reducing those amounts was submitted on the DAERA platform on 31st October 2025 for the baseline year of data (2023/2024);

- iii. the council's Scope 1 and 2 emissions for 2023/2024 were 101,42.8 tCO₂e and 3565.4 tCO₂e respectively;
- iv. the council's proposals and policies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions include the 13 short-term actions within the Climate Action Plan (CAP) that relate to mitigation along with a progress update for each action; and
- v. although the next mitigation report to DAERA is not due until 2029, mitigation reporting will be repeated internally on an annual basis to enable Council to track its emissions and its progress for reducing these emissions.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Section 42 of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 requires DAERA to make new Regulations, which will place climate change reporting duties on specified public bodies. The regulations came into operation in early May 2024, 21 days after they are laid in the Assembly. The first report required under the regulations, is the mitigation report which was submitted on 31st October 2025.

What was submitted?

3.2 As this was the first report, the baseline year of data (2023/2024) of the amounts and sources of the council's greenhouse gas emissions were calculated and uploaded. In future reports the 3 most recent financial years will be required.

3.3 The report also included a statement of the council's proposals and policies for reducing those amounts and otherwise for mitigating the effects of climate change in the exercise of its functions. On this occasion, this included the short-term actions within the Climate Action Plan (CAP) that relate to mitigation. Updates were included on each of the actions, tracking their target for delivery.

Greenhouse gas figures

3.4 Estimates created inhouse matched those created using the DAERA portal and are listed below.

Climate and City Resilience Committee,
Thursday, 15th January, 2026

Scope 1

Direct GHG emissions totals

Title	Total
Total scope 1 emissions (tCO ₂ e)	10142.768637
Total outside of scopes emissions (tCO ₂ e)	2472.792203

Scope 2

4.2 - Scope 2: Energy indirect GHG emissions - Scope 2 accounts for GHG emissions from the generation of purchased energy consumed by the organisation.

Energy indirect GHG emissions totals

Title	Total
Total Scope 2 Emissions (Location-based) (tCO ₂ e)	3565.429366

Proposals and policies for reduction

3.5 The short-term mitigation actions were submitted to DAERA as our proposals and policies for carbon reduction. The short-term mitigation actions are listed below.

1. Develop and launch an accessible climate data platform to track progress on delivering climate adaptation and mitigation actions (1.7)
2. Develop a sustainable/ low carbon procurement policy and supplier guidance documents to support a transition to an inclusive, net zero and resilient future (1.12)
3. Develop a sustainable food policy for the Council that addresses waste, sourcing, packaging, emissions measurement and an events protocol (1.14)
4. Complete a second phase of building energy audits - (Andersonstown LC, Lisnasharragh LC, Templemore Av LC, Brook LC) and the Waterfront Hall (3.4)
5. Develop the integration of whole life carbon assessments as standard practice in the Capital Programme (3.8)
6. Launch a phased metering and retrofitting programme across BCC's top energy users based on the findings of the building level audits of Adelaide, Cecil Ward, City Hall and Duncrue (3.11)

7. Scope out a strategy to increase renewable and low-carbon energy use through corporate power purchase agreements (3.15)
8. Review the Business Travel Policy and develop the Sustainable Staff Travel Plan to encourage modal shift, active travel and more fuel-efficient driving for Council staff (4.1)
9. Through sustainable procurement, aim to use local suppliers to the Council to reduce miles travelled within the confines of procurement legislation and Local Govt Act restrictions (4.4)
10. Conduct a commercial assessment of Council land suitable for installing low emission vehicle (LEV) charging points (4.9)
11. Commence work on repurposing staff parking spaces for cycle racks and integrate appropriate facilities to support active travel e.g. shower and changing facilities (4.10)
12. Continue to progress the proposal for a single use plastics policy for the Council (5.4)
13. Develop a mechanism to track and report on internal Council generated waste (5.7).

3.6 There was an additional section that asked about linkage of current action to other existing policies. For example, it was highlighted that an internal sustainable food policy (1.14), will link to current work produced by the Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership.

Next steps

3.7 The next report due to be submitted to DAERA is the adaptation report on 31st March 2026. Further updates will be brought to committee outlining the contents of this report. The Climate Team will continue this mitigation reporting cycle on an annual basis, including figures for our greenhouse gas emissions along with progress made towards actions within the CAP.

4.0 Financial & Resource Implications

4.1 There are no financial and resource implications in relation to this update.

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications

5.1 Any good relations or equality implications will be identified as part of the Council's screening process.”

The Committee noted the recommendations in the report.

Update on Public Body Reporting –
Proposed Contents for Adaptation Report

The Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer presented the following report to the Committee:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To inform Members of the requirements for the Council’s Climate Adaptation Report that must be submitted to DAERA by 31st March 2026.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to note:

- i. that the Council is required to submit an adaptation report 31st March 2026 covering a 4 year period from 1st Jan 2026;
- ii. that the contents of the report must outline the current and predicted climate change impacts in relation to the Council’s functions i.e. a climate change impact assessment along with the Council’s adaptation targets and priority actions;
- iii. that the priority actions must be based on the Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programmes 2 and 3, the Council’s Climate Action Plan (CAP) and any additional adaptation work taking place across Council;
- iv. the three CAP actions to be included in the report:
 - update the BCC Climate Risk Assessment in line with the new mandatory Public Body Reporting requirements (under the Climate Change Act);
 - apply SUDs policy and guidance (SUDS Manual C753) as standard practice in the Capital Programme;
 - start to deliver the Tree Establishment Strategy and continue the One Million Trees Programme;
- v. the adaptation report submitted to DAERA will be brought back to a future Committee.

3.0 Main report

3.1 In June 2024, Members were informed of the Public Body Reporting Requirements under the NI Climate Act 2022. Section 42 of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland)

2022 requires DAERA to make new Regulations, which will place climate change reporting duties on specified public bodies. The regulations came into operation in early May 2024, 21 days after they are laid in the Assembly. The first report required under the regulations, is the mitigation report which was submitted to DAERA in October 2025. The Council must now produce and submit an adaptation report for submission by 31st March 2026.

What will be required?

- 3.2 The first adaptation report must relate to the period of 4 years beginning with 1st January 2026 and include:
 - an assessment of the current and predicted impact of climate change in relation to the organisation's functions; and
 - the proposals and policies for adapting to climate change in the exercise of its functions, along with implementation timescales.
- 3.3 The second and subsequent reports are required every 5 years and will include an assessment of the progress the body has made towards implementing the proposals and policies set out in any previous climate change adaptation reports.
- 3.4 The adaptation report includes information under six headings.
 - Part 1: Profile – information about the organisation.
 - Part 2: Governance – what governance structures exist in Council to manage adaptation, strategies and plans that integrate adaptation planning and what objectives relate to it.
 - Part 3 – Impacts: the Council's climate risk assessment including the methodology and findings.
 - Part 4 – Actions: the Council's adaptation targets and priority actions and how this relates to the NICCAP.
 - Part 5 – Case Studies: inclusion of up to 5 case studies that illustrate best practice being undertaken by Council.
 - Part 6 – Validation and Authorisation: validated findings (i.e. through peer review or external experts) and authorisation of the plan with the relevant decision makers within the organisation.
- 3.5 The Impacts section will set out the various climate risks and opportunities work completed by the Council to date including

work with Climate Northern Ireland in 2020 and the Council's Climate Risk Assessment in 2023.

3.6 The Actions will be drawn from the Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programmes 2 and 3, the Councils Climate Action Plan (outlined below) adopted in April 2025 and any additional adaptation work which is taking place across Council and is currently being mapped through the Talx2 work.

3.7 Four CAP adaptation actions will be included in the report:

1. Update the BCC Climate Risk Assessment in line with the new mandatory Public Body Reporting requirements (under the Climate Change Act) (2.2)
2. Apply SUDs policy and guidance (SUDS Manual C753) as standard practice in the Capital Programme (2.3)
3. Start to deliver the Tree Establishment Strategy and continue the One Million Trees Programme (2.19)
4. Develop a sustainable food policy for the Council that addresses waste, sourcing, packaging, emissions measurement and an events protocol (1.14).

3.8 In addition, selected actions from NICCAP 2 and NICCAP 3 (which has not yet been finalised) will be included in the report to DAERA. The final version of the report, as submitted to DAERA, will be presented at a future meeting of this committee.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

4.1 There are no financial and resource implications.

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Implications

5.1 Any good relations or equality implications will be identified as part of the Council's screening process."

The Committee noted the information provided.

Funding Update: Pathways2Resilience Project

The Adaptation and Resilience Advisor provided the Committee with an update on Belfast's successful inclusion in the Horizon Pathways2Resilience Programme, a five-year initiative funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme. She outlined that the programme aimed to support at least 100 regions and communities across Europe in developing climate resilience strategies, adaptation pathways, and investment plans.

**Climate and City Resilience Committee,
Thursday, 15th January, 2026**

The Members were advised that Belfast had secured €198,612 in funding from Climate KIC, along with a capacity-building program to design and implement a transformative climate adaptation and resilience plan. The project, running from January 2026 to June 2027, would focus on creating a Climate Resilience Baseline report, Strategy, Action Plan, and Investment Plan. The funding would also support the recruitment of temporary project staff to enhance the capacity of Belfast City Council (BCC) and Northern Ireland Environment Link (Climate NI) in delivering resilience and adaptation initiatives.

She highlighted the pressing need for climate adaptation in Belfast due to the city's vulnerability to climate risks such as rising sea levels, surface water flooding and extreme weather events. Climate projections had indicated significant changes, including hotter summers, wetter winters, and increased storminess, which posed challenges to the city's infrastructure and residents. The Members were advised that the Pathways2Resilience programme would strengthen existing research and efforts on climate resilience, support annual climate adaptation reporting to the Council and contribute to the Belfast Agenda 2024-2028 and ongoing environmental initiatives. By participating in the programme, Belfast aimed to develop ambitious and impactful strategies to address climate challenges and ensure long-term sustainability.

In response to a Member's query, she outlined that she would continue to bring updates to the Committee in respect of any other cities in the UK or Ireland which were also participating in the programme.

After discussion, the Committee noted:

- i. that funding of €198,612 had been secured from Climate KIC which was part of the EU Horizon Pathways2Resilience Programme to engage with the capacity development programme and develop a Climate Resilience Baseline report, a Climate Resilience Strategy, a Climate Resilience Action Plan, and a Climate Resilience Investment Plan;
- ii. the project started in January 2026 and would end in June 2027;
- iii. that BCC would enter into an agreement with Northern Ireland Environment Link (Climate NI) to work in partnership to deliver the project.

Chairperson

Standards and Business Committee

Tuesday, 27th January, 2026

MEETING OF THE STANDARDS AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Flynn (Chairperson); Aldermen Lawlor and McCullough; and Councillors Bower, Bradley, Carson, de Faoite, P. Donnelly, D. Douglas, Lyons, Murphy, Magee, McCallin, McCormick, McDonough-Brown, McAteer, I. McLaughlin and R. McLaughlin.

In attendance: Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services; and Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

(Alderman Lawlor in the Chair).

Apologies

There were no apologies received.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 20th November, 2025, were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st December, 2025.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

(The Chairperson, Councillor Flynn, in the Chair).

Motions

City Centre Gritting Feasibility Study

The Committee agreed that the motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Smyth and seconded by Councillor Groogan, be referred, in the first instance, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Funding for Faith-Based Organisations and Addiction Services

The Committee agreed that the motion, which had been proposed by Alderman McCullough and seconded by Councillor Bunting, be referred, in the first instance, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

**Standards and Business Committee,
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Fleadh Cheoil 2026 - Legacy Monument for Belfast

The Committee agreed that the motion, which had been proposed by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Doherty) and seconded by Councillor Whyte, be referred, in the first instance, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Moved by Councillor Lawlor,
Seconded by Councillor Flynn (Chairperson) and

Resolved - The Committee agrees that the motion, which had proposed by Councillor Brooks and seconded by Councillor Smyth, be adopted.

Chairperson