

Council

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall
on Wednesday, 1st July, 2026 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Lord Mayor, Councillor R.M. Donnelly (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Abernethy);
The High Sheriff (Alderman McCoubrey);
Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCullough
and Rodgers; and
Councillors Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower,
Bradley, Brennan, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Bunting,
Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Collins, de Faoite,
P. Doherty, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, Doran,
D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson, Flynn,
Garrett, Groogan, Kelly, Long, Lyons, Magee, Maghie,
McAteer, McCabe, McCallin, McCann, McCormick,
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

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Hanvey and McCusker.

Declarations of Interest

Regarding the item 'PEACEPLUS Distillery Street Regeneration Project' under the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th June, Councillor Long declared an interest in that the report referenced the Department of Justice, in respect of which his wife was the Minister.

Councillor Duffy declared an interest under the heading 'Minutes of Shared City Partnership' within the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th June, in that his employer was one of the delivery partners for the schemes referred to therein.

Councillor Groogan declared interests under the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th June under the headings 'Belfast Stories – Belfast Film Festival', 'Local Community Ownership Fund' and 'Minutes of Shared City Partnership'. In addition, she declared an interest under the heading, 'Vacant to Vibrant Scheme' within the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 18th June. All of the foregoing interests related to her employer who was associated with, or had applied for funding, under schemes associated with the items.

Councillors Verner and McCabe declared interests under the heading 'Minutes of Shared City Partnership' within the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th June in that their employers were delivery partners in schemes referred to therein.

Councillors de Faoite and McCabe declared interests under the minutes of the Licensing Committee of 17th June in that they were associated with applications for the grants of 14-day occasional licences. Councillor de Faoite in that he had lobbied on behalf of an applicant during the planning process; and Councillor McCabe in that her employer had applied for one of the licences.

In respect of the items 'Proposal for RAPID Drugs' Disposal Bin - Ormeau Park' and 'Update on The Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026', under the minutes of the People and Communities Committee of 23rd June, Councillor McKeown declared interests in that his employer was associated with the initiatives. In addition, he declared an interest under the heading 'Pilot Drug and Pill Testing at Events' within the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th June in that his employer was associated with the item also.

Councillor R. McLaughlin declared an interest within the minutes of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 18th June under the heading 'Belfast City and Region Place Partnership' in that he was a member of the Harbour Commissioners, which was referenced within the report, specifically the MIPIM real estate and investment event.

None of the above-mentioned items, with the exception of the item 'Belfast City and Region Place Partnership' specifically the Council's participation at MIPIM, became subject to debate. Accordingly, Councillor R. McLaughlin left the meeting for the duration of that item.

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor,
Seconded by the Deputy Lord Mayor and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Council of 1st June, be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

Civil Unrest in Belfast

The Lord Mayor referred to the violence which had taken place in parts of the city in the aftermath of a stabbing incident which had occurred in Kinnaird Avenue on Tuesday, 9th June. She expressed sympathy for the victim of the attack and to all of those who had been targeted by racist violence and intimidation over the following days. She stated that everybody, regardless of race, faith, background or nationality, had the right to live in safety within their communities. The Council, she added, should stand united in support of all of the victims of the violence. She concluded by thanking those individuals, organisations and statutory bodies which had provided help and support throughout the period of unrest. A number of Members spoke in support of the sentiments expressed and condemned the threats which had been made to the Lord Mayor.

Miscellaneous Announcements

The Lord Mayor referred to the forthcoming retirements of staff members Briege Madden and Sean Conlon and thanked them both for their long-standing service to the Council and wished them well in the future. It was agreed that letters of thanks be sent by the Lord Mayor to the two staff members.

Councillor McAteer congratulated East Belfast Sure Start on being shortlisted for an Advancing Healthcare Award for their 'Connect with Me' booklet, which had been written in conjunction with speech and language therapists from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

Councillor M. Donnelly congratulated the Gort na Móna CLG Under-15 girls' football team which had won the All-Ireland Féile Peile na nÓg Championship on 27th June. He paid tribute to their players, coaching staff and volunteers and thanked the Lord Mayor for hosting an event in the parlour to mark their achievement.

Councillor Maghie congratulated Belfast Healthy Cities on the redesignation of Belfast as a World Health Organisation Healthy City. That achievement, she pointed out, was an excellent example of partnership working across Belfast which recognised also the city's determination to address health inequalities and its causes.

Councillor Long wished everybody a happy Canada Day and thanked the Deputy Lord Mayor for attending an event to mark the occasion earlier that day.

Councillor de Faoite congratulated two young representatives of the L'Arche organisation who had represented Belfast at a United Nations event in New York, which was one of the largest inter-governmental conferences ever held to address disability rights, participation and dignity. He suggested that the Lord Mayor might consider a visit to the centre at a future date.

Councillor Carson congratulated the Under-14 hurlers of Pádraig Sáirseil CLG on their winning of the Antrim and Ulster Feile na nGael Region 2 championship. The Lord Mayor undertook to write the club's chairperson to convey congratulations on behalf of the Council.

Changes of Positions on Committees

The Chief Executive reported that notification had been received from the DUP indicating that it wished to replace Councillor Ferguson with Councillor S. Douglas on the Climate and City Resilience Committee. In addition, it was reported that notification had been received from the Alliance Party indicating that it wished to replace the Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Abernethy, with Councillor Bell on the Licensing Committee.

The Council noted the changes.

Deputation

The Chief Executive reported that a request to address the Council had been received from representatives of several youth organisations regarding the minute within the People and Communities Committee of 23rd June under the heading 'Support for Youth Work Charter'.

The Council acceded to the request and the Lord Mayor welcomed Mr S. McMullan, Ms. O. Floyd and Ms. T. O'Reilly to the meeting. The Council was advised that the Youth Work Charter, which had been launched by the Youth Work Alliance, was an advocacy framework to protect, fund and unify the voluntary youth sector. The Charter set out eight core demands, primarily calling for the Minister of Education to secure a ring-fenced funding to guarantee universal open access and adequately resource proactive violence prevention.

The Charter, it was pointed out, demanded also parity of esteem with the formal education sector, the protection of frontline youth work staff delivering high-risk interventions, together with a genuine and needs-led partnership between the statutory and voluntary sectors. The Charter, it was added, was urging full government compliance with the Children's Services Co-operation Act (NI) 2015 to deliver joint, enhanced strategies that tackle the root causes of violence, whilst protecting the diverse 'one youth service' ecosystem that encompasses uniformed, Irish-medium, faith-based, and community provision.

The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Council, thanked the deputation for attending and for the information which had been provided.

Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor I. McLaughlin,
Seconded by Councillor J. Maghie,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th June, 2026, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Amendments

Belfast Stories

Moved by Councillor Smyth,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

That the Committee's decision of 19th June under the above-mentioned heading be amended to reflect that the Council would examine further the potential of entering into agreements with a number of creative sector organisations in respect of the operating model for the site.

On a vote, six voted in favour of the amendment and fifty against and it was declared lost.

Belfast Stories

Moved by Councillor Maghie,
Seconded by Councillor Murray,

That the decision of the Committee of 19th June under the above-mentioned heading be rejected and, accordingly, the Council agrees to proceed with the proposed user for the studio and event space at the site.

On a vote, thirty Members voted in favour of the amendment and twenty-four against, with two 'no votes' recorded, and it was declared carried.

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth and

Resolved – That the Council agrees that the decision of the Committee of 19th June, under the above-mentioned heading, be amended to reflect that a delegation of traders from Smithfield Market be invited to a future meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee to discuss a range of issues relating to the site; and a cleaning and enhancement operation be undertaken thereat. The Council noted also that the Chief Executive would revert to Members in respect of the proposed usage of the car park during Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann.

Minutes of the Shared City Partnership

Moved by Councillor Duffy,
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved – That the Council agrees that the decision of the Committee of 19th June, under the above-mentioned heading, be amended to reflect, should any additional Good Relations funding be made available by The Executive Office to address the causes of the recent disorder, that delegated authority be granted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to distribute such funding.

Installations Working Group

At the request of Councillor Lyons, the Council agreed that the decision of the Committee of 19th June, under the above-mentioned heading, be amended to reflect that, within the third bullet point, the words ‘stained glass window’ be replaced by ‘plaque’; and the words ‘in due course’ be replaced by ‘in September’ in relation to the proposed Fire Service memorial in the City Hall.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th June, 2026, omitting matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee, were approved and adopted.

Minutes of the People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Maghie,
Seconded by Councillor M. Donnelly,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 23rd June, 2026 be approved and adopted, subject to an amendment under the heading ‘Partnership Agreements 2026/27’ to note that the organisation listed as ‘Outdoor Recreation NI’ had been renamed ‘Outscape’.

Amendments

Dual Language Street Signs - Long Streets

Moved by Councillor Ó Néill,
Seconded by Councillor M. Donnelly,

That the decision of the Committee of 23rd June under the above-mentioned heading be rejected and, accordingly, the Council agrees that

dual language street signs be erected along the length of both Donegall Park Avenue and the Oldpark Road.

On a vote, thirty-one Members voted for the amendment and twenty-five against and it was declared carried.

Dual Language Street Signs - Pilot Street

Moved by Councillor Ó Néill,
Seconded by Councillor M. Donnelly,

That the decision of the Committee of 23rd June under the above-mentioned heading be rejected and, accordingly, the Council agrees that residual discretion be exercised and the applications for dual language street signs at be approved.

On a vote, twenty-eight Members voted in favour of the amendment and twenty-nine against and it was declared lost.

Dual Language Street Signs - Caffrey Avenue and Glenwood View

Moved by Councillor Ó Néill,
Seconded by Councillor M. Donnelly,

That the Council agrees that the decision of the Committee of 23rd June under the above-mentioned heading be rejected and, accordingly, residual discretion be exercised and the applications for dual language street signs at Caffrey Avenue and Glenwood View be approved.

On a vote, thirty-one Members voted in favour of the amendment and twenty-six against and it was declared carried.

**Northern Ireland Housing Executive -
Tenancy Succession Policy**

At the request of Councillor Collins, the Chief Executive indicated that a report in relation to a Notice of Motion regarding 'Action to Address Empty Homes', which had been adopted by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 21st March, 2025, would be submitted to that Committee in due course.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the People and Communities Committee of 23rd June, 2026, were approved and adopted.

Minutes of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Duffy,
Seconded by Councillor Murphy,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 10th and 18th June, 2026, be approved and adopted.

Amendment

Belfast City and Region Place Partnership

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth,

That the decision of the Committee of 18th June under the above-mentioned heading, specifically that portion relating to the Council's proposed attendance at MIPIM 2027, be rejected and, accordingly, the Council agrees not to be represented at the event.

On a vote, five Members voted in favour of the amendment and twenty-three against, with eighteen 'no votes' recorded, and it was declared lost.

Accordingly, the minutes of the Committee of 18th June as presented were approved and adopted.

Minutes of the Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor T. Brooks,
Seconded by Councillor McCann,

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 17th June, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of the Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 16th June 2026, be approved and adopted.

**Minutes of the Belfast Waterfront and
Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee**

Moved by Councillor McAteer,
Seconded by Councillor Duffy and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee of 15th June, 2026, be approved and adopted.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson