

Council

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall
on Tuesday, 1st September, 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, McCusker, McDonough-Brown,
McDowell, McKay, McKeown, I. McLaughlin, R.
McLaughlin, Meenehan, Murphy, Murray, Nelson,
Néill, Smyth, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Declarations of Interest

Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Councillor de Faoite declared an interest in relation to the item 'Planning Update' in that he was on the Board of Governors of Forge Integrated Primary School.

Councillor Black declared an interest in relation to the item 'Independently Managed Community Centres (IMCC's)' in that she was employed by Grosvenor Community Centre.

Councillors Duffy, Groogan, McCabe and Verner declared an interest in relation to the item 'Minutes of the Shared City Partnership Meeting' in that they were employed by or associated with organisations which were in receipt of PEACEPLUS funding.

Councillors Duffy, Groogan and Verner also declared an interest in relation to the item 'Area-Based Community Planning and Community Wealth Building' in that they were employed by or associated with organisations which had applied for funding.

Councillor Nelson declared an interest in relation the item 'Belfast Hills Partnership - Request for Increase to Annual Funding', in that he was on the Board of the partnership. He also declared an interest in relation to the item 'Correspondence received – Department of Justice – Tackling Anti-Social Scrambler and E-Scooter Use in Belfast Response' in that his partner was named in the correspondence.

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

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in relation to the item 'Request for Illumination of City Hall to mark International Safe Abortion Day 2026' in that he worked for the Public Health Agency and left the meeting whilst this item was under consideration.

**Minutes of the City Growth
and Regeneration Committee**

Councillor Groogan declared an interest in relation to the item 'Vacant to Vibrant Programme Update' in that her employer was in receipt of a grant through the scheme. As this item did not become the subject of debate or discussion, she was not required to leave the meeting.

Notices of Motion

Councillors Long and R. McLaughlin declared an interest in relation to the motions 'Mobile Maternity Units for Gaza' and 'Evidence-Based Approach to Preventing Radicalisation and Supporting the De-Radicalisation of Young Men' in that their partners were members of the Northern Ireland Executive and left the meeting whilst those items were under consideration.

Minutes of the Meetings of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor R.M. Donnelly),
Seconded by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Abernethy) and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the meetings of the Council of 1st and 10th July, 2026, be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Council, congratulated and thanked all staff and volunteers for their work and contribution to the successful delivery of the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann which was held in the city in August. A number of Members echoed the comments of the Lord Mayor.

The Deputy Lord Mayor stated that he had recently attended the Intercultural Community Development Foundation's 'Young People Talent Showcase' which celebrated the creativity and skills of young people. He shared some of the comments of the young people from a range of cultural backgrounds on their experiences of living in Belfast.

Councillor Lyons thanked all those who had contributed to the rediscovery, restoration and rededication of the grave in Balmoral Cemetery of John McCredy McAleery who had introduced association football to Ireland in 1878 and had founded Cliftonville Football Club in 1879.

Alderman Lawlor marked Orange Victims Day, which remembered members of the Orange Institution who had been murdered and extended his thoughts to the victims' friends and families.

Councillor Murray referred to the wide range of festivals which took place within the city over the summer period, and which highlighted the city's diversity and support for culture, music and the arts.

Councillor de Faoite highlighted that a fundraising gig would take place at the First Presbyterian Church on Rosemary Street on 4th September, 2026, in aid of Muscular Dystrophy Ireland.

Condolences

The Lord Mayor extended condolences on behalf of the Council to the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services, Jim Girvan, on the recent passing of his sister.

Councillors M. Donnelly and de Faoite expressed their condolences to the family of retired Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer Eoin Doyle who had recently passed. At the request of Councillor M. Donnelly, the Lord Mayor agreed to write to the family on behalf of the Council to extend its condolences.

Councillor de Faoite also expressed his condolences on the recent passing of Dolly Parton and commended her for her charitable work and efforts, including the Imagination Library programme which gifted free books to children.

Congratulations

The Lord Mayor congratulated Councillor Flynn and his husband on their recent marriage and wished them well for the future.

Councillor Lyons and Brennan congratulated the Antrim Ladies teams which won the All-Ireland Junior Football and the All-Ireland Intermediate Camogie Championships in August. At the request of Councillor Lyons, the Lord Mayor agreed to mark the recent successes of the Antrim teams with a reception in City Hall.

Councillor M. Donnelly congratulated West Belfast's Coran Madden, formerly of Cliftonville Football Club, who had recently signed his first professional contract with English Premier League club Brentford.

Councillor R. Brooks congratulated McArthur Nursery School which had celebrated its 90th anniversary in June; Nettlefield Primary School which would be celebrating in its 90th anniversary in September; and Euston Street Primary School and Nursery Unit which would also be celebrating in September to mark its centenary.

Councillor de Faoite congratulated Bredagh GAC's senior reserve hurlers who had recently won the Betsy Grey Shield. At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the Lord Mayor agreed to mark the recent success of Bredagh GAC's senior reserve hurlers.

Councillor Kelly congratulated Garyn McAllister from Sandy Row who had won a bronze medal for Team NI in the men's 90kg boxing at the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. At the request of Councillor Kelly, the Lord Mayor agreed to send a letter of congratulations to Garyn on his recent success.

Requests to address the Council

Gaels Against Genocide – Notice of Motion **'Mobile Maternity Units for Gaza'**

The Lord Mayor advised that a request to address the Council had been received in relation to the notice of motion on the agenda 'Mobile Maternity Units for Gaza'.

The Council acceded to the request, and the Lord Mayor welcomed to the meeting Mr. Michael Doherty and Mr. Aidan Thornbury of Gaels Against Genocide.

Mr. Doherty highlighted that the United Nations had reported that 94 percent of hospitals within Gaza had been either damaged or destroyed, which had left pregnant women and newborn babies without essential care. He stated that, in response, a fundraising campaign had been established across Ireland in 2024 which had raised funds to enable the construction of three medically approved mobile maternity units in Cairo, Egypt, which would then be transported to Gaza. He advised that, due to the ongoing border restrictions, the Israeli Government had prevented the transport of those mobile maternity units from Cairo to Gaza, which had denied women and newborn babies in Gaza the access to urgent and potentially life-saving care.

Mr. Thornbury concluded by calling on the Council to support the notice of motion on the agenda and put pressure on the Executive, the Irish Government and the UK Government to urge the Israeli Government to allow those mobile maternity units unrestricted entry into Gaza.

The Lord Mayor thanked the deputation for attending and they left the meeting.

Northern Ireland Food To Go Association – Christmas Market

The Lord Mayor advised that a request to address the Council had been received in relation to the item within the minutes of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, 'Christmas Market Expansion Plans'.

The Council acceded to the request, and the Lord Mayor welcomed to the meeting Mr. Michael Henderson, Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Food To Go Association.

Mr. Henderson welcomed the potential expansion of the Christmas Market but stated that all effort should be made to ensure that any potential expansion plans focused on providing meaningful opportunities for local traders. He congratulated the Council on the successful delivery of the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann and highlighted that it had demonstrated the appetite and demand for local traders and artisan vendors. He added that the Christmas period was an opportunity to showcase the significant contribution made by local traders to the city's offering and visitor experience. He outlined some of the challenges which local independent traders had faced during the Christmas period, including costs and lack of opportunities, and called on the Council to prioritise local producers and vendors when considering any potential expansion plans.

The Lord Mayor thanked Mr. Henderson for attending and he left the meeting.

Open Doors UK and Ireland – Notice of Motion 'Open Doors World Watch 2026'

The Lord Mayor advised that a request to address the Council had been received in relation to the notice of motion on the agenda 'Open Doors World Watch 2026'.

The Council acceded to the request, and the Lord Mayor welcomed to the meeting Mr. Chris Phillips, Northern Ireland Lead for Open Doors UK and Ireland.

Mr. Phillips informed the Council that Open Doors UK and Ireland had supported persecuted Christians around the world by providing practical aid, advocacy and Christian resources. He advised that each year Open Doors had published a 'World Watch List', which ranked the countries where Christians had faced the most extreme persecution. He reported that 388 million Christians worldwide had faced high levels of persecution and discrimination, and that during the most recent reporting period, of the 4,849 Christians which had been killed, 3,490 of those had occurred in Nigeria. He

highlighted the attacks faced by Christian communities in Nigeria and need for the UK Government to support and encourage the Nigerian Government to ensure the protection of all vulnerable communities. He added that freedom of religion was a universal right and that people of all faiths and those of no religious belief should be safeguarded. Mr. Phillips concluded by calling on the Council to support the notice of motion on the agenda which would be a significant step to highlight the issue, display solidarity with the residents of Belfast who had family, friends or church connections to those affected, and to urge the UK Government to prioritise the freedom of religion or belief in its foreign policy and diplomatic engagement and press the Nigerian Government to take action to ensure that vulnerable communities are protected and that those responsible for violence are brought to justice.

The Lord Mayor thanked Mr. Phillips for attending and he left the meeting.

Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor I. McLaughlin,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

“That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st August, 2026, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.”

Amendments

**Request for Illumination of City Hall
to Mark International Safe Abortion Day 2026**

Moved by Councillor Kelly,
Seconded by Councillor Bunting,

“That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st August, 2026, under the heading “Request for Illumination of City Hall to mark International Safe Abortion Day 2026”, be rejected and, accordingly, the Council agrees not to illuminate City Hall to mark International Safe Abortion Day on 28th September, 2026.”

On a vote, eighteen Members voted for the proposal, thirty-six against and one no vote and it was declared lost.

Belfast Region City Deal - Annual Report

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth,

“That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st August, 2026, under the heading “Belfast Region City Deal - Annual Report”, be rejected and, accordingly, the Council agrees to defer consideration of the report to enable further information to be brought back to the Committee in respect of the AI Adoption Programme, including details of the fund and the environmental and economic impact.”

On a vote, five Members voted for the proposal, forty-nine against and two no votes and it was declared lost.

**Independently Managed Community Centres
(IMCC's)**

At the request of Councillor Brennan, the Council agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st August, 2026, under the heading "Independently Managed Community Centres (IMCC's)", be amended to provide that funding would continue until the review of the IMCC's was complete.

TEO Rapid Response Funding

At the request of Councillor Beattie, the Council agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st August, 2026, under the heading "TEO Rapid Response Funding", be amended to provide that delegated authority be granted to the Strategic Policy and Resources in respect of the removal of any offensive signage displayed throughout the city.

Irish Language Policy – Implementation Plan

At the request of Councillor R. Brooks, the Council agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st August, 2026, under the heading "Irish Language Policy – Implementation Plan", be amended to provide that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee which would provide further information on the expenditure associated with the implementation of the Irish Language Policy.

**Minutes of the Disability Working
Group of 14th August, 2026**

At the request of Councillor R. Brooks, the Council agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st August, 2026, under the heading "Minutes of the Disability Working Group of 14th August, 2026", be amended to provide that a workshop be held for all Members by the end of October in relation to the delivery of a strategic roadmap to create an accessible city by 2035.

**Correspondence received –
Removal of Ring-fenced Protection for
Youth Service Funding – Department of Education**

At the request of Councillor Collins, the Council agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st August, 2026, under the heading "Correspondence received - Removal of Ring-fenced Protection for Youth Service Funding - Department of Education", be amended to provide that the Council writes back to the Minister of Education to highlight its concern that the Education Authority's youth services budget would no longer be ring-fenced and to call on the Education Authority to ensure that funding for youth services would be protected.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st August, 2026, omitting matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee, were approved and adopted.

Call-In - Proposed New Crematorium at Roselawn

The Council was provided with a copy of the legal opinion which was obtained in relation to the call-in of the Council decision of 20th February, 2026, in respect of the proposed new crematorium at Roselawn.

The Council agreed to defer consideration of the call-in and that it be referred back to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Minutes of the People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor M. Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin,

“That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 11th August, 2026 be approved and adopted.”

Amendments

Resources and Fleet/Waste Management – Update

At the request of Councillor Beattie, the Council agreed that the minute of the People and Communities Committee of 11th August, 2026, under the heading “Resources and Fleet/Waste Management - Update”, be amended to provide that, in consultation with Council staff, union representatives and elected Members, a street cleansing strategy be developed and brought back for the Committee’s consideration within eight weeks.

DAERA Consultation re: Draft Air Quality (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026

At the request of Councillor Collins, the Council agreed that the minute of the People and Communities Committee of 11th August, 2026, under the heading “DAERA Consultation re: Draft Air Quality (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026”, be amended to provide that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee in relation to odour complaints.

Abandoned Bins Protocol and Improvements to Bulky Waste Collections

At the request of Councillor R. Brooks, the Council agreed that the minute of the People and Communities Committee of 11th August, 2026, under the heading “Abandoned Bins Protocol and Improvements to Bulky Waste Collections”, be amended to provide that additional resourcing of the Council’s Dog Warden Service be considered as part of the rate-setting process for 2027/28.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the People and Communities Committee of 11th August, 2026, were approved and adopted.

Minutes of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Duffy,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 26th August, 2026, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of the Licensing Committee

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

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the special Licensing Committee of 22nd July, 2026, 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 18th August, 2026, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee

Moved by Councillor Lyons,
Seconded by Councillor Doherty, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 13th August, 2026 be approved and adopted.

Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Alderman McCullough and

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 25th July, 2026, be approved and adopted.

Notices of Motion

Mobile Maternity Units for Gaza

In accordance with notice on the agenda, it was

Moved by Councillor Doherty,
Seconded by Councillor McCusker,

“This Council notes with grave concern the continuing genocide and humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and the devastating impact on pregnant women, newborn babies and families requiring urgent medical care.

The Council further notes that three mobile maternity units, funded through fundraising initiatives across Ireland, including significant efforts by Gaels Against Genocide and communities here in Belfast and the North, have been developed to provide safe and secure maternity care for expectant mothers in Gaza.

The Council is deeply concerned that these units are being blocked from entering Gaza, despite the urgent need for maternity and newborn care.

This Council believes that humanitarian medical aid must never be blocked, and that pregnant women and babies must be protected in all circumstances.

The Council agrees to write to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, and all Executive Ministers, calling on the Northern Ireland Executive to make urgent representations to the Irish Government, UK Government and relevant international bodies to secure the immediate and unrestricted entry of these mobile maternity units into Gaza.”

On a vote, thirty-eight Members voted for the motion and fourteen against and it was declared carried.

Open Doors World Watch 2026

In accordance with notice on the agenda, it was

Moved by Alderman McCullough,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson,

“Belfast City Council notes with profound concern that more than 388 million Christians around the world face high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith.

The Council further notes the findings of the Open Doors World Watch List 2026, including that 4,849 Christians were killed worldwide during the reporting period because of their Christian identity, of whom 3,490 were killed in Nigeria.

The Council expresses particular concern at the extreme levels of violence, persecution and displacement faced by Christians in Nigeria and recognises that these events will also be of particular concern to members of Belfast's Christian and Nigerian communities, including those with family and community connections to Nigeria.

The Council further notes the recent European Parliament resolution condemning the ongoing persecution of Christians in Nigeria and calling for greater protection and accountability.

Therefore, this Council commits to:

- Endorsing the Open Doors World Watch List 2026 Advocacy Report;
- Condemning the persecution, discrimination and violence faced by Christians around the world;
- Writing to the UK Government urging it to continue to promote and protect freedom of religion or belief as a leading priority in foreign policy and diplomatic engagement;
- Urging the UK Government, through its engagement with Nigeria, to press the Nigerian Government to take effective action to protect vulnerable communities, tackle the culture of impunity surrounding attacks, and ensure that those responsible for violence against Christians and other civilians are brought to justice; and
- Highlighting the findings of the World Watch List 2026 and the plight of persecuted.”

Amendment

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

“The Council acknowledges that Christians continue to experience persecution and discrimination in many parts of the world. It equally recognises the persecution faced by people from other religious traditions, as well as those targeted because they hold no religious belief.

The Council unequivocally supports freedom of religion or belief for everyone, wherever they may be.

The Council welcomes the most recent United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution: A/RES/80/202 on protecting the right to 'Freedom of religion or belief'

The Council notes with deep concern the rise in hate crime and hate incidents across the North, particularly those directed towards minority ethnic communities, religious communities and members of the LGBT+ community.

The Council unequivocally condemns all forms of racism, sectarianism, religious intolerance, homophobia and other identity-based hatred. An attack on any community is an attack on the values of equality, dignity and mutual respect.”

The amendment was put to the Council and on a vote, twenty-six Members voted for the amendment and seventeen against and it was declared carried.

The amendment was thereupon put to the Council as the substantive motion and was declared passed.

**Evidence-Based Approach to Preventing
Radicalisation and Supporting the
De-Radicalisation of Young Men**

The Council agreed that the motion standing in the name of Councillor Whyte and seconded by Councillor de Faoite on 'Evidence-Based Approach to Preventing Radicalisation and Supporting the De-Radicalisation of Young Men' be deferred to its meeting on 1st October, 2026.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson