

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

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

Members present: The Lord Mayor, Councillor Kelly (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Doherty);
The High Sheriff (Alderman McCoubrey);
Aldermen Lawlor, 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, Flynn, Garrett, Groogan,
Hanvey, Long, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, McAteer,
McCabe, McCallin, McCann, McCormick,
McDonough-Brown, McKay, McKeown,
I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Meenehan, Murphy,
Nelson, Ó Néill, Smyth, Verner and Walsh.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Black declared an interest in the item "Independently Managed Community Centres" within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that Grosvenor Community Centre was her place of work.

Councillor de Faoite declared an interest in the item "Planning Information" within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that he was on the Board of Governors of Forge Integrated Primary School.

Councillor P. Donnelly declared an interest in the item "Minutes of the Shared City Partnership Meeting" within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that his employer was in receipt of PEACEPLUS funding.

Councillor R. M. Donnelly declared an interest in the item "Minutes of the Shared City Partnership Meeting" within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that her employer was in receipt of PEACEPLUS funding.

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Councillor Duffy declared an interest in the item “Minutes of the Shared City Partnership Meeting” within the within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that his brother was involved in the delivery of PEACEPLUS projects and he worked for the West Belfast Partnership Board.

Councillor Groogan declared an interest in the items “Area-based Community Planning and Community Wealth Building” and “Minutes of the Shared City Partnership Meeting” within the within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that her employer was one of the Partnership Boards and in receipt of PEACEPLUS funding, the item “Vacant to Vibrant Programme Update” within the City Growth and Regeneration Committee minutes, in that her employer was in receipt of a grant through the scheme and the item “Cultural Multi-Annual Grants” within the City Growth and Regeneration Committee minutes, in that she had undertaken freelance work for an organisation that had applied for a grant and the item “Belfast Harbour Commissioners –Draft Masterplan 2025-50”, in that she was a member of the Planning Committee.

Councillor Long declared an interest in the item “Draft NI Executive Early Learning and Childcare Strategy” within the within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that his wife was the Minister for Justice.

Councillor McCabe declared an interest in the item “Minutes of the Shared City Partnership Meeting” within the within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that her employer was in receipt of PEACEPLUS funding and also the item “Cultural Multi-Annual Grants” within the City Growth and Regeneration Committee Minutes, in that her employer was an applicant.

Councillor McCann declared an interest in the item “Minutes of the Shared City Partnership Meeting” within the within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that his aunt was employed by an organisation in receipt of PEACEPLUS funding.

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in the item “Minutes of the Shared City Partnership Meeting” within the within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that his employer had made a presentation at the meeting.

Councillor Murphy declared an interest in the item “Requests for Funding” within the within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that a family member was involved with Ligoniel Rec Football Club.

Councillor Murray declared an interest in the items ”Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026 Update” and “Requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality” within the within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that he was employed by SOS NI.

Councillor Verner declared an interest in the item “Minutes of the Shared City Partnership Meeting” within the within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that her employer was in receipt of PEACEPLUS funding.

Councillor Walsh declared an interest in the item “Minutes of the Shared City Partnership Meeting” within the within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that was a member of the West Belfast Partnership Board.

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Minutes of the Council

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

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the meetings of the Council of 2nd March, 2026, be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

Mrs. Greta Rodgers

The Lord Mayor and all political parties present, expressed their deepest condolences to Alderman Rodgers on the recent passing of his wife Greta.

Alderman Rodgers thanked the Lord Mayor and the Council Members for their kind words and support following his loss.

Condolences

The Lord Mayor expressed her condolences to Council officers Liam, Mark and Stephen Mullholland on the recent passing of their father.

Councillor Groogan expressed her condolences to the families of Amy Doherty, Ellie Flanagan and Naomi Connor following their recent deaths

Councillor Long expressed his condolences to the family of former Councillor Peter Tompson on his recent passing.

Councillor Black expressed her condolences to the family of James (Jim) Petticrew, former divisional superintendent of St. John Ambulance and the Lord Mayor agreed to her request to send a letter of sympathy to his family.

Congratulations

Councillor Walsh congratulated Our Lady and St. Patrick's College Knock ladies Gaelic footballers who had recently won the All-Ireland Senior Post-Primary Schools title.

Councillor McCabe congratulated boxer Anthony Cacace on becoming two-time champion of the world after winning his recent fight in Dublin.

Councillor Canavan congratulated St. Dominic's Grammar School basketball team on winning the U19 All-Ireland B Finals and the Lord Mayor acceded to her request to send a letter of congratulations.

Councillor De Faoite congratulated Colin Harvey and Linda Irvine who had been appointed to serve as members of President Connolly's Council of State and the Lord Mayor acceded to his request to send letters of congratulations.

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Councillor Bunting congratulated the Belfast Bands Forum on its successful Commonwealth Day event in City Hall and Imperial Guards Flute Band for its performance and participation in the annual St. Patrick's Day parade. She also congratulated Councillor Doran on receiving a Good Relations Youth Award

Councillor Murray congratulated the Belfast Giants Ice Hockey Team on winning its ninth Elite League title and Cranmore Integrated Primary School on having been awarded the Autism NI Impact Award and the Lord Mayor acceded to his request to send a letter of congratulations to Cranmore Integrated Primary School.

Councillor D. Douglas congratulated Mr. Thomas Warnick and Mr. Jim Bailey on the first East Belfast Pool League Awards event.

Acknowledgements

Alderman Lawlor marked the anniversary of the founding of the Ulster Defense Regiment CGC.

Councillor McKay commended Queen's University students who had taken part in a referendum to reinstate dual language signage at the Students' Union.

Councillor Flynn acknowledged the recent annual Trans Day of Visibility and asked that it act as a reminder to Elected Members to celebrate trans people and the contribution they make to the city.

Councillor Groogan reminded the Council that April was PMDD awareness month.

Councillor De Faoite addressed a recent outbreak of meningitis B and requested that the Council's Corporate Communications be used to promote the uptake of the meningitis B vaccine.

Thanks

The Lord Mayor thanked the Sandy Row Cheerleaders for their participation in the annual St. Patrick's Day parade.

The Lord Mayor thanked Catherine Christy and Fra Shannon for their service as Council officers following their recent retirement.

Change of Position of Responsibility

The Chief Executive reported that notification had been received that Alderman Copeland replace Councillor Groogan on the board of arc21.

The Council approved the change.

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Request to address the Council

The Chief Executive reported that a request to address the Council had been received from Ms. S. Pentel, Mr. R. Coyle and Mr. C. Gallagher regarding Belfast Stories. The Council agreed to receive the deputation in restricted session.

Restricted Item

The information contained in the representation associated with the above item is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Resolved – “That the Council agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during the deputation 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 advised that content of ‘restricted’ items 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.

Ms. S. Pentel, Mr. R. Coyle and Mr. C. Gallagher made representations to the Council with regard to the Belfast Stories project.

The Lord Mayor thanked Ms. S. Pentel, Mr. R. Coyle and Mr. C. Gallagher for attending and they retired from the meeting.

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Brennan,
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

“That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 20th March, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.”

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

At the request of Councillor P. Donnelly, the City Solicitor agreed to make arrangements for the City Hall to be illuminated to mark India’s men’s Cricket Team playing at two-match T201 series at Stormont in June, 2026

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**Area-based Community Planning and
Community Wealth Building**

Amendment

Moved by Councillor De Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor McKeown and

Resolved – “That the Council agrees that the minute under the heading “Area-based Community Planning and Community Wealth Building” be amended to provide that a meeting be convened with relevant stakeholders in south and east Belfast to engage and address the issues which had been raised.”

**Official Announcements during Council
Meetings**

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth and

Resolved – “That the Council agrees that the minute under the heading “Official Announcements during Council Meetings” be amended to reflect that official announcements at Council meetings be limited to one minute in duration, that further consideration be given to a restriction on reference to other political parties and that a report be brought back to the Committee with regard to the democratic efficacy of the Standards and Business Committee”

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 20th March, were approved and adopted.

People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Cobain,
Seconded by Councillor R-M Donnelly,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 4th March, be approved and adopted.

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Proposals for Dual Language Street Signs

Amendment 1

Moved by Councillor R-M Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite

“That the Council agrees that the minute under the heading “Proposals for Dual Language Street Signs” be amended to provide that all six applications for the erection of second street nameplates in Irish be approved.

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

Amendment 2

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth,

“That the Council agrees that the minute under the heading “Proposals for Dual Language Street Signs” be amended to provide that five of the six applications for the erection of second street nameplates in Irish be approved, with the exception of the application for Stormont Park.

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

Compact Mechanical Sweeper

Amendment

At the request of Councillor Canavan, the Council agreed that the minute under the heading “Compact Mechanical Sweeper” be amended to provide that the report regarding options in relation to the operation of a mechanical machine within neighbourhoods be presented to the Committee at its meeting in May, 2026.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 4th March, were approved and adopted.

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City Growth and Regeneration Committee

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

“That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 11th and 23rd March, be approved and adopted.”

Cultural Multi-Annual Grants

Amendment

At the request of Councillor Nelson, the Council agreed that the minute under the heading “Cultural Multi-Annual Grants” be amended to provide that delegated authority be granted to the Director of Economic Development to proceed with the allocation of a discretionary transition fund to support those organisations which had incurred a net reduction in funding under the terms of the Cultural Multi-Annual Grants 2026-28.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 11th and 23rd March, were approved and adopted.

Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor Doran,
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

“That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 18th March, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.”

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

Amendment

Moved by Alderman McCullough,
Seconded by Alderman Lawlor and

Resolved – “That the Council agrees that a full report be provided to the Committee that would detail the number, distribution and concentration of HMOs across the city, the number and distribution of short-term lets, including Airbnb-style properties, set out the current policy position, including thresholds and area designation, outline the legal position and options available to amend policy, provide a clear timeframe to bring those options forward for decision and an estimate of future growth, based on current trends.”

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Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 18th March, were approved and adopted.

Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved – “That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 10th March, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.”

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

Moved by Councillor Hanvey,
Seconded by Councillor Walsh and

Resolved – “That the minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders’ Committee of 16th March, be approved and adopted.”

Climate and City Resilience Committee

Moved by Councillor M. Donnelly,
Seconded by Alderman Lawlor and

Resolved – “That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 12th March, be approved and adopted.”

Minutes of the Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Alderman Lawlor and

Resolved – “That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 24th March, be approved and adopted.”

Lord Mayor
Chairperson