

Public Document Pack

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

22nd January, 2020

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

As previously notified to you, I enclose a copy of the reports for the following items to be considered at the meeting to be held at 9.30 am on Friday, 24th January, 2020.

Yours faithfully,

SUZANNE WYLIE

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

4. Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

- (e) Inclusive Growth Strategy: Development of a Social Value Procurement Framework (Pages 1 - 12)

8. Operational Issues

- (c) Consultation response to the DAERA Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland (Pages 13 - 34)
- (g) Minutes of Meeting of Working Group on the Climate Crises (Pages 35 - 38)
- (h) Minutes of the Meeting of the Customer Focus Working Group (Pages 39 - 42)

9. Issues raised in advance by Members

- (a) Girdwood - Councillor Dorrian

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Subject:	Inclusive Growth Strategy: Development of a Social Value procurement framework
Date:	24 January 2020
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor / Director of Legal & Civic Services
Contact Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development; Noleen Bohill, Head of Commercial and Procurement Services

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is provide an update on the development of a programme of work related to Social Value as part of the Inclusive Growth Strategy.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	It is recommended that Members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the work in relation to social value that is currently being undertaken Agree to the establishment of a task and finish Social Value Working Group for Members which would meet bi-monthly
3.0	Main report
3.1	<u>Background</u> Members agreed a Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Beattie in January 2019 on the development of a social value strategy to further social, environmental and economic goals

	<p>of Belfast City Council and will be aware that work is continuing on the development of an Inclusive Growth Strategy as part of the Belfast Agenda.</p>
3.2	<p>Social value is the additional benefit to the community from the commissioning or procurement process which is over and above the direct purchasing of goods, services and works, including economic, environmental and social well-being or community benefits that can be delivered to a local area. It is about maximising the impact of public expenditure to get the best possible social outcome.</p>
3.3	<p>This work builds on the approach taken by the Council since 2013 to integrate social clauses within relevant council procurements to provide ring-fenced employment and work placement opportunities and promote accessibility to small enterprises. Whilst these clauses represent a laudable effort to promote skills development and employment, impact has been limited by a narrow approach and outcomes difficult to discern in terms of measurement. In part it must be recognised that the current legal framework in N Ireland does not provide the same breadth of opportunity to promote social value as other jurisdictions. With the return of the Assembly one of the key actions will be to raise with ministers the issue of new enabling legislation and amendment or repeal of existing legislation which may inhibit the ambition held by the Council to use social value as a vehicle to drive inclusive growth.</p>
3.4	<p>Much work has already been undertaken in terms of contract analysis and looking at themes, outcomes and measures that would contribute to a new social value/inclusive growth framework with strategic alignment to the themes in the Belfast Agenda. In that context there is a nexus with an ethical trading framework that should sit snugly with the social value framework and which will be developed in tandem, albeit that the ethical trading framework incorporating a rights based approach to trading, in addition to promoting sustainability and the environment, should have its own platform.</p>
3.5	<p>Members should also note that it was agreed at People & Communities in December 2019 to broaden the remit of the officer social values working group to consider how to eradicate single-use items through more effective purchasing procedures, assessed against the waste hierarchy and the wider sustainable agenda.</p>
3.6	<p>Officers have also looked at other cities to learn from their experiences and to understand the challenges and opportunities presented by developing and implementing a social value</p>

	framework. From the work undertaken to date the officers believe they are now in a position to progress the development of a framework for the Council.
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.7	In order to take this work forward, a work programme relating to procurement has been developed under the Inclusive Growth Strategy. An officer working group which meets monthly has been established comprising staff from each department and chaired by John Walsh, the City Solicitor, who has been appointed Senior Responsible Officer.
3.8	One of the key tasks is the establishment of a draft Social Value Procurement Framework governing how social value could be incorporated into the Council's procurement and contractual processes. This draft framework will have to be agreed through Committee before being issued for public consultation. This will be the central policy document establishing meaningful criteria sitting at the heart of contractual relations with third parties and which will have measurable/reportable outcomes.
3.9	It is proposed that a task and finish Social Value Procurement Member Working Group is established which would meet bi-monthly and make recommendations to Committee on the framework. Through this it is hoped that focused engagement will allow the Council to adopt the policy within the ambitious timeframe set out in the project plan.
	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.10	The work programme is being led by officers from Economic Development and Commercial and Procurement Services and involves officers from each department. A new Member Working Group would be resourced by Democratic Services.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.11	Equality, good relations and rural needs implications will be considered in the development of the framework.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Extract minutes from Council meeting on 7 Jan 2019 Appendix 2 - Terms of Reference of the officer Social Value Working Group Appendix 3 - Social Value Procurement Project Plan

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Appendix 1 – Extract of minutes of Council meeting on 7 Jan 2019

Social Clauses

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Beattie proposed:

“This Council agrees to develop a social value strategy to further social, environmental and economic goals of Belfast City Council.

As far as permissible by Law, this Council should increase the value of social impact clauses at the pre-procurement stage and to include them within the award criteria.

Contracts should be informed by a social needs assessment with consideration given to how social clauses can help address those needs.

Assessments should be conducted with key stakeholders, including members of the public, as appropriate.

The social value strategy should promote more creative use of social clauses to deliver positive social benefits.

Council officials should set up monitoring and evaluation frameworks for the delivery of social clauses at the start of the contract and these should be included in the tender documents.

The social value strategy should be outcome based and used to tackle poverty, particularly within areas of multiple deprivation.

Tackling zero hour contracts and encouraging living wage employment should be central to the strategy.

To achieve the social value strategy, I am proposing that this Council sets up a working group, which will report directly to the Strategic Policy and Resource committee and submit a report within two months.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Murphy.

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

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Social Value Working Group (SVWG)

DRAFT Terms of Reference

1.0 Background

Belfast has a vision to be a city that will be re-imagined and resurgent, a great place to live and work for everyone. This means supporting people to reach their potential and creating a successful place for everyone across the city. Social value is about maximising the impact of public expenditure to get the best possible outcomes. This can in part be achieved by ensuring that, where practicable, the money spent on procuring goods, works and services benefits the people, the communities and the economy of Belfast.

Since 2013 the Council has integrated social clauses within relevant council procurements primarily focused upon the provision of employment and work placement opportunities, ring-fenced for the unemployed and increasingly accessibility to supply chain opportunities for smaller enterprises (including social enterprises). Whilst the current Social Clause Policy provides a mechanism to integrate some element of social value through BCC contracts, the approach is limited and members have expressed the desire to evolve our existing approach to a more encompassing social value model. Focusing upon ensuring that economic prosperity is as inclusive and widespread as possible whilst ensuring the efficient use of resources and value for money.

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this working group will be to inform and lead on the development of the Councils approach to integrating social value through procurement process. The scope of responsibility for this group will include:

- Supporting the principals and achievement of the Belfast Agenda and inclusive growth commitments through procurement spend;
- Reviewing best practice approaches to the integration of social value within procurement processes;
- Creating a robust and ambitious approach for the integration of social value through the Councils procurement processes, with consideration given to financial affordability, legal implications and the maximisation of impact;
- Supporting the adoption of the recommended approach through engagement with internal and external stakeholders;
- Development and delivery of an implementation plan for the adopted approach with consideration given to staffing resources, management and monitoring arrangements etc.

For the purpose of this working steering group Social value is defined by the Social Value Hub as:

“the additional benefit to the community over and above the direct purchasing of goods, services and outcomes”

For commissioning and procurement this means that social value should be at the heart of all goods, services and works which are designed, procured and delivered. The intention through social value will result in bringing a wide range of benefits for Belfast to include but not restricted to creating jobs and apprenticeships, volunteering opportunities, and undertaking initiatives that have a community benefit or will deliver environmental improvements.

3.0 Governance

The Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for this steering group and for the delivery of social clauses is the City Solicitor, John Walsh. However it is recognised scope of responsibility for this group resides across the Council and is explicitly linked to the Council's Procurement Strategy, managed and resourced through Finance & Resources Department. Additionally the support structure for contractors to deliver upon their commitments exists across the Council principally through the Place & Economy Department. Delivery is therefore dependent upon collective ownership and delivery across Council departments.

Reporting on the activities of the steering group and its activities will be directly to the Commercial Panel, Chief Officers Management Team and the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

4.0 Membership

The membership of the SVWG is as follows:

- John Walsh, City Solicitor (Chair)
- Head of Commercial and Procurement Services (Finances & Resources Department)
- Director of Economic Development (Place & Economy Department)
- Strategy, Policy & Partnership Manager (City & Organisational Strategy Department)
- Director of Physical Programmes (Physical Programmes Department)
- Operational Director of City & Neighbourhoods (City & Neighbourhoods Services Department)
- Divisional Solicitor (Legal & Civic Services Department)
- Head of Audit, Governance & Risk Services

5.0 Meetings & Frequency

The working group will take place on a monthly basis and will be chaired by the John Walsh or their nominee. The purpose of the group will be to:

- Investigate the options available to the Council for the integration of social value within procurement processes, taking into account best practice from elsewhere;
- Review the financial and legal implications of the integration of social value and mitigate any risks identified;
- Maximise the potential economic, social and environmental benefit to be derived through procurement practices, with consideration of the risk factors identified;
- Identify the resource implications of implementing, managing and monitoring social value through procurement;

- Develop a Social Value Procurement Framework aligned to the ambitions of the Council through the Belfast Agenda and Inclusive Growth Strategy;
- Support the approval and adoption of the framework through council channels and if relevant public consultation process;
- Develop and support the implementation plan for this framework with internal and external stakeholders. Ensuring effective mechanisms are in place integrate, manage and measure social value impact;
- Ensure sufficient supports exists through the Council to support the delivery of the framework.

6.0 Reporting

The SVWG will be accountable to the Commercial Panel, directly reporting to the panel with monthly updates provided on progress to date. The Commercial Panel will support the working group by directing and informing the work programme of the group. Internal approval of the social value approach will be undertaken initially through Commercial Panel, prior to seeking Chief Management team approval and elected member engagement/approval.

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Social Value

Legend		Lead Section	Other Support	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
0	Pre Development Phase																	
	Establish a cross departmental working group to inform the development of the social value framework. Representation																	
	*Develop terms of reference for working group	EDU	CPS															
	* Seek nominations sought from required sections	CPS	EDU															
	* Working group meetings	CPS	EDU															
1	Development & Approval Phase																	
	Develop social value outcomes																	
	* Review of existing intelligence on best practice approaches	EDU	CPS															
	* Develop draft SV outcomes to be sought through procurement aligned to Belfast Agenda	SH	EDU															
	* Develop measurement tool - mandatory criteria; TOMS or points system	CPS	SH/EDU															
	Procurement Methodology																	
	* Develop approach for assessing SV applicability i.e. create category applicability matrix, threshold limits etc.	CPS	WG															
	* Assess evaluation weightings and propose recommended approach considering financial implications, risk, aspiration etc.	CPS	WG															
	* Develop procurement process for the assessment, integration, evaluation and management of social value within procurement process	CPS	WG															
	* Scale of social value integration: assessment of tender activity to determine the extent to which social value will apply	CPS	WG															
	* Identify and undertake test cases to pilot approach	CPS	WG															
	Legal implications																	
	* Develop options to address non-compliance on the delivery of social value	LS	CPS															
	* Agree the legal remedies to be utilised in instances of non-compliance	LS	CPS															
	Contract Management & Monitoring																	
	* Develop mechanisms for screening, management and monitoring of SV requirements on a contract by	CPS	WG															
	* Develop mechanism for the central collation and tracking of SV delivery across BCC contracts	CPS	WG															
	* Identify resource implications for the delivery of the SV Procurement Framework	CPS	WG															
	* Develop a phased implementation plan including training and development	CPS	OD															
	Draft Social Value Procurement Framework																	
	* Draft Social Value Procurement Framework based upon recommended approach	CPS	WG															
	Stakeholder Engagement																	
	* Consult on draft Framework with the Commercial Panel	SRO	CPS & WG															
	* Consult on the draft Framework with CMT	SRO	CPS & WG															
	* Consult on the draft Framework with a cross party working group	SRO	CPS & WG															
	* Refresh Draft Framework following internal consultation	SRO	CPS & WG															
	Elected Member engagement																	
	Create a Cross Party Working Group to help inform social value approach	SRO	CPS & WG															
	Provide regular updates to SP&R and City Growth & Regeneration Committees on the work of the group, update on project plan etc	SRO	CPS & WG															
	Present draft Framework to SP&R Committee for approval to go to public consultation	SRO	CPS															
	Council ratification on SP&R decision to commence public consultation																	
	Approval Process & Public Consultation																	
	Undertake public consultation on Draft Framework (12 week period) to include specific engagement sessions	CPS	EDU															
	* Existing suppliers to BCC																	
	* Business representative and sectoral bodies																	
	* Social Economy sector representatives																	
	* Community & voluntary sector representatives																	
	Undertaken equality screening and rural screening on the Draft Framework	CPS	EDU															
	Compile findings from public consultation and refresh draft framework	CPS	EDU															
	Present Framework to Commercial Panel	SRO	CPS & WG															
	Present Framework to CMT	SRO	CPS & WG															
	Present Framework to Cross Party Working Group	SRO	CPS & WG															
	Present final Procurement Framework to SP&R Committee for adoption and CG&R committee for information	SRO	CPS & WG															
	Council ratification on SP&R decision																	
2	Pre Engagement																	
	Engagement																	
	Social Value Engagement Session (Staff)																	
	* Identification of key staff (potential contract managers) to be invited to the session	CPS	WG															
	* Creation and issue of invite for the session	CPS	WG															
	* Development of session content	CPS	WG															
	* Session delivery	CPS	WG															
	Social Value Engagement Session (Contractors)																	
	* Identification of key contractors to be invited to the session	CPS	WG															
	* Creation and issue of invite for the session & event logistics (venue booking, audio visual)	CPS	WG															
	* Development of session content	CPS	WG															
	* Session delivery	CPS	WG															
	Implementation																	
	*Screen contracts for SV inclusion, where applicable identify potential outcomes and proposed SV weighting	CPS	CM															
	*Engage with market early to understand potential social value opportunities within the contract	CM	CPS															
	*Creation of on-line directory of best practice quantitative tender question examples	CPS	WG															
	*Create on-line training for contract managers on best practice tendering for social value	OD	CPS															
	*Create and train contract managers	OD	CPS															
	*Development SV requirements to be integrated as part of tender specification	CPS	WG															
	*Development of contract management templates for the screening, management and monitoring of SV requirements	CPS	WG															
	*Development of a centralised monitoring system for the collation of SV monitoring returns	CPS	Digital Services															
3	Contract Award																	
	Create Social Value tendering guidelines as an Appendix in Tender Pack	CPS	WG															
	Tender creation - Ensure correct KPIs are in contract	CM	LS															



Subject:	Consultation response to the DAERA Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland
Date:	24 January 2020
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director, City & Neighbourhood Services Department
Contact Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services Grainia Long, Commissioner for Resilience

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	Members are requested to note the proposed BCC response to the DAERA Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland, as discussed and approved by the People and Communities Committee at its meeting on 14 January 2020.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the contents of the attached People and Communities Committee report of 14 January 2020, the draft BCC consultation response to the DAERA Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland, and to consider the inclusion of the amendments put forward by the Green Party, as well as factor in some developments as a result of restoration of the Executive referenced in 3.2-3.3 below. The Green Party's amendments are attached at Appendix 3.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the request for an extension to the Response to DAERA was agreed and is the 5th February 2020
3.0	Main Report
	Key Issues
3.1	Amendments to the consultation response were tabled by Councillor Smyth on behalf of the Green Party at the aforementioned meeting. Following discussion, it was agreed that the Committee would review the proposed changes put forward by Councillor Smyth, and submit any feedback to the City and Neighbourhood Services Department for compilation and onward submission to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to approve the final consultation response to DAERA. No responses have been received.
3.2	However officers had advised at the People and Communities committee they could also review the comments in light of the 'The New Decade, New Approach Deal' as a result of the restoration of the Assembly. In light of this, the executive have now agreed to include a Climate Change Strategy and Act, to address immediate and longer term impacts of climate change. They have also committed to introduce legislation and targets for reducing carbon emissions in line with the Paris Climate Change Accord and this will be addressed through the programme for Government. A new Energy Strategy is to be developed that will set ambitious targets and actions for a fair and just transition to a zero carbon society. It is also acknowledged that these actions and interventions will be required across a wide range of areas in order to address the impacts of climate change in a fair and just way. The executive has also committed to the establishment of an Independent Environmental Protection Agency to oversee this work and ensure targets are met. Given that these are now Assembly positions, officers would propose adding into the formal response that these developments are strongly welcomed and supported by this Council.
3.3	<p>The key response for consideration is outlined in the attached People and Communities report, and this committee is asked to note the associated appendices. On the attached Appendix 3 officers have indicated where comments may be substantially covered off via the New Deal as referenced above. Members are also reminded that at the October meeting of this committee, agreement was reached and wording updated following a notice of motion on carbon emissions and therefore this could be the revised wording (as set put below) to be included in the response to the DAERA consultation. It is proposed to add to the response that's DAERA needs to consider more informed and ambitious targets.</p> <p><i>'This Council has supported a motion to declare a Climate Emergency and in light of these, this Council commits to a more ambitious and more urgent target of net-zero</i></p>

	<p><i>emissions than 2050. This target will be informed by the work undertaken below [to produce a Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plan] and will reflect the ambition of similar cities in the UK, who have carbon neutrality goals more ambitious than the 2050 target. Glasgow, Bristol, Birmingham, Nottingham, Sheffield and Leeds have committed to 2030 and Manchester to 2038.</i></p>
3.4	<p><u>Finance & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 - People and Communities report - Consultation response to the DAERA Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland including (14 January 2020)</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Draft BCC response to DAERA Environment Strategy as presented to People and Communities Committee (14 January 2020)</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Proposed Green Party amendments to BCC draft response to DAERA Environment Strategy</p>

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Subject:	Consultation response to the DAERA Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland
Date:	14 th January 2020
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director of Neighbourhood Services, City & Neighbourhood Services Department
Contact Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services Grainia Long, Commissioner for Resilience

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	<p>Members are advised that the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) have recently commenced a consultation into proposals for a new Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland. DAERA have stated that a Northern Ireland Environment Strategy is required to form the basis for a series of interventions that can deliver real improvements in the quality of the environment and thereby improve the health and well-being of our citizens, create opportunities to develop our economy and play our part in protecting the global environment for many decades to come. The various consultation documents are available to download via the following weblink:</p> <p>https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/esni-public-discussion-document</p>

1.2	This report serves to summarise the contents of the consultation document and to highlight some of environmental statistics and environmental progress that DAERA have referred to within the consultation document.
1.3	This report also includes proposed consultation responses to the various questions that DAERA have proposed throughout the overall Environment Strategy consultation document.
1.4	Members should note that the consultation has been discussed by the All-Party Working Group on the Climate Crisis. Moreover, this report will also be presented to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee for notation, given the Committee's interest in climate action.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are requested to note; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the draft response and to agree that the council's consultation response, as detailed in Appendix 1 to this report, be forwarded to DAERA for consideration.
2.2	Members are advised that the City Solicitor has written to DAERA concerning an extension to the Department's stated consultation deadline of 17:00 on the 23 rd December 2019. DAERA have advised that the Department is presently considering an extension to the public discussion exercise into the New Year and would hope to announce a revised closing date to the consultation process at the end of the current election period. The council's consultation response will be submitted in accordance with any revised DAERA consultation timetable.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u> DAERA have advised that within the current draft Programme for Government (PfG) 2016-2021, the Department is responsible for Outcome 2 – <i>'We live and work sustainably, protecting the environment'</i> , and for five of the six associated indicators relating to greenhouse gas emissions; household waste that is reused, recycled or composted; annual mean nitrogen dioxide concentrations at monitored urban roadside locations; levels of soluble reactive phosphorus in rivers and levels of dissolved inorganic nitrogen in marine waters and; biodiversity – the percentage of protected areas under favourable management. DAERA have also advised that at a Departmental level, their vision is of <i>'A living, working, active landscape valued by everyone'</i> .
3.2	DAERA have advised that an Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland is therefore now required due to a number of factors including, environmental challenges, climate change, publication of the UK Government document, <i>'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment'</i> , Brexit and environmental knowledge gaps.

3.3	<p>In terms of progress with the PfG indicators, DAERA have advised that for greenhouse gas emissions, Northern Ireland accounts for around 4% of the overall UK total and in terms of the UK Climate Change Act committing the UK to at least an 80% reduction by 2050 from 1990 baseline levels, DAERA have stated that Northern Ireland emissions have decreased by 17.9% from 24.3 to 20 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent between 1990 and 2017. For household recycling, DAERA have stated that the NI household waste recycling rate was 48.1% in 2017/18; an increase from 44.3% the previous year, with a new high of over 420,000 tonnes of waste sent for recycling. DAERA therefore consider household waste recycling to have experienced a positive change since the baseline year. In terms of ambient air quality, DAERA have advised that the nitrogen dioxide average annual mean background figure measured in urban areas has remained relatively stable over recent years, whereas monitored roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations have been variable. For river and marine water quality, DAERA have stated that levels of soluble reactive phosphorous in river water are unchanged since the baseline year and levels of dissolved inorganic nitrogen in our marine waters have also remained relatively stable. For biodiversity, DAERA have advised that whilst the total terrestrial and marine protected areas have increased between 2009 and 2018, the proportion of these areas under favourable management has shown a decreasing trend.</p>
3.4	<p>DAERA have stated that the normal procedure for developing an Environment Strategy document would be for the Department to take its lead from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and that the form and content of any Environment Strategy would be a matter for a DAERA Minister and NI Executive. DAERA have also stated that in the absence of a Minister, they would wish to obtain as broad a view as possible on what a future Environment Strategy might seek to address in order to help inform an incoming Minister. DAERA are therefore seeking views on what the environment should look like in the future, what the environmental priorities and objectives should be, and how the Department should achieve them.</p>
3.5	<p>DAERA have advised that at the very least, the key environmental areas covered by the new Strategy will be climate change (mitigation and adaptation); the natural environment and landscapes; resource efficiency, the marine environment, environmental quality (air, water and neighbourhood); fisheries (inland and sea) and aquaculture and the built environment.</p>
3.6	<p>To help inform the consultation process, DAERA have posed eleven questions for consultees to consider and address. The DAERA consultation document has been internally circulated to relevant council Departments and Services, and responses have been provided to the consultation questions where deemed necessary and where the questions relate to areas of</p>

	council responsibility. A copy of the questions, together with proposed council responses have been provided as Appendix A to this report.
3.7	In terms of the headline environmental issues and matters highlighted within the council's proposed responses, Members are advised that the council has highlighted the issues of climate change and climate adaptation; biodiversity; ambient air quality and its links to transportation; neighbourhood environmental quality; local development planning and the built environment; the consideration of natural capital in environmental decision making; resource and energy efficiency; zero waste and achieving a circular economy; waste management and enforcement; the need for a Northern Ireland litter strategy; dealing with dangerous structures and tackling dilapidations and; the need for greater education on the environment.
3.8	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> None
3.9	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessments</u> None.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1- DAERA Environment Strategy Consultation Questions and Proposed Council Responses.

Appendix A - DAERA Environment Strategy Consultation Questions and Proposed Council Responses.

General Comment.

Belfast City Council welcomes the commitment contained within the consultation document to an all-encompassing Environment Strategy that recognises the scale and range of environment-related challenges across Northern Ireland. The council would however, strongly encourage the development of a Northern Ireland wide Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plan, which would complement plans at a city level, and which would aim to deliver the principles set out in a future Environment Strategy.

Belfast City Council considers climate resilience (mitigation and adaptation) to be a core priority, and has declared a Climate Emergency. An All-Party Working Group of Elected Members advise and steer the council's strategic direction in relation to sustainability and climate action. Under city-wide Community Planning structures, the council has established a Resilience and Sustainability Board, which brings together community planning partners and other stakeholders from across the city to plan climate mitigation and adaptation measures. Our 'Living Here' Board, brings together agencies focused on a wide range of public facing services, which support and enable a positive environment for the city's residents, including measures on ambient air quality. Furthermore, our 'Growing the Economy and City Development' Board is taking a collaborative approach to work on sustainable transport. The council therefore has an important role in convening and enabling city-wide, cross-agency work to ensure a thriving and sustainable city, and is keen to support and help deliver the objectives in a future Environment Strategy. The comments set out in this response are therefore aimed at positively supporting the development of a future Environment Strategy.

Q1: Do you agree that the Environment Strategy should sit alongside existing Executive-endorsd strategies, such as the Sustainable Development, Public Health and Economic Strategies?

The council would consider that in order to give the environment appropriate emphasis and protection, and mindful of the data that has been presented as part of the DAERA consultation document demonstrating the direction of recent environmental performance for Northern Ireland, the Environment Strategy should sit alongside existing Executive-endorsd strategies, such as the Sustainable Development, Public Health and Economic Strategies, etc.

The relationship between a future Environment Strategy and the existing Sustainable Development Strategy is critical. It may be advisable therefore to identify key areas of complementarity early on, and the new Environment Strategy should aim to provide fresh impetus to the principles of Sustainable Development across government.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a globally recognised framework for the development of high-level cross government strategies. As a signatory to the SDGs, it is advisable for government Departments across the UK, including the Devolved Regions, to use the SDGs to inform their strategies. The council would recommend this approach for development of the Environment Strategy.

The council further considers that the Environment Strategy should be underpinned by appropriate supporting and enabling legislation. Specific consideration should be given to the introduction of an Environment Bill for Northern Ireland so as to provide the Environment Strategy with a binding and legal footing. A failure to provide an appropriate legal underpinning will likely mean that the Strategy lacks '*teeth*' and remains largely ineffective, alongside a host of other similar governmental strategies such as the Northern Ireland Sustainable Development and Biodiversity Strategies.

The council would note however, that in terms of the Strategy Scope, DAERA has identified that a number of these high-level, Executive-endorsd Strategies may themselves directly affect the environment or be influenced by it, including for example, the Sustainable Development Strategy, Public Health Strategy, draft Industrial Strategy, Economic Strategy and the Regional Development

Strategy. It is noted that a number of these Strategies were developed some time ago and the council would therefore recommend that these Strategies should be updated or augmented alongside the process of the developing an Environment Strategy in order to ensure a consistent and concurrent direction of environmental protection.

Whilst the council considers that the Environment Strategy should sit alongside the other Executive endorsed strategies, the council also considers that there is a pressing need to develop a 'Green New Deal' for Northern Ireland that can straddle environmental and economic development objectives. The council would therefore recommend that government should revisit the detailed proposals for a Green New Deal, which focussed on the retrofit of homes to an advanced low carbon standard. The Green New Deal plan was developed in partnership with a coalition of public, private and community sectors and had support from the construction sector and finance institutions.

In addition, the council would highlight that it has recently declared a climate emergency and has established an eight member All Party Working Group on Climate Crisis in order to drive a new environmental resilience framework in the city. In terms of the climate agenda, the council would emphasise that:

- The impact of climate change and environmental sustainability issues dominate the global political and business agenda. The evidence base from the IPCC confirms that we have a 12-year window to address this issue, before catastrophic climate change severely threatens the life supporting systems we rely on, bringing into stark relief the absolute necessity to act urgently.
- Nowhere is this challenge starker than in NI, a region still 90% dependant on imported fossil fuel for primary energy demand and at the 'end of the pipe' for fossil fuel supplies. If this energy security position does not change dramatically, we will find ourselves in an increasingly vulnerable position, locked into an expensive, high carbon and uncompetitive economy for years to come.

Q2: Do you agree that these broad environmental areas are appropriate for the Environment Strategy?

The council considers that at the very least, the proposed environmental areas are appropriate for the Environment Strategy. However, and specifically:

- In terms of climate change, the council would highlight that mitigation and adaptation have been considered as part of the development of the council's Local Development Plan for the city and in terms of land use planning. Furthermore, the council has commenced work to develop a comprehensive climate adaptation and mitigation plan, which will apply corporately. It is also working in partnership across the city to develop a collaborative plan at a city-wide level. In doing so, it has joined the Place Based Climate Action Network (P-CAN), working with cities elsewhere in the UK, and has commissioned a 'Mini Stern' review, to provide us with an economic analysis of decarbonisation. It is the council's view that a similar approach is necessary at a central government level, to measure the scale and nature of carbon emissions, and to understand the cost and economic benefits of reduction. This science based approach should drive future targets to decarbonise.
- The Strategy makes no reference to the June 2019 change in UK law to commit the UK to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050, and in fact continues to refer to previous targets of at least 80% reduction from 1990 levels. Meeting the 2050 target will require significant investment, strategic planning and collaboration between central and local government. As such, the council believes that the Strategy should include a methodology for setting targets for decarbonisation, and that it should refer to the 2050 target as one of the six 'Draft Outcomes'.
- The council does not however agree with the statement on page 25 which advises that Northern Ireland is not formally part of the recent UK Committee on Climate Change report. The report 'Net Zero: The UK's contribution to stopping global warming', is clear on page 13, that 'Northern

Ireland does not currently have its own long-term target for emissions, but is included within UK targets.'

- The council would also highlight that the areas of climate change, environmental quality and the built environment are of particular relevance to the council's Building Control functions. Building Control have advised that although the attractiveness of neighbourhoods and the quality of the built environment, dilapidation and neglect have been included within the Environmental Quality (Air, Water and Neighbourhood) area, it would be Building Control's view that these matters may sit better within the area dealing with the Built Environment.
- With regard to the natural environment and landscapes, the council would agree that this should be included within the Strategy, given recent reports on the very significant loss of biodiversity across the UK. Moreover, the council's draft Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan and Open Spaces Strategy also recognises the importance of the natural environment in providing ecosystem services.
- The council would seek clarification however on why ecosystems and ecosystem services have been placed within the Environmental Prosperity theme, whereas biodiversity has been placed within the Environmental Quality theme, as denoted in Section 8 Strategic Themes. It is considered that this approach fails to recognise the inherent assumption that environmental quality underpins ecosystem services. The council would consider that there should be an understanding that we need to invest in the quality of our natural assets and stocks so as to protect and enhance the benefits (ecosystem services) that we receive from the environment. It is considered that this investment process should take a long term perspective and approach.
- The council would consider that ambient air quality is of the utmost importance for the city, particularly in terms of public health and the potential for inner city communities and road transport corridors to be the most severely affected. The council is aware that DAERA is presently developing a Northern Ireland Air Quality Strategy (referred to in Annex B of the Environment Strategy document) and the council would advise that it will provide detailed technical air quality comments during the consultation into that Strategy document. The council would nevertheless highlight that four Air Quality Management Areas remain across the city for modelled and monitored exceedences of the nitrogen dioxide annual mean objectives and limit values. These AQMAs have been designated along arterial transport routes and source apportionment has determined that the exceedences within the AQMAs arise principally from road transport emissions. The council would therefore emphasise the need to address nitrogen dioxide emissions across the city through a transition towards more sustainable modes of transport for the city. The council would also highlight the need for Environment and Air Quality Strategies to consider emerging pollutants of concern, including fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}).
- The council would also consider however, that the other local / neighbourhood issues that have been identified for action are of significant importance and so they should be addressed separately so as not to diminish their importance but also so as to not undermine the strategic importance of ambient air and water quality issues. The council welcomes the inclusion of Neighbourhood Environmental Quality, under the broad Environmental Quality theme. It is considered that this fits well with the council's Community Plan, the Belfast Agenda and with the proposed outcome that Belfast will be a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city through maximising the benefit of our natural and built environment.
- For the built environment, the council would consider that whilst the various topic areas represent important issues, they are more likely to be detailed matters to be addressed through local strategies; in particular Local Development Plans, etc. The council nevertheless considers that the Environment Strategy should acknowledge and highlight the importance of these matters, at a Northern Ireland wide level.

Q3: As described below, do you agree that these are appropriate strategic themes for the Environment Strategy? If “No”, what alternative or additional themes/issues would you like to see in the strategy?

Yes

Q4: Do you have any comments on what specific issues should be included under a proposed Environmental Engagement strategic theme?

The council would highlight that environmental education and engagement is extremely important for all citizens, at all ages and for agencies so that they have greater awareness of the value of the environment and nature and of individuals' and organisations' roles in maintaining its critical life-sustaining benefits.

This has been demonstrated, for example, through our successful behavioural change Neighbourhood Quality campaigns, which reinforce the consequence of littering or failing to pick up after your dog, including raising the awareness of the £80 fixed penalty notice. External evaluation of the campaign has indicated that 93% of respondents are now aware of the fine associated with littering.

In terms of environmental engagement, the council would therefore recommend that DAERA should link the Environmental Engagement strategic theme to education and to the Department of Education's strategies and initiatives, with particular reference to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) based subjects.

Q5: Do you have any comments on what specific issues should be included under a proposed Environmental Prosperity strategic theme?

The DAERA comment that *'there is ample research evidence that most people see the natural environment as having intrinsic value'* links to the council's previous comments about ecosystem services and the concept of natural capital. Whilst a relatively new concept, the council considers that natural capital is an important means of ensuring the protection of our natural environment. The council would therefore contend that the Environment Strategy should seek to address this concept and embed it into future decision-making.

The document does not sufficiently recognise the extent of the climate threat as the biggest environmental and economic risk facing Northern Ireland. It therefore misses an opportunity to address this threat with the level of urgency required. In a region abundant in wind, wave, tidal, biomass and biogas reserves, the decarbonisation of the electricity, transport, and the heat sectors presents an enormous opportunity to avail of those technologies at scale to drive an advanced low carbon sector. The final strategy should include a bigger focus on how decarbonisation can be enabled in Northern Ireland by attracting inward investment to generate wealth, enhance the skill base and provide a pipeline of skills for the new green economy. A comprehensive economic analysis of decarbonisation should be undertaken and should drive the region's Economic Strategy, as well as its Environmental Strategy. The document requires significant strengthening in this area if Northern Ireland is to gain competitive advantage and transition to a low-carbon economy.

The council would query however, if there is a specific drive towards investing in emerging sectors of environmentally friendly technology / renewables that are not explicitly detailed within the Strategy. If not, it would be beneficial to see consideration given to these sectors, rather than to just already profitable, but not necessarily wholly conducive to environmental health sectors listed within this theme, e.g. tourism, agri-business, etc.

Q6: Do you have any comments on what specific issues should be included under a proposed Environmental Efficiency strategic theme?

The council considers that climate change must be addressed as a matter of urgency, and that addressing climate change must encompass environment efficiency and carbon reduction, etc.

In relation to 'resource efficiency', the circular economy is mentioned with a view to achieving a circular economy through the application of the waste hierarchy. It is considered however, that there is little detail on how a local authority, for example, might be incentivised to promote prevention of generation and the reuse of materials over concepts detailed further down the waste hierarchy pyramid such as recycling. Under current provisions, NIEA establishes local authority targets for the reduction of landfilling and for recycling. Whilst it is clear that local authorities will need to have a key part in helping to increase resource efficiency, the targets that have been presently set may conflict with circular economy aspirations and objectives.

The council would highlight that the Building Regulations are crucial in ensuring that new buildings are energy efficient and that the energy efficiency of existing buildings is improved whenever building works are carried out. Within Northern Ireland however, the Building Regulations are currently lagging behind those in the rest of the UK and Ireland, in terms of energy efficiency. The council would recommend that this issue should be urgently addressed.

It is considered that future construction, renovation and alteration of buildings could be regulated through amended Building Regulations to improve thermal performance and efficiency, to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions, and to drive renewable forms of energy, in order to promote a low carbon economy and ensure the efficient use of resources. Accordingly, it is considered that the use of low or zero carbon or renewable energy sources on new buildings should be regulated, and encouraged on existing buildings, alongside thermal insulation.

Amended Building Regulations could also include additional requirements to provide resilience to climate change, e.g. increasing the sizing of rainwater goods; better consideration of over-heating due to solar-gain / shading requirements; reducing water usage through rainwater harvesting and the use of brown water and; taking account of increased wind loadings, etc. Building Regulations could also assist with flood resilience in terms of drainage, rainwater attenuation, use of permeable surfaces, etc.

It is considered that robust regulation, clear technical guidance and the demarcation of enforcement responsibilities is required to ensure measures required by any statutory agency can be appropriately designed, approved, checked and enforced. Accordingly, there should be clearly defined linkages between agencies and their policies and legislation. In addition, the increased remit and complexity of Building Regulations would require amended fees legislation in order to ensure adequate resource for robust enforcement.

In terms of the Circular Economy and Sustainable Sources, Building Control would recommend regulation of the manufacture of materials from recyclable or sustainable sources; regulation of new homes to be '*lifetime homes*', with associated design guidance, and with increased provision for cycle storage, drying rooms, electric car charging points, etc. and features from the Code for Sustainable Homes.

The document should reference the government's '*Road to Zero Strategy*', which is a comprehensive plan for the decarbonisation of the transport sector throughout the UK. This strategy accelerates the development of the local electric vehicle market and associated charging infrastructure. It also encourages the hydrogen transport sector and provision of hydrogen refuelling facilities. These new technologies will substantially drive down emissions in the sector. The fast adoption of new smart and digital technology in the transport / energy / renewable energy nexus is transforming the transport sector to a cleaner and more efficient model. The decarbonisation of the transport sector in cities will have a transformative impact on both carbon emissions and ambient air quality, and therefore should be central to any future Environment Strategy.

Q7: Do you have any comments on what specific issues should be included under a proposed Environmental Quality strategic theme?

As has been highlighted previously, there are a wide range of issues detailed under the environmental quality heading, some of which are best addressed at local level, whilst others are clearly of a Northern Ireland wide strategic importance. The council would consider that the Environment Strategy should make mention of all of the suggested issues, but maintain the strategic significance of Northern Ireland wide issues, such as water, air quality and biodiversity, etc.

With regard to biodiversity, the council would wish to highlight that the biodiversity indicator, '*percentage of protected area under favourable management*', as detailed on page 12 of the Environmental Strategy consultation document, is only a quantitative indicator and will not monitor condition and trends. In addition, it is considered that this indicator is insufficient as 'designated sites' cover only a small percentage of Northern Ireland; for example ASSIs cover only 7%. It is recommended that the Environment Strategy should develop a useful indicator to monitor biodiversity status and trends. The starting point for this is to invest in baseline biodiversity data. A current key issue is the lack of appropriate data to monitor environmental change, particularly for biodiversity.

For clarity and to emphasise the need to address biodiversity issues, the State of Nature Report 2019 key findings included that:

- By 2020 the UK will not meet most of the Convention on Biological Diversity Action Targets.
- The abundance and distribution of the UK's species has, on average, declined since 1970 and this decline has continued in the most recent decade. Prior to 1970, the UK's wildlife had already been depleted.
- Across NI, 11% of species are threatened with extinction.

As highlighted previously, Northern Ireland does not yet have a Litter Strategy, unlike the Litter Strategy for England 2017. We would welcome the introduction of a Northern Ireland Litter Strategy to ensure this issue, which impacts on all areas of our communities, is addressed. The council has adopted a three pronged approach to improving Neighbourhood Environmental Quality; behavioural change campaigns including education and outreach programmes, enhanced enforcement and an improved cleaning regime. During 2018 and 2019, the council issued over 1,800 fixed penalty notices for littering and waste. We therefore see enforcement as a key element in bringing about behavioural change and as such, it should be included as an issue within the Environmental Quality strategic theme of the Strategy. In addition, in dealing with the issue of Graffiti, which is now endemic in our towns and cities and has a profound effect on our Neighbourhood Environmental Quality, the current enforcement powers for local authorities are considered to be insufficient. We would welcome greater powers to require landowners to remove graffiti from their properties.

From a Building Control perspective, the council would highlight that it enforces legislation to deal with dangerous structures and tackle dilapidations. The council has however long been lobbying for more modern, robust legislation to enable more action to be taken to address these common problems. It is considered that the legislation within Northern Ireland is insufficient in relation to comprehensively dealing with dangerous structures and dilapidated buildings. Accordingly, new legislation needs to be brought forward to allow local councils to deal with these matter more easily and efficiently. It is further considered that a central government fund should be established to allow councils to draw down finances, where the council is forced to remove or make safe a dilapidated building by default. Local councils should also have the power to take ownership of vacant derelict properties and bring them back to use when no owner can be found. Legislation needs to support local councils to be proactive in this regard.

Q8: What do you see as the main environmental governance priorities for Northern Ireland?

In terms of environmental governance, the council would note DAERA's comment that this issue has generated a long-running debate which has focused to a large extent on whether Northern Ireland should have an independent Environmental Protection Agency. Whilst there is support for an independent Agency, DAERA has highlighted that responses to the most recent discussion document on environmental governance indicated a widely held view amongst stakeholders that the focus should be on environmental outcomes, rather than simply changing delivery structures. The council would agree that the emphasis should be on outcomes as they are most important. It is considered however that clear ownership and good governance are crucial in ensuring effective leadership and proper and consistent control and delivery. Whether these objectives are delivered via an independent agency or not, the environmental governance and delivery mechanisms must fulfil these roles. The Environment Strategy should establish a clear environmental vision for Northern Ireland and the subsequent policy development should flow from this vision, supported by better regulations and a clearer demarcation of enforcement responsibilities but with better co-operation between all of the organisations or agencies involved.

It is additionally considered that greater resources need to be dedicated to tracing and prosecuting waste crimes. The potential punishment for dumping or illegal landfill operations, etc. must exceed the potential profit to the individual or organisations that commit these offences.

It is noted that there is a potential 'grey area' between household and commercial waste if for example household waste is collected by a commercial operator. The council would query if a plan exists to regulate such operators so that they must apply the waste hierarchy and adhere to existing regulations such as the need to be a registered carrier of waste.

DAERA have highlighted that of particular relevance to the Environment Strategy are proposals that:

- a) The OEP's duties should include monitoring and reporting on the UK Government's progress against its 25-year plan for the environment; and that
- b) The UK Government's 25 year plan for the environment should be given a statutory footing.

The council would consider that these plans must have a statutory footing if they are to deliver real and effective outcomes. A statutory footing will also enable them to be material in decision-making.

Q9: Do you agree that these are appropriate draft outcomes for the Environment Strategy? If "No", what alternative or additional outcomes would you like to see?

No, the draft outcomes listed would be improved by a focus on targets to incentivise actions of stakeholders such as local authorities.

Specifically, the council would suggest that:

- The draft outcome for achieving zero waste and a well-developed circular economy could be expanded to include reference to the UK's 2050 target for net zero emissions
- In relation to biodiversity loss halted, ecosystems in a healthy state, and well managed landscapes, the draft outcome should be expanded to include measures to restore loss
- The draft outcome, we achieve sustainable consumption and production on land and sea could include a reference to the efficient and sustainable use of land.
- In terms of climate change, the council considers that the opportunity to draft a new Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland as a once in a generation opportunity to develop a transformative and ambitious sustainable energy and environmental strategy. The council would therefore recommend that the Strategy should also set ambitious targets for Northern Ireland to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 in line with the current UK government legislation and interim milestones and targets to 2030 and 2040 in line with European and Paris Agreement objectives.

- By setting ambitious carbon budgets, in all sectors, including particularly the public, transport and agricultural sectors, we will ensure that the Northern Ireland environment is protected and enhanced, whilst we continue to benefit from clean, green sustainable and smart economic growth, whilst avoiding catastrophic climate change.
- It is disappointing to note that this consultation document fails to recognise climate change as the biggest environmental threat facing Northern Ireland, and similarly that it fails to address it with the urgency required. In a region abundant in wind, wave, tidal, biomass and biogas reserves, the decarbonisation of the electricity, transport, and heat sectors represents an enormous opportunity to avail of these technologies, at a scale which could enable and drive an advanced low carbon sector.
- Moreover, the current Environmental Strategy document contains little reference as to how this can be enabled for Northern Ireland and the council therefore considers that the Strategy document, in its current form has failed to recognise the significant opportunity to attract inward investment generate wealth, enhance the skill base and provide a pipeline of skills for a new green economy.
- In relation to the transport sector, the council considers that the Strategy document also fails to reference the UK Road to Zero Strategy, a comprehensive plan for the decarbonisation of the transport sector throughout the UK. This UK Strategy is designed to accelerate the development of the local electric vehicle market and associated charging infrastructure. It also encourages development of the hydrogen transport sector and the provision of hydrogen refuelling facilities. The council considers that these new technologies will substantially drive down emissions in the Transport sector.
- The council considers that decarbonisation of the transport sector in cities will have a transformative beneficial impact on carbon emissions and air quality and should therefore be central to any future Environment Strategy. It is estimated that transport makes up at least 30% of carbon emissions in cities like Belfast and 23% regionally. The fast adoption of new smart and digital technologies in the transport / energy and renewable energy sectors is already transforming the transport sector into a cleaner and more efficient model.
- The council would highlight that there is little reference to the contents of the NI Sustainable Development Strategy, the associated Statutory Duty and the guidance issued to local Authorities and other public bodies on their compliance with the duty. The sustainable development guidance issued by the Northern Ireland government in 2014 emphasises the need to prioritise the carbon issue. It also recommends that public bodies put in place appropriate governance and administrative mechanisms to ensure the environmental sustainability issues are addressed.

Q10: What are your big ideas for the future protection and enhancement of the environment?

- The council would strongly encourage the development of specific program and targets to enhance and support the circular economy by creating an environment that is supportive of emerging technologies which increase the efficient use of resources.
- The council is keen to pursue a programme of work, which delivers a more resourceful Belfast and shows how resource management can contribute to the Circular Economy. In this regard, the creation of support schemes to develop this embryonic market and support for those organisations that can deliver social and economic benefits alongside positive environmental outcomes would be welcome.
- The proposed Environmental Strategy should also seek to integrate with other resource management policy initiatives such as; Deposit Return Scheme, Extended Producer Responsibility and the Plastics Tax proposed by HMRC.

- From a waste perspective, the council would also support the introduction of a mandatory electronic waste tracking system along with greater enforcement of existing waste legislation to increase the chances of 'bad actors' being caught. Punishments should fit the crime in terms of financial or other penalties, in terms of the potential profits versus environmental harm.
- The council considers that there should be a focus on transitioning from single-occupancy vehicles by developing infrastructure for a robust, well connected country-wide public transport system; ideally powered with sustainable fuel sources. The council would contend that there needs to be an increasing availability of renewable energy sources for homes (e.g. wind, solar).
- The council also considers that there needs to be a greater focus on conservation, including legislating to protect the existing natural environment from unchecked development, and working with conservationists to rehabilitate damaged habitats and ecosystem services.
- From a Building Control perspective, the council would recommend a greater incentive for increasing the energy efficiency of existing buildings. It is considered that the present Energy Performance of Buildings legislation is limited as there is no established acceptable lower threshold energy rating for a property. Moreover, Northern Ireland should consider a lower limit for properties that are for rental.
- It is also considered that more funding should be put into schemes that tackle fuel poverty, such as the Affordable Warmth Scheme, and that deep-retrofit energy efficiency schemes should be encouraged.
- It is finally considered that a government wide climate adaptation and mitigation plan is urgently needed to prepare and protect the region from the impacts of climate change and to bring together partners from central and local government and from other sectors to work together to decarbonise by 2050 at the latest. Furthermore the Strategy should include a reference for the need for it to be placed on a statutory footing, through the passage of appropriate environmental legislation.

Q11: Do you have any other comments or contributions

None.

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Environment Strategy Proposed Additions, Cllr Brian Smyth, GPNI for People and Communities Committee 14/1/20:

Q1/ Paragraph 1: **Regional planning** to be added to existing executive endorsed strategies

The Environment strategy should be renamed the 'Environmental Emergency Strategy to inform and communicate that we are in a crisis situation, but there are plans to address this and also because we have declared a climate emergency at this council.

The strategy and targets must be legally binding and we need new legislation to meet both. Need to be linked to human health, free from degrading pollutants and extraction, improved air quality etc.

With regards to the paragraph on 'As 2020 approaches': This is now a 10 year window, not 12.

Covered to extent in the New Approach Deal see 3.2-3.3

Q2/ In reference to 2050 targets, Belfast City Council is currently considering a target year for arriving at net-zero carbon targets, and believes this target should be more ambitious than the 2050 target set in law. Belfast City Council believes that Northern Ireland should have its own legally binding targets on long term emissions, and these should be evidence based.

Paragraph 7: To highlight that Belfast City Council passed a motion on more stringent air quality testing in June 2019.

Covered in both New Approach Deal and in wording to amended Notice of Motion as referenced in paragraph 3.2 -3.3

Q3/ We want a theme on environmental restoration and recovery and caution around framing of environmental prosperity. Also environmental governance needs to be addressed throughout multiple government departments.

Committee to consider a view, although partially covered by New Approach Deal see 3.2-3.3

Q4/ for environmental education to be built into the school curriculum to teach young people. Yet with the lack of time we have in relation to 2030 to also engage parents, families' etc.

To form a Northern Ireland citizen's assembly on our climate and ecological emergency and to learn from the one formed in the Republic of Ireland.

Committee to take a view

Q5/ There is an emphasis on economic prosperity instead of environmental prosperity. We don't think that economic benefit should outweigh environmental impact. There is also no reference to a 'just transition', which should be included in Environmental prosperity.

Committee to take a View

Q6/ In relation to energy efficiency, we need legally set binding targets.

We also need reference to a 'transition towards sustainable agriculture'.

Committee to consider a view, although partially covered by New Approach Deal see 3.2-3.3

Q7

Specific issues that should be included are air, water and marine quality.

DAERA Environmental crime team needs greater support and resource.

Committee to consider a view, although partially covered by New Approach Deal see 3.2-3.3

Q8/ Climate breakdown legislation and that the proposed outcome to reduce Greenhouse gas emissions does not go far enough and there must be net zero carbon emissions by 2035 as an interim target, in line with the motion passed by this council.

We also need an Independent Environmental Protection Agency that is properly funded, which has the ability to tackle environmental and waste crimes.

Covered in the New Approach Deal and in wording to amended Notice of Motion as referenced in paragraph 3.2 -3.3

Q9/ We need legally binding targets and a clear timetable

Committee to take a View

Q10/

Legislation for a NI Climate Act

The establishment of an Independent Environmental Protection Agency

Above Covered in both New Approach Deal and in wording to amended Notice of Motion as referenced in paragraph 3.2 -3.3

Targets to be legally binding

All Island cooperation, we are a single island ecosystem. Governance should be under a similar framework.

A Citizens Assembly which can engage the public on our climate and ecological breakdown.

Nature Recovery Networks: restore sites and legally protect those habitats under threats.

Committee decision required

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Working Group on the Climate Crisis

Monday, 13th January, 2020

MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE CLIMATE CRISIS

- Members present: Councillor de Faoite (Chairperson);
The Lord Mayor, Councillor Baker;
The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor McReynolds;
Aldermen Copeland and Spence; and
Councillors Ferguson, Hutchinson and Smyth.
- Also attended: Councillor O'Hara.
- In attendance: Ms. G. Long, Commissioner for Resilience;
Ms. C. McKeown, Sustainable Development Manager; and
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 18th November, 2019 were taken as read and signed as correct.

A Member sought clarification on the role of the Resilience and Sustainability Board and its links with the Council's Resilience Strategy. The Commissioner explained that the Board provided a coordinating role at a Community Planning level (that is, across the city) for developing a city-wide climate plan, and that the Council was responsible for the development and implementation of its own resilience strategy and climate plan-through that All Party Group and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were declared.

Belfast Emergency Planning Team

Ms. Claire Carleton, Project Manager for Belfast Emergency Prepared Group attended in connection with this item and was welcomed by the Chairperson. She provided the Working Group with an outline of the work of the Emergency Preparedness Group and the actions taken by that group when an emergency was called. The Members were provided with an overview of the integration and coordination of the various groups involved in response to an emergency situation, including the actions required to restore the infrastructure after the emergency had concluded. The Working Group was provided with information in respect of a risk register which highlighted the risk factors to the city associated with a major incident and or hazard and the likelihood of their occurrence.

Ms Carleton outlined a range of emergencies which the Emergency Planning Team had prepared for including, amongst other things, severe weather, major transport accidents and malicious attacks. She provided an outline of the Civil Contingencies Structures in Northern Ireland incorporating a list of the range of partner organisations within the Emergency Preparedness Group. The Members were informed of the key role performed by local authorities in managing emergencies such as the structure and key personnel of the Belfast City Council Emergency Planning Team and the resources available to the Council to mitigate against the impact of potential emergencies.

The Working Group was provided with a range of resources available to it to mitigate against the impact of potential emergencies. This included the communication network to inform political representatives, and the public at large, in the provision of guidance and advice to ensure that risk to life and property was minimised. The Emergency Preparedness Manager outlined a number of major emergencies which had impacted on the city in recent years, for example, the Bank Buildings fire in August, 2018 and ex-hurricane Ophelia which had occurred in October, 2017. She provided information also on the actions taken by the Council to provide a coordinated response and assistance to residents and the community, in general affected by the impact of those occurrences. The Chairperson requested that members of the Working Group be invited to attend one of the emergency management training sessions and the Resilience Manager agreed that this request could be accommodated.

The Members thanked the Resilience Manager for her informative presentation and she retired from the meeting.

Motion from Strategic People and Communities Committee On Car- Free Days in the City

The Working Group referred to a previous motion referred to the People and Communities Committee in respect of undertaking a number of proposed car-free days to highlight the issue of congestion and air pollution in the city. The Members highlighted the importance of ensuring that the Department for Infrastructure were supportive of the proposed initiative and had suggested that the 20th till 22nd September would be preferable dates coinciding with the Culture weekend and other social events within the city. A Member raised the point that Translink might have concerns about the city centre being closed to transport. In response, it was explained that car-free only referred to vehicular traffic and not buses. Other Members raised the issue that provision would need to be made for essential services, including disabled access, emergency services and access to church services

The Working Group was keen to reinforce the benefits of clean air over the proposed period under which the car-free initiative would be held such as the promotion of the park and ride scheme and the possibility of subsidised public transport fare arrangements over the same period. The Members stressed the importance of communication with the public, outlining the benefits to the environment and the climate associated with undertaking the initiative.

The Commissioner for Resilience agreed that she would work with other relevant teams within Council and revert to the Working Group with some options as to how the proposed car-free days initiative could be developed. This would include a proposed timeframe for implementation, and agreed also that the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) would be invited to a future meeting of the Working Group to take a collaborative approach and coordinated effort, thereby ensuring the success of the initiative. She made reference also to the ongoing City Connectivity Study which would emerge in the coming weeks.

Noted.

Consultations to note - Environment Strategy and Maximum Resale Price of Electricity

The Sustainable Development Manager referred to the consultation document on the MRP (maximum resale price of electricity) which the Utility Regulator had issued, and explained the impact of the two options in the paper, that is, removal of the MRP or proposal that the Utility Regulator retain the regulation role on the price of resale of

electricity. The Working Group was provided with an explanation of government policy and practice in Great Britain and how the removal of the MRP enabled the commercialisation of the charging infrastructure, as providers could supply electricity at a profit, thus enabling electric vehicle charging operators to make further investment. The Members considered the point that if the maximum resale price for electricity were to be removed, competition within the industry could potentially set the price.

The Working Group expressed its concern in regard to the high purchase price of electric vehicles which acted as a barrier to individuals purchasing such vehicles, and the importance of affordability more generally. The Commissioner for Resilience advised that the Council required the development of greater policy/strategy in respect of the issues pertaining to the matter and that the Working Group agreed that it would defer consideration of the issue until its next scheduled meeting to be held in February, 2020 and to permit further information in the matter to be provided.

Noted.

Belfast Climate Action Plan – Process for Moving Forward

The Commissioner for Resilience informed the Working Group that the methodology for developing a Climate Action Plan had been signed off and that work had commenced in regard to the implementation of the recommendations contained therein. She referred to three pieces of work which required to be undertaken as part of the implementation of the plan including:

1. A climate risk assessment of Council assets;
2. A wider sustainability review; and
3. Data capture on existing and potential scenarios for energy use

The Chairperson referred to the launch of the Place Based Climate Action Network (PCAN) event which had been very successful and of the requirement to secure funding from central government in respect of future events. The Working Group agreed also that consideration be given to writing to the newly appointed Ministers for Environment, Economy and Infrastructure, requesting that additional funds be made available for that purpose. The Working Group agreed also that both the Belfast Youth Forum and the Northern Ireland Youth Forum be invited to attend its March meeting, subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Appointment to Sustainable Northern Ireland

The Commissioner for Resilience requested that nomination be sought from the Sinn Fein Party Group to replace the Lord Mayor who, given his civic duties, was unable to continue as that party's political representative on Sustainable Northern Ireland.

Date of Next Meeting

The Working Group agreed that its next meeting be held on Monday, 10th February at 5.15 p.m.

Chairperson

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Customer Focus Working Group

Wednesday, 8th January, 2020

CUSTOMER FOCUS WORKING GROUP MINUTES

Members present: Alderman Rodgers (Chairperson); and
Councillors Bunting, Flynn, Hanvey and Hutchinson.

In attendance: Mrs. R. Crozier, Customer Focus Programme Director;
Mr. P. Gribben, Head of Digital Services;
Mr. C. Quinn, Customer Services Manager;
Ms. K. Kennedy, Project Manager;
Mrs. C. Dixon, Online Customer Experience Manager
Ms. E. Lee, PA Consulting; and
Miss E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 6th November, 2019 were agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

Declaration of Interest

No declarations of interest were declared.

Customer Focus Programme

Update on Customer Focus Programme - Approach to implementation and outline plan

The Customer Focus Programme Director provided the Working Group with an update on the approach to the implementation and the outline plan of the Customer Hub Programme. She advised that a report would be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in January in relation to the future blueprint and implementation plan.

The Customer Services Manager presented an overview of the programme to date. He reminded Members that the Customer Vision – Putting you first ‘to provide easy to use and accessible services, whenever and wherever you need us’ had been issued for consultation and roadshows had also been planned to take place in January.

He stated that completed work of the Discovery and Planning Phase included: the Website; Customer Relationship Management System; Customer Hub; Integration; Service Design and Implementation; and Emerging Opportunities.

He explained what had been achieved so far and highlighted the progress of three components of the programme: The Customer Hub; Website; and Services. He also provided details of how the programme would transform the customer experience and the future work which was required to achieve it.

The Online Customer Experience Manager advised that, as part of the Customer Focus Programme, the team would develop a new website. She informed the Working Group that some user testing was required with various groups at the beginning of the process and it was important that Members' opinions were captured. She explained that Fathom had been commissioned to carry out this work and would require volunteers from 13th January. She confirmed that Democratic Services would email the Working Group with details of the request.

In relation to Service Design, the Customer Service Manager highlighted that a draft Future Blueprint of Customer Hub and Cleansing and Waste Services had been developed, together with a Service Design Approach and draft Implementation Plan. He pointed out that Service Design on prioritised work streams had also commenced, which included:

- Elected Members;
- Customer Hub;
- Policies and Strategies;
- Missed Bins;
- Bulky Waste; and
- Wide and Thin approach (building capacity over time).

During discussion, Members questioned how the Customer Hub would interface with the public, how waste complaints would be managed, and highlighted the importance of the first impressions of the new service.

The Customer Focus Programme Director outlined the importance of the Customer Hub's relationship with elected members, customers, the services and front line staff, and the need for effective communication across all of these stakeholders to become more responsive to customers' needs. She advised that customer service standards would be developed across all Council services to ensure a consistent responsive service would be received. She explained that, for the September launch, as much information as possible would be provided for customers and staff at first point of contact with the new Customer Hub but that services would continue to improve as more services were brought on board, together with further training and the development of staff.

In relation to Greenwich Leisure Limited complaints, she informed the Working Group that the Council would work with the Council's Partnership Manager and Active Belfast Board to ensure that relevant information on Leisure Services was available via the Customer Hub and to share the development and consistency of approach across the Leisure assets.

During further discussion, the Customer Focus Programme Director advised that a review of the current complaints process formed part of the programme and that lessons identified across customer contact channels including the Contact Centres would be taken into account in the design of the new approach.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

Ideation Session - Generate ideas to solve some of the key challenges

The Project Manager provided an overview of the last workshop session on how the Customer Hub could improve and enhance the work of Elected Members. She confirmed that the Journey and Empathy Mapping had now been completed and the next workshop would examine the following four key areas:

- Education – How the Council Works;
- Contacts – Who are the key people;
- Real Time Information – To be kept updated; and
- Golden Access – What would help Councillors?

The Working Group undertook a range of Workshop Exercises and noted that the findings would be analysed and presented at a future meeting.

Date of Next Meeting

The Working Group noted that the next meeting would take place on 5th February.

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