

# Public Document Pack

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

15th February, 2022

## **MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

In addition to those matters previously notified to you, the following items will also be considered at the meeting to be held remotely at 9.30 a.m. on Friday, 18th February, 2022.

Yours faithfully,

Ronan Cregan

Deputy Chief Executive

### **AGENDA:**

#### **2. Restricted Items**

- (f) City Hall Recovery Plan - Update on Progress (Pages 1 - 6)

#### **4. Governance**

- (a) Local Government Boundary Commissioner – Revised Recommendations  
(Pages 7 - 92)

#### **7. Finance, Procurement and Performance**

- (b) Request from Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland (Pages 93 - 96)

#### **8. Equality and Good Relations**

- (b) Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee (Pages 97 - 100)
- (c) Minutes of Meeting of Shared City Partnership (Pages 101 - 180)

**9. Operational Issues**

- (b) Requests for use of the City Hall and the Provision of Hospitality  
(Pages 181 - 184)
- (c) Request for use of the City Hall Grounds – Belfast Mela Festival Carnival  
(Pages 185 - 190)
- (d) Minutes of Meeting of Climate Crisis Working Group (Pages 191 - 196)

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6  
of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Local Government Boundary Commissioner – Revised Recommendations</b>
<b>Date:</b>	18th February, 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Walsh, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
<b>Contact Officers:</b>	Russell Connelly, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
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"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the Local Government Boundary Commissioner's Revised Recommendations which were published on 18th January and to seek approval of the draft Council response to the revised recommendations. The Commissioner has asked for written feedback to be submitted by 1st March 2022.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the Local Government Boundary Commissioner's Revised Recommendations, as set out in Appendix 1, and approve the Council response outlined in paragraph 3.4 below.

3.0	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p data-bbox="264 253 437 286"><b>Background</b></p> <p data-bbox="264 304 1465 387">On 27th July 2021, the Local Government Boundary Commissioner published the Provisional Recommendations for the Review of Local Government Boundaries in Northern Ireland.</p> <p data-bbox="264 454 1465 741">The Council provided a detailed written response to the Provisional Recommendations in relation to the district boundary and Political Parties were encouraged to respond individually with respect to the provisional ward boundary recommendations. Council officials reiterated the position outlined in the written response during the public hearing in the Belfast council area which was facilitated by an Assistant Commissioner on 5th October 2021. A copy of that response is attached at Appendix 2.</p> <p data-bbox="264 808 1182 842"><b>Summary of BCC Response to the Provisional Recommendations</b></p> <p data-bbox="264 860 1465 992">In its response to the Provisional Recommendations, Belfast City Council indicated that it did not agree with paragraph 7.3.1 of the Provisional Recommendations report, which states that the district boundary line should remain unchanged.</p> <p data-bbox="264 1059 1465 1294">The Council highlighted the fact that, following the previous Local Government Boundary review in 2008, the Final Recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commissioner (Dick Mackenzie) had a recommendation to place the area containing Forestside shopping centre and the Castlereagh Council Civic HQ building within the new Belfast district boundary.</p> <p data-bbox="264 1361 1465 1494">However, the Council noted that the NI Executive had subsequently made amendments to the Final Recommendations which resulted in Forestside and the adjacent Castlereagh Council Civic HQs remaining within the new Lisburn and Castlereagh council area.</p> <p data-bbox="264 1561 1334 1594">The Council referred to the following two issues in relation to the district boundary:</p> <p data-bbox="264 1650 775 1684"><b><u>Galwally Area (including Forestside)</u></b></p> <p data-bbox="264 1740 1465 1975">The Council requested that the Local Government Boundary Commissioner reassess the findings of the 2008 Local Government Boundary Review including the “Final Recommendations” report and the “Report of the Assistant Commissioner Sarah Havlin on Belfast City Council district” which made clear recommendations that the Galwally area containing Forestside should reside within the Belfast district boundary.</p>

	<p>The Council would argue that the principles upon which the 2008 recommendations were made and those features which the Commissioner determined to constitute 'readily identifiable boundaries' in respect of this area (namely the A55 Outer Ring Road and the upland topography in this area) have not changed.</p> <p><b><u>Harbour Area</u></b></p> <p>The Council also wishes to highlight the issue with the district boundary as it pertains to the Harbour ward, and in particular the extension to the harbour which has resulted in part of the harbour infrastructure being outside of the district boundary.</p> <p>The Council would note that there is a further approved extension beyond the currently constructed area shown on the plans. The Commissioner when considering any modification to the district boundary may wish to take this into account also.</p>
3.2	<p><b>Revised Recommendations – District Boundary</b></p> <p>The LG Boundary Commissioner recommends that the district boundary line should remain unchanged.</p> <p><b><u>Galwally Area (including Forestside)</u></b></p> <p>The following excerpt outlines the Commissioner's findings in relation to the Galwally area:</p> <p><i>"I note the submissions on this issue and the analysis of the Assistant Commissioner. I am in agreement with the rationale of the Assistant Commissioner on the importance of the fact that the boundary line at this point was mandated by a process of the Northern Ireland Assembly following the last Review in 2008/09. It is true to say that the boundary line at this area does not correspond to the recommendations made by my predecessor in the 2008/09 Review, however, it is the line which was passed into law after consideration and amendment by the legislature during the passage of the 2012 Act.</i></p> <p><i>My approach in this Review is one of minimum intervention where possible. In the absence of a compelling reason, I am not persuaded to interfere with existing District boundary lines. I agree with the Assistant Commissioner that the submission made by Belfast City Council (BCC) does not constitute a compelling reason to interfere with the District boundary between the District of Belfast City and the District of Lisburn and Castlereagh.</i></p> <p><i>I also note that there was another submission to alter the same District line at the area around Drumkeen to bring a small number of houses into Belfast from the District of Lisburn and Castlereagh. I agree with the Assistant Commissioner that there is no compelling reason to interfere with the District boundary line on this basis".</i></p>

	<p><b><u>Harbour Area</u></b></p> <p>The following excerpt outlines the Commissioner’s findings in relation to the Harbour area:</p> <p><i>“I note the findings of the Assistant Commissioner and I am in agreement that the submission of Belfast City Council raises a compelling reason to realign the District Boundary at Duncairn and Sydenham wards on the grounds of defacement. As stated by the Assistant Commissioner:</i></p> <p><i>I believe that there is defacement to the existing district line between the District of Belfast City and Belfast Lough. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that the district line should be amended to encompass existing and future development of the Harbour estate.</i></p> <p><i>I have addressed this issue and the realignment of the District boundary at this point can be seen in the attached map”.</i></p>
3.3	<p><b>Revised Recommendations – Wards</b></p> <p>The LG Boundary Commissioner recommends that Belfast district should remain comprised of 60 wards.</p> <p>There is a total of 230,236 electors within the district which averages at 3,837 electors per ward and my Revised Recommendations balance the electorate across the 60 wards. The revised ward and district boundaries changes that have been proposed can be viewed at the following link. <a href="#">Belfast Wards</a></p>
3.4	<p><b>Belfast City Council Response</b></p> <p><b>District Boundary</b></p> <p><b><u>Galwally Area</u></b></p> <p>The Council would argue that any independent review into the placement of any district boundary line should be based on the Schedule 4, Part III “Rules in accordance which recommendations of a commissioner are to be made”, the first of which is:</p> <p>“Regard shall be had to the desirability of determining district and ward boundaries which are readily identifiable”.</p> <p>The Council would reiterate that those features which the Local Government Boundary Commissioner correctly determined in 2008 to constitute ‘readily identifiable boundaries’ in respect of this area (namely the A55 Outer Ring Road and the upland topography in this area) have not changed.</p> <p>The Council recognise that <b>all</b> of the extant district and ward boundaries for all 11 councils, including those in relation to Belfast, were mandated by a political process of the NI Assembly following the last review in 2008/9. The Council would argue that this fact does not exempt any of the boundaries from future review as this would negate the requirement for any future</p>

	<p>review and would render the rules set out in Schedule 4, Part III of The Local Government (Boundaries) (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 redundant.</p> <p>The Council would, therefore, recommend again that the Commissioner refers to the principles upon which the 2008 Final Recommendations were made and the Schedule 4, Part III Rules including the first rule which places prominence on the desirability of determining district boundaries which are readily identifiable.</p> <p>The reason put forth by the Council, therefore, appeals directly to the first rule in Schedule 4, Part III which defines the rules in accordance which a Commissioner will make recommendations, therefore ensuring that such a reason is not only valid but is a material consideration.</p> <p>Any argument that Belfast's district boundary was "mandated by a political process" or reference to "the fact that the boundary was a decision made by the NI Assembly which is historically agreed" will equally apply to all district boundaries which are subject to the review. As such, the Council do not agree that this is a valid argument for determining that such reasons as those which directly relate to legislated Rules such as Schedule 4, Part III (14) are not compelling.</p> <p>The Council would note that no other argument, other than previous political agreement has been presented against the suggested change to the district boundary.</p> <p><b><u>Harbour Area</u></b></p> <p>The Council welcomes the revised recommendation in respect of the Harbour area and the proposed suggest that the district line should be amended to encompass existing and future development of the Harbour estate.</p> <p><b><u>Wards</u></b></p> <p>In line with previous decisions in relation to the Review of Local Government Boundaries in Northern Ireland, responses to the Commissioners recommendations in relation to ward boundaries will be left to individual parties. Parties are encouraged to review the map accessible via the link in paragraph para 3.3 above.</p>
3.5	<p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>No financial implications attached this report</p>
3.6	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications</u></b></p> <p>No good relations or equality implications attached to this report</p>

<b>4.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	<p><b>Appendix 1</b> – Local Government Boundary Commission Revised Recommendations - Belfast</p> <p><b>Appendix 2</b> – BCC response to the Provisional Recommendations</p> <p><b>Appendix 3</b> – Report of the Assistant Commissioner for the proposed District of Belfast City</p>



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# **Revised Recommendations 2021-2022 Review**

**Published 18<sup>th</sup> January 2022**



Local Government  
Boundaries Commissioner  
for Northern Ireland

An Coimisinéir um  
Theorainneacha Rialtais  
Áitiúil do Thuaisceart Éireann

Mairches o Hamelt  
Government Commissioner  
for Norlin Airlan

## Chapter 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents my Revised Recommendations for the Review of Local Government Boundaries in Northern Ireland. These Revised Recommendations will now be the subject of a further period of public consultation for six weeks.
- 1.2 I was appointed by the Department for Communities (DfC) as Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for Northern Ireland in June 2020. My task is to review and make recommendations in respect of the number, boundaries and names of the 11 local government districts and the number, boundaries and names of the wards into which each district is divided. The Department has directed me to submit my final recommendations by 31 May 2022.
- 1.3 On 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021 the Department appointed 5 Assistant Commissioners to assist me with my Review. The primary role of the Assistant Commissioners will be to consider written and oral representations made in respect of my Provisional Recommendations and to provide impartial advice to me.
- 1.4 The initial period of public consultation, on my Provisional Recommendations, ran from 27<sup>th</sup> July until 21<sup>st</sup> September 2021. Eleven public hearings were held in September and October, each chaired by an Assistant Commissioner.
- 1.5 I have endeavoured to make this Review as accessible and inclusive as possible. I am presenting these Recommendations in an accessible digital format that has been developed by colleagues in Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland (OSNI). This approach is not only in response to the current public health situation, but also because I am of the view that the quality of the digital maps is far superior to a printed version and this will allow everyone to examine my proposals in detail. I am encouraged by the positive feedback that I have received about this approach in response to my Provisional Recommendations.



## Chapter 2. Legislative Framework

2.1 This chapter sets out the legislative framework for my Review. The parameters of the Local Government Boundaries Review and the procedures for the Review that I must follow are set out in the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972.

2.2 I was appointed under Part IV of the above act, Article 50 Paragraph (1) (b). Part IV of the Act provides that:

*The function of a Commissioner appointed under subsection 50 (1) (b) shall be to review and make recommendations regarding*

- a. *The number, boundaries and names of local government districts; and*
- b. *The number, boundaries and names of the wards into which each district is divided.*

2.3 Schedule 4 of the above act sets out the appointment process for a LGB Commissioner, as well as the procedure for my Review that I must follow and the rules that I must adhere to. Full details of this legislation can be found at [www.lgbc-ni.org.uk/links](http://www.lgbc-ni.org.uk/links). I set out my approach to this legislation in Section 4 of this report.

2.4 The current names and boundaries of local government districts and wards in Northern Ireland are detailed in the Local Government (Boundaries) Order 2012. Following the 2012 Order, a number of District Councils made applications to the Department to amend the District name. These changes to the names of the districts took effect in 2016 full details of the legislation can be found at <https://www.lgbc-ni.org.uk/links>.

2.5 The current boundaries of districts and wards can be found on the Map Viewer at <https://apps.spatialni.gov.uk/LGBC/LGBCPublicConsultationApp/index.html>.

2.6 I have set out in detail my general approach to the Review and to the legislation in my Provisional Recommendations Report Chapter 4. This can be accessed at [LGBC - Provisional Recommendations 2021-2022 Review](#).

## Chapter 3. Work to Date and key milestones

- 3.1 This chapter summarises the work done in advance of the publication of these Revised Recommendations for public consultation. A summary of key milestones is available at <https://www.lgbc-ni.org.uk/milestone-timeline>.
- 3.2 The data that informs the Review was provided by the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland on the Enumeration Date, the 4th January 2021.
- 3.3 I published a public notice on 3 February 2021 launching the LGBC website and announcing that the preparatory stage of my Review was complete. I invited proposals from councils, political parties, associations, organisations and individual members of the public in relation to the number, boundaries and names of the 11 districts: and the number, boundaries and names of the wards within the 11 districts.
- 3.4 In May 2021 I hosted a number of ‘Meet the Commissioner’ virtual information sessions with officers and members from the 11 councils. I used these virtual sessions to raise awareness among councils about the Review, to clarify the Review process and the timescales involved. A number of the questions raised during these sessions can be found at <https://www.lgbc-ni.org.uk/faqs>.
- 3.5 On 27 July 2021 I launched my Provisional Recommendations report for public consultation for a period of 8 weeks. I published a public notice in the local and regional press announcing the launch of the consultation and inviting responses from all interested parties. My proposals were presented in an online format with high quality digital maps for each district and ward provided by OSNI on Spatial NI. There was an online portal for responses, with more detailed responses submitted by e-mail. More detail on the consultation is included in the next section. The consultation closed on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2021.
- 3.6 On 1<sup>st</sup> August the Department for Communities appointed five Assistant Commissioners to assist me with my Review. From 28<sup>th</sup> September until 14<sup>th</sup> October a series of Public hearings

were held, one for each district. The hearings were chaired by the Assistant Commissioners, and were conducted in a hybrid format that allowed socially distanced in-person participation at the venues as well as participation via an online platform. The Assistant Commissioners have since submitted their reports to me on each of the districts, taking into consideration oral and written submissions. The Reports are published on the LGBC website at [Publications | Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for Northern Ireland](#). More detail on the consultation is found in Sections 4 and 5 of this report.

- 3.7 The second stage consultation on these Revised Recommendations will run for 6 weeks. The closing date for receipt of written representations is 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022.
- 3.8 I will give consideration to all representations received in formulating my final report and making my recommendations to the Department. The Department has directed me to submit my final report by 31 May 2022.

## Chapter 4. Consultation on Provisional Recommendations.

- 4.1 I published my Provisional Recommendations for public consultation on 27 July 2021. I advertised the public consultation by publishing a public notice in the local and regional press, as well as via LGBC social media channels.
- 4.2 I announced the publication of my Provisional Recommendations and the opening of the 8 weeks consultation period by sending a letter of notification to Assessors to the Commissioner including the Chief Electoral Officer, the Director of Census (in place of the Registrar General), the Commissioner of Valuation and the Chief Survey Officer. Chief Executives of the 11 Councils were notified and asked to disseminate to their members, as were those government and non-governmental bodies on the Department for Communities Section 75 Consultee lists which includes all political parties in Northern Ireland and to all those who showed an early interest in my Review.
- 4.3 My Provisional Recommendations were presented in an online format with high quality digital maps for each district and ward provided by OSNI on Spatial NI. There was an online portal for responses, with an e-mail address provided for the submission of more detailed responses.
- 4.4 Libraries NI assisted in the consultation process by facilitating online access to the consultation across the network of local libraries in Northern Ireland. A number of District Councils also provided online access to the consultation for their citizens in council facilities, which meant that those who do not have internet access at home were able to access the report, maps and consultation. I am very grateful for Libraries NI and to the District Councils who were able to assist us in this, particularly given the challenging public health situation due to the Covid-19 pandemic over recent months.
- 4.5 The report and consultation documents were made available in alternative formats and in other languages on request. Following a request the team provided a translation of the report and consultation questions in Irish, which was also published on the LGBC website.

- 4.6 There were a total of 290 responses to the consultation. There were 8 responses received by e-mail and 282 on the online portal.
- 4.7 On the online portal, the vast majority of the responses referred only to the issue of monolingual/bilingual/trilingual ward and district names. There was strong support voiced for the use of bilingual Irish/English ward and district names, and strong support voiced against the use of any language other than English. There was limited support voiced for the use of Irish only names, and limited support for trilingual Irish/English/Ulster Scots names.
- 4.8 While more respondents on the online portal declared that they did not agree with proposals for each of the 11 districts than those who did support them, only a very small number gave reasons for this. Many of those who said they did not agree included comments setting out their support for/opposition to the use of bilingual English/Irish names. It is important to note that none of the district proposals included recommendations for the naming of wards or districts. The issue of signage is also out of scope for my Review. The majority of respondents did not answer the district specific questions.
- 4.9 I have set out my approach to the district specific issues raised in the consultation in Chapter 6 of this Report. Chapter 5 deals with my general approach to naming districts and wards.
- 4.10 Following the 8 week consultation period for written responses to my Recommendations, I convened a public hearing in each of the 11 districts. The public hearings were held in line with public health guidance. It was challenging for my team, supported by Morrow Communications, to locate suitable venues across the 11 Districts given the prevailing public health restrictions, I am very grateful to them for their efforts.
- 4.11 Given the public health situation and to allow increased participation for citizens, the events were held in a hybrid format, which allowed oral representations to be made in person and via an online platform.

- 4.12 Each hearing was chaired by an Assistant Commissioner. The Assistant Commissioners have all submitted reports to me on their Districts that took all oral and written representations into account. The reports are available at [Publications | Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for Northern Ireland](#).
- 4.13 I have considered the Assistant Commissioners' reports in respect of each District, which have been of considerable assistance to me in formulating these Revised Recommendations. I have departed from my Provisional Recommendations where an Assistant Commissioner's report has drawn to my attention something that I consider justifies such a revision. It is however important to note that by sections 50(1) and (3) of the 1972 Act, the functions of review and recommendation in the 2021/2022 Review are conferred on the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner, and on no-one else. The recommendations that follow are therefore mine alone.

## **Chapter 5. Names of Districts and Wards.**

### **Function of a Local Government Boundaries Commissioner**

- 5.1 My primary function as Local Government Boundary Commissioner is the delineation of administrative boundaries which groups electors for the purpose of local elections and to seek to ensure that each vote has approximately equal weight. My work therefore is primarily calculating numbers in a spatial context using the latest detailed digital mapping.
- 5.2 Schedule 50 of the Local Government (NI) Act 1972, (as amended), also sets out my role in making recommendations for the names of local government districts and the names of wards. It is my view that my role in recommending names of the Districts and Wards is in large measure linked to my role in the delineation of boundaries.

### **My approach to this Review**

- 5.3 I set out my approach to this Review in detail in my Provisional Recommendations report available at [LGBC- Provisional Recommendations 2021-2022 Review](#).
- 5.4 Following my established principle of minimum intervention where possible in this Review, and my approach that naming of districts and Wards is linked to my spatial consideration, it follows that if the space within proposed Districts and wards is not changing or shifting significantly, there would not seem to be a requirement to change the names from the names which were settled in the last Review and passed into legislation.

### **Legislative framework for changes to names of Districts and Wards**

- 5.5 As set out above, Schedule 50 of the 1972 Act describes the function of a Local Government Boundaries commissioner, in relation to making recommendations for names of districts and wards.
- 5.6 It is important to note that the district names formed under a Local Government Boundary Review and subsequent legislation do not have to be adopted permanently by the council in

that District. It is open to any council to apply under Section 51 (1) of the Local Government Act to change its name. It is therefore not exclusively a matter for this Review process to settle the names of Districts.

5.7 In the period since the last Review, three councils have exercised the statutory right under Section 51 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 to name the council differently from the district name conferred under the 2012 Order. I can therefore confirm the names of those councils have been legally changed pursuant to an application under Section (51) 1 and it follows that the District names are now officially:

- Ards and North Down (North Down and Ards in the 2012 Order);
- Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon (Armagh Banbridge and Craigavon in the 2012 Order); and
- Derry City and Strabane District (Derry and Strabane in the 2012 Order).

These three Districts are therefore referenced with their respective updated names in this report and associated official maps.

5.8 Ward names are not subject to any other method of potential name change other than in the periodic local government boundary reviews.

### **Bilingual/Trilingual names of Districts and Wards**

5.9 There has been engagement in this Review by Conradh na Gaeilge, an organisation concerned with the promotion of the Irish language, and the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ). It is their submission that this Review, given that it has remit for place naming, should produce a map with names for all wards and Districts in Irish. These organisations provided me with a joint written submission in advance of the publication of my Provisional Recommendations. In addition, a representative of Conradh na Gaeilge attended the Public hearing in Belfast and provided oral evidence. Foras na Gaeilge provided a written submission to my Provisional Recommendations in support of the use of names in Irish across all local government districts. I received a number of responses to the consultation both for and against the use of Irish language and Ulster Scots in ward and District names. I received two written responses by e-mail setting out strong opposition to the use of any language other than English in ward and district names.



5.10 My view is that the starting point in considering this issue is to look to the commitments made in the New Decade New Approach (NDNA) Report in January 2020. Commitments in relation to the issue of language and culture in Northern Ireland are set out in Paragraphs 26 and 27 as follows:

26. *The First Minister and deputy First Minister, supported by Junior Ministers in The Executive Office, will sponsor and oversee a new framework both recognising and celebrating Northern Ireland's diversity of identities and culture, and accommodating cultural difference.*

27. *The framework will be underpinned by an affirmation of the birthright of all the people of Northern Ireland to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both, as they may so choose, while acknowledging and accommodating those within our community who define themselves as 'other' and those who form our ethnic and newcomer communities. It will comprise:*

*a. An Office of Identity and Cultural Expression to promote cultural pluralism and respect for diversity, build social cohesion and reconciliation and to celebrate and support all aspects of Northern Ireland's rich cultural and linguistic heritage.*

*b. Legislation to create a Commissioner to recognise, support, protect and enhance the development of the Irish language in Northern Ireland and to provide official recognition of the status of the Irish Language in Northern Ireland. The legislation will also repeal the Administration of Justice (Language) Act (Ireland) 1737.*

*c. Legislation to create a further such Commissioner to enhance and develop the language, arts and literature associated with the Ulster Scots / Ulster British tradition and to provide official recognition of the status of the Ulster Scots language in Northern Ireland. The legislation will also place a legal duty on the Department of Education to encourage and facilitate the use of Ulster Scots in the education system.*

*d. The main function of the Irish Language Commissioner will be to protect and enhance the development of the use of the Irish language by public authorities including by providing advice and guidance, and introducing, supporting and monitoring the use of best practice language standards.*

*e. The main function of the further such Commissioner will be to enhance and develop the language, arts and literature associated with the Ulster Scots/ Ulster British tradition in Northern Ireland.*

*f. A central Translation Hub will also be established in the Department of Finance within three months of an agreement, in order to provide language translation services for the 9 Executive Departments, Arm's Length Bodies, Local Government and Public Bodies.*

*g. The Assembly's Standing Orders will also be amended to allow any person to conduct their business before the Assembly or an Assembly Committee through Irish or Ulster Scots. A simultaneous translation system will be made available in the Assembly to ensure that a person without Irish or Ulster Scots is not placed at a disadvantage.*

*h. This legislation - including establishing the Office and both Commissioners - will be established as new dedicated parts of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This is the legislation which implements the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement and subsequent agreements and establishes the Assembly and Executive in law. The enactment of these new Parts of the Northern Ireland Act will reflect the importance of these issues to people and society in Northern Ireland.*

*i. The Office of Identity will provide funding streams and schemes, including publishing and broadcasting, small grants, events and tourism, exhibition and museum curation, built heritage, cultural education and tourism projects<sup>1</sup>.*

5.11 At the point of writing, these commitments have not been implemented by the NI Executive.

5.12 In the absence of the structures outlined above, my view is that an appropriate starting point for consideration of the Irish language issue, as a matter of law, is the recognition by the Court of Appeal in *Re MacGiolla Cathain's Application* [2010] NICA 24 at [2] – [3] that:

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<sup>1</sup> [2020-01-08 a new decade a new approach.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/2020-01-08-a-new-decade-a-new-approach.pdf)

*'... English remains the language of the vast majority of the population and it is the general language of public administration.*

*The way in which Irish should be recognised and valued in Northern Ireland is a matter of political debate. The Good Friday and St Andrew's Agreements pointed up the issue. How the question should be dealt with is a question of policy not law. The court cannot resolve the issue or contribute to the political debate. It can only determine the present appeal by reference to the correct legal principles applicable under the existing law'*

It should be noted that this ruling predates the publication of the NDNA in 2020.

- 5.13 In my view it would be inappropriate, as well as a fundamental disservice to the important issue of language, if I were to make decisions on the use of Irish language across all administrative place names in the absence of any legislative framework on the use of minority languages in public administration.
- 5.14 As a general matter of policy affecting all districts and wards, it would be preferable for the question of the use of Irish and other minority languages to be addressed within the statutory framework committed to in *New Decade, New Approach* when put in place. However, in the absence of such a statutory framework, it may be appropriate for a particular district or ward to be named in a manner reflective of, for example, how that place is referred to locally, including in a minority language.
- 5.15 I note the information provided by Conradh na Gaeilge in relation to the Queen's University Belfast Place Names project. The Place Names project is a very interesting and valuable piece of work, which provides strong evidence on the Irish language origins of the majority of local place names. The work however is not as yet complete in that it does not include a list of agreed names for electoral wards in Northern Ireland. I therefore do not have evidence of fully authenticated names that could be said to be settled place names in Irish for all wards and districts across Northern Ireland.

## Conclusions

- 5.16 It is therefore my view that there should be no change to my approach of naming districts and wards with the same names as settled in the 2012 Order subject to the following caveat: I wish to be careful not to conflate the issue of recognition of Irish Language (which is outside my remit) and the appropriateness of naming a district or ward by using a particular name which is connected to that place or space (which is within my remit).
- 5.17 I would make the distinction between the wider submission requesting that I adopt a naming convention across the whole map incorporating the Irish language, which is a request to develop a policy approach on the use and recognition of a language, and the different issue of very locally focused submissions on more appropriate ward names which may be more in keeping with the prevalent use of a language in that particular area.
- 5.18 Whilst it is my initial position not to interfere with the settled names of wards if nothing has changed in spatial terms since the last Review, if there is strong evidence to support the case that an existing ward name does not fully correspond to how local people refer to their particular place or space, then I think that case for a change of ward name could be made.
- 5.19 My assessment in each case will depend on the strength of the evidence in each particular locality. If it is the case that a ward name change which is based on the use of language and cultural identity in a particular area may have merit, then I have set out my views on this in the proposals for that that particular district.

## Chapter 6. Revised Recommendations for the 11 Districts.

### Summary position

District	Change from Provisional Recommendations
Antrim and Newtownabbey	Ward boundaries changes
Ards and North Down	Ward boundary changes, correction of district name
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	Correction of district name
Belfast	Ward boundary changes
Causeway Coast and Glens	Ward and minor district Boundary changes
Derry City and Strabane District	Correction of District name
Fermanagh and Omagh	Ward boundary changes
Lisburn and Castlereagh	Ward boundary changes
Mid and East Antrim	Ward and minor district boundary changes
Mid Ulster	No change
Newry Mourne and Down	No change

## 6.4 Belfast

- 6.4.1 I have provided considerably more detail in this chapter due to the volume and nature of the representations made to me in the consultation, and the analysis provided to me by the Assistant commissioner for Belfast. The Assistant Commissioner's report can be accessed at [Belfast City Assistant Commissioner's Report](#).

### District boundary

6.4.2 ***Galwally – District Line of Belfast with Lisburn and Castlereagh***

I note the submissions on this issue and the analysis of the Assistant Commissioner. I am in agreement with the rationale of the Assistant Commissioner on the importance of the fact that the boundary line at this point was mandated by a process of the Northern Ireland Assembly following the last Review in 2008/09. It is true to say that the boundary line at this area does not correspond to the recommendations made by my predecessor in the 2008/09 Review, however, it is the line which was passed into law after consideration and amendment by the legislature during the passage of the 2012 Act.

My approach in this Review is one of minimum intervention where possible. In the absence of a compelling reason, I am not persuaded to interfere with existing District boundary lines. I agree with the Assistant Commissioner that the submission made by Belfast City Council (BCC) does not constitute a compelling reason to interfere with the District boundary between the District of Belfast City and the District of Lisburn and Castlereagh. The submission from BCC can be accessed at [Belfast City Council - Submission to the LGBC.pdf \(lgbc-ni.org.uk\)](#) as can the letter from Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council [Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council - Submission to the LGBC.pdf \(lgbc-ni.org.uk\)](#).

I also note that there was another submission to alter the same District line at the area around Drumkeen to bring a small number of houses into Belfast from the District of Lisburn and Castlereagh. I agree with the Assistant Commissioner that there is no compelling reason to interfere with the District boundary line on this basis.

6.4.3 ***Harbour***

I note the findings of the Assistant Commissioner and I am in agreement that the submission of Belfast City Council raises a compelling reason to realign the District

Boundary at Duncairn and Sydenham wards on the grounds of defacement. As stated by the Assistant Commissioner:

*I believe that there is defacement to the existing district line between the District of Belfast City & Belfast Lough. Therefore it is reasonable to suggest that the district line should be amended to encompass existing and future development of the Harbour estate.*

I have addressed this issue and the realignment of the District boundary at this point can be seen in the attached map.

## **Number and boundaries of wards**

### **6.4.4 61 Ward Model**

A submission by the SDLP relating to wards in South Belfast has been described as raising 'valid points' by the Assistant Commissioner. Some of the submission is noted as being out of scope as it references the clustering of wards under the District Electoral Areas process, which is a separate statutory process and not part of this Review. Other points raised by the SDLP made the case that my proposed ward configuration cuts across cohesive communities and is summarised by the Assistant Commissioner in his report as follows:

- ***Concern that the current proposals are based more on the required mathematical balancing than taking into account the actual experience and liveability of these wards on the ground and are therefore artificially separating communities and goes against the essence of democratic participation where established communities work with their recognised elected representatives for the ongoing enhancement of their area;***
- ***Suggest the addition of one additional ward within each of the Balmoral DEA & the Botanic DEA, to therefore have 12 wards as opposed to the current 10 within these areas (additional ward in each DEA) to take account of natural population growth within this area and to redesign the 12 wards in such a way as to accommodate, facilitate and recognise the natural growth of this part of the city rather than artificially cleaving it apart and splitting up communities;***
- ***Concern that the current proposals will artificially spilt existing communities (citing an example of the proposed changes adjacent to the Ravenhill Road along the Park Road, North Parade and South Parade with these being very distinct and unified communities and part of the Ormeau Road community and the problems that would occur if they were moved into the Ravenhill Ward);***

- ***Concern that the current proposals will lead to a lack of community cohesion in areas where there is already an existing issue with low voter turnout, and***
- ***Concern that the current proposals will negatively affect what are diverse communities and will create shells of communities, tilting the wards towards vast tracks of under populated areas where you have a transient population such as The Holylands or the wider university area or parts of the inner city.***

Under my approach I have followed a principle of minimum intervention where possible and so I have not changed District lines unless there is a compelling reason to do so. I have not increased or decreased the amount of existing wards because I was able to produce workable models which met the statutory criteria for all 11 Districts by using the same number of wards as currently exist.

6.4.5 However, there are other options open to me in terms of reconfiguring the changes required to distribute the number of electors in wards and indeed within districts. For example, I could reconfigure district lines to move electors in more populous areas such as Belfast into neighbouring districts that are less populous such as Lisburn and Castlereagh or Ards and North Down. I decided against this option under my principle of minimum disruption and instead configured the Belfast population within its existing district lines. A consequence of this is that there is more widespread change to the internal ward boundaries in order to equitably distribute the number of electors in Belfast across 60 wards.

6.4.6 Under the Rule in Paragraph 18, it is open to me to consider an increase or decrease of the number of wards in a District by a maximum of 5 wards if *'having regard to the matters mentioned in paragraph 17, the Commissioner considers it desirable.'* In considering the exercising of this discretion it is clear that I must only have regard to the Paragraph 17 factors, which are ***the size, population and physical diversity of the district and the desirability that there should be a proper representation of the rural and urban electorate within the district.***



- 6.4.7 At the outset of this process I was mindful of the Paragraph 17 factors that are of particular relevance to Belfast, namely the spatial size of Belfast and the fact that it is the most populous area of Northern Ireland. However, it is important to note that the legislation acknowledges and makes allowance for this by allocating 20 more wards to this District compared to all other Districts in Northern Ireland. When analysing the changes to electoral numbers within Belfast since the date of the last Review, the creation of more wards to deal with growth was considered. However, I decided to test whether the District could be configured by using 60 wards in order to demonstrate whether it was desirable to create more wards in Belfast. I was able to produce a 60 ward model which suggests that the 60 ward model still works for Belfast based on current numbers across the whole District.
- 6.4.8 The Assistant Commissioner notes the significant population growth in wards of Blackstaff, Central, Stranmillis and Windsor and on this basis he puts forward an alternative model of 61 wards to deal with the bulges in population which have occurred in these areas since the last Review. The SDLP submission argued for two additional wards. Whilst I did not choose a model of more than 60 wards for my Provisional Recommendations, I would not rule out using my discretion to increase or to decrease the number of wards as a method of configuring boundaries within a District and this submission provides a welcome opportunity to further test the issue in the context of this district.
- 6.4.9 In the previous Review, the Rule 17 factors were considered in reaching a decision to increase to 41 wards in the Districts of Newry Mourne and Down and Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon. However, it should be noted that these Districts have slightly different considerations than Belfast. These Districts encompass both urban and very rural areas. The same cannot be said of Belfast which is almost wholly urban. The analysis of the Assistant Commissioner in terms of the desirability of increasing the number of wards in Belfast has regard to the relevant matters in paragraph 17, namely size and population. Accordingly, in order to test the available evidence on the issue of population in Belfast and in particular in South Belfast, I have taken counsel from the Chief Statistical Officer for Northern Ireland who is a statutory advisor to me in this Review. Links to the data provided by the Northern Ireland Statistical and Research Agency (NISRA) can be found here [Population | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/population).

6.4.10 Data relating to population in different parts of the city is calculated on the four current Parliamentary Boundary constituencies (Belfast North, Belfast South, Belfast East and Belfast West). It should be noted that the submission under analysis refers to population in wards which largely fall within the Belfast South Parliamentary constituency. Numerically, Belfast South is the largest Parliamentary Constituency (PC) of the 4 constituencies in Belfast, with an estimated total of 115,900 people in mid-2020. Belfast South also has the largest population of people aged 16 and over, 96,700 people, as of mid-2020. I therefore agree that this is a particularly populous area of the city.

6.4.11 However, I also note that Belfast South PC has the highest levels of negative net migration since mid-2013, totaling 4,000 people leaving. The evidence also confirms that since the date of the last Review, Belfast South is **not the area of largest growth in the City**. Belfast East is the area of largest growth with Belfast South being second largest. Moreover, in general terms, whilst population may have increased in the city as a whole since 2009, **the population of Belfast is projected to stagnate over the next ten years**. The following statistics on this are notable:

- At the time of the last Review of Local Government Boundaries, the population of Belfast District in mid-2009 was estimated to be 331,800 people. By mid-2020, the population increased by 10,800 people (3.3 per cent) to reach 342,600;
- Population growth for Belfast District since mid-2009 **falls below the Northern Ireland population growth for the same period** (5.7 per cent);
- The population of Belfast District is projected to increase by 4,400 people (1.3 per cent) in the short term (mid-2018 to mid-2028), however less so in the long term (to mid-2043), 2,600 people (0.8 per cent);
- Northern Ireland over the same period is projected to grow by 3.7 per cent in the short term (mid-2018 to mid-2028) and 5.7 per cent in the long term (mid-2043);
- Age Analysis was also considered in terms of the likely impact of the impact of population statistics on electorate statistics (people coming on to the electoral register)

- Since mid-2009, the population of Belfast District has increased by the largest percentage in the middle to older ages;
- The population aged 40-64 has increased by 6,500 people (6.8 per cent) and the population aged 65+ has increased by 3,400 people (7.0 per cent). In comparison, the population aged 16-39 has decreased by 2,500 people (2.0 per cent) over the same period;
- This trend is projected to continue over the next 25 years. In the short term (mid-2018 to mid-2028) the population of Belfast is projected to increase by 2,900 people (2.9 per cent) for ages 40-64 and by 8,800 people (17.5 per cent) in the population aged 65+;
- In the long term, (mid-2043) the population aged 40-64 is projected to decrease slightly (0.3 per cent) while the population aged 65 and over is projected to increase by 40.3 per cent (20,200 people); and
- Belfast is also projected to experience significant decreases in the younger population, 0-15 and 16-39 over the next 25 years (mid-2043), by 12.2 per cent and 7.3 per cent, respectively.

Notably there is also a trend of population movement out of Belfast. Belfast District has experienced a **negative net migration since mid-2009**. Over the past decade, net migration has contributed to a loss of 10,600 people from Belfast District. The majority of this loss of people can be attributed to negative net internal migration, which totalled 8,100 people between mid-2009 to mid-2020. Essentially, this shows **a trend of people moving out of Belfast, mostly into other areas of Northern Ireland**.

6.4.12 These trends are projected to continue. In the short term, mid-2018 to mid-2028, Belfast District is projected to experience positive natural change of 10,000 people and in the long term (mid-2043) this is projected to increase to 19,400 people. In comparison, net migration is projected to remain negative. Over the period, mid-2018 to mid-2028, Belfast LGD is projected to lose 5,600 people due to net migration, increasing to 16,800 by mid-2043.

6.4.13 Aside from population I also looked at this issue in terms of any significant growth in the electorate figures since my enumeration date. I consulted with the Chief Electoral Officer of Northern Ireland, also a statutory advisor to me under this Review, who provided me with an informal update on trends emerging from the Electoral Office canvass. Having extensively researched and tested the issue of population and the impact of this in terms of electorate and balance of local government representation in Belfast, my conclusions are:

- *It is difficult to conclude, on the grounds of population growth since the wards were last configured, that the area which is the subject of this proposal needs another ward or more representation at council level when compared to other areas of the City;*
- *It is difficult to conclude that the District of Belfast requires additional local government wards over and above the current 60 ward model, when its projected population data is compared to other areas across Northern Ireland. The 60 ward model is workable on current numbers and is likely to continue to be workable when looking at the projections for population patterns over the next 10 years;*
- *In balancing all of the evidence on the population of Belfast as a whole, and particularly the area of Belfast in question, I am not persuaded that another ward in the south of the city as submitted is justified. Indeed, I do not see any evidence which would persuade me that more than 60 wards would be required in this District;*
- *I also note that the argument for more wards in Belfast was advanced by only one consultee. Belfast City Council actively engaged with the Review and did not make any representations that Belfast requires more than 60 wards; and*
- *I therefore do not agree with the reasoning of the Assistant Commissioner that a 61 ward model for the District of Belfast is desirable having regard to all of the matters in Paragraph 17.*

I fully understand the views expressed about the challenges of drawing boundary lines around communities when the legislative focus is on achieving wards which are ‘substantially the same’ whilst drawing boundary lines which are ‘readily identifiable’.

It is often the case that people find this process too focused on mathematical balancing and geographical features rather than paying attention to how people feel about disruption to cohesive communities and separating housing which was previously in the same ward.

It is difficult to preserve cohesion when the process is designed to redistribute the number of electors in an equal way. As a result, change to what people have become used to is unavoidable when updating electoral boundaries against patterns of population movement over a considerable period of time.

- 6.4.14 Where possible, I wish to ensure that readily identifiable boundaries are used and sometimes there may be many options of to choose from in terms of a readily identifiable boundary in an area. When comparing one boundary to another it is open to me to test the strength of numerous boundaries by listening to evidence such as that contained in the SDLP submission about the Ravenhill Road. I agree with the Assistant Commissioner's analysis on this particular issue:

***the boundary between Ormeau and Ravenhill reverts back to the current ward boundary, as prior to this review, but this means Ravenhill still needs additional electors which is achieved by moving the boundary between Cregagh and Ravenhill, using the stream at the back of the houses at Onslow Parade as the real-world feature for the boundary to follow***

As analysed by the Assistant Commissioner, the SDLP have made a relevant argument based on achieving a boundary that can be described as being more readily identifiable than the boundary I have proposed at this point. In addition, the use of this alternative boundary can also achieve the requirement of achieving ward units which contain a number of electors which is 'substantially the same' as set out in the reconfiguration set out in the report of the Assistant Commissioner. Indeed I also note a representation from the Alliance Party that states

***Additionally, the proposed changes to the boundary between Ravenhill and Ormeau wards again removes a clear line of demarcation. The boundary remaining on the Ravenhill Road gives a clear boundary line between the DEAs of Botanic and Lisnasharragh.***

Whilst this submission references the boundaries of District Electoral Areas, which is out of scope of my remit and is not a permissible consideration under my legislation, I note the phrase 'clear line of demarcation' which refers to the Ravenhill Road. This is broadly the same point that has been made by the SDLP submission about this area which tends to give this argument additional weight. I am therefore content to accept the analysis and proposal by the Assistant Commissioner to redraw the boundary line at Ormeau, Cregagh and Ravenhill wards as shown in the attached map.

- 6.4.15 There is a total of 230236 electors within the district which averages at 3837 electors per ward and my Revised Recommendations balance the electorate across the 60 wards. The revised ward and district boundaries changes that I have proposed can be viewed at [Belfast](#). The electorate per ward as at 4 January 2021 and the electorate per ward in my Proposed and Revised Recommendations are set out at Table 4 below.

#### ***Belfast Ward Names***

- 6.4.16 As set out in Chapter 5 on the general issue of the naming of districts and wards under this process, it is my view that my role in recommending names of the Districts and Wards is in large measure linked to my role in the delineation of boundaries.

Descriptors of place for the naming of administrative units such as Districts and wards makes use of spatial reference points like compass points county names and also geographical features associated with a particular space such as a lough, river, mountain or main road. It is also true to say that many place descriptions have evolved from multiple languages and cultural influences.

- 6.4.17 In Chapter 5 I set out how I make the distinction between the wider submission on the use of the Irish language across the whole map, which is a request to develop a policy approach on the use and recognition of a language, and those submissions which are more local and nuanced in terms of how local people in specific areas refer to the name for their locality which, in some cases, may be linked to the use of a language and strong cultural heritage of a particular local area.

6.4.18 I also set out in Chapter 5 that I would not be inclined to interfere with naming of wards if nothing has changed in spatial terms since the ward was last settled with its legal name i.e. in the 2008/09 Review. However, if there is strong evidence to support the case that an existing ward name does not fully correspond to how the people living there identify and refer to their space or place, then I think that individual submissions could potentially be well argued for a ward name change, depending on the strength of the evidence in the particular locality. This includes names in a minority language.

6.4.19 I agree with the findings of the Assistant Commissioner about the potential merit in the submission for a ward name change in 7 particular Belfast wards to reflect how the local community refers to the areas in question. These wards are Ballymurphy, Beechmount, Cliftonville, New Lodge, Shaw's Road, Turf Lodge and Twinbrook. In these 7 wards there is evidence of prevalent use of the Irish language. In particular, a number of clear and tangible issues have been raised during the consultation including the fact that all 7 of these wards contain an Irish Medium School. This is a significant development since the last Review and the evidence of the growth of Irish Medium education in Northern Ireland over the last ten years is well documented. This is particularly true in parts of Belfast.

6.4.20 I also note the prevalence of the use of the Irish name for some of these wards based on how the community refers to the area on which the ward name is founded. I can see this in several of the consultation responses on the online portal that refer to Ballymurphy ward as Baile Uí Mhurchú. I further note that the Assistant Commissioner paid site visits to the areas identified and observed significant use of the Irish language in signage and other public communication in the locality and he received representation on the widespread use of Irish and the importance of the Irish language for the community in these areas. However, I also note that there is no evidence so far either from the consultation or from The Place Names Project that would support a well-used and understood name in the Irish language which could be nominated for the naming of all of these wards. There is no evidence available at all as to the Irish name used for the areas of Cliftonville ward Turf Lodge ward.

6.4.21 I can see that the Assistant Commissioner has focused on these 7 wards due to the location of Irish Medium Schools in each of these wards, but it is not clear that the community in each of these 7 wards do in fact share a well-known and understood Irish name for the area

which would be an appropriate ward name for me to propose. My conclusion is that some or all of these wards may be more appropriately named by use of the Irish name known and used by the local communities, but I am unable to make a definitive assessment at this stage as to what those names should be. However, I have received information from the Place Names Project at Queen's University which gives information on the Irish names on 5 of the 7 wards in question.

6.4.22 Accordingly, I am not minded to change any of these ward names in these revised proposals, but I would ask for further views on these 7 wards as to the appropriate name for each ward which I will duly consider when making my final recommendations after the secondary consultation has closed. The evidence received under the consultation, including the work done by the Place Names Project, suggests the following names may be well understood names for the areas:

**Ballymurphy – Baile Uí Mhurchú;**

**Beechmount – Ard na bhFeá;**

**Cliftonville – No evidence of any other name used;**

**New Lodge – An Lóiste Úr;**

**Shaw's Road – Bóthar Seoighe;**

**Turf Lodge – No evidence of any other name used; and**

**Twinbrook – Cill Uiaghe.**

6.4.23 I look forward to hearing more views on the potential names for these seven wards so that I may make a final evaluation.



**Table 4. Belfast**

<b>Number of wards – 60</b>	<b>Total electorate - 230236</b>	<b>Average ward size - 3837</b>	
<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Current Electorate<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>Proposed Electorate PROVISIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>Proposed Electorate REVISED RECOMMENDATIONS  (N.B. A figure has only been included where there is a change)</b>
Andersonstown	3713	3713	
Ardoyne	3665	4018	
Ballygomartin	4168	4129	
Ballymacarrett	3819	3819	
Ballymurphy	3598	3598	
Ballysillan	3449	3651	
Beechmount	3605	3605	
Beersbridge	4076	3611	
Bellevue	3672	3672	
Belmont	3608	3608	
Belvoir	3681	3681	
Blackstaff	4398	4209	
Bloomfield	3919	3618	
Cavehill	3403	3513	
Central	5282	4214	
Chichester Park	3970	3860	
Cliftonville	3896	3896	
Clonard	3956	3828	
Collin Glen	4089	4089	
Connswater	3975	3975	

<sup>5</sup> The manual geocoding process results in very small and statistically insignificant differences in the final electorate figures used for the Review, and the figures published by EONI on the enumeration date

Cregagh	3402	3577	3491
Duncairn	4584	4088	
Dunmurry	3878	3878	
Falls	3329	3457	
Falls Park	3707	3707	
Finaghy	3539	4217	
Forth River	3307	3479	
Fortwilliam	3393	3876	
Garnerville	3553	3553	
Gilnahirk	3740	3740	
Hillfoot	3630	3630	
Innisfayle	3932	3932	
Knock	3855	3649	
Ladybrook	3728	3927	
Lagmore	5070	3986	
Legoniel	3974	3772	
Malone	3754	4202	
Merok	3193	3513	
Musgrave	3705	4219	
New Lodge	3447	3460	
Orangefield	3568	3713	
Ormeau	4200	3911	4200
Poleglass	3969	4131	
Ravenhill	3399	3688	3485
Rosetta	4028	3853	
Sandown	3287	3794	
Shandon	4000	4000	
Shankill	4415	4086	
Shaw's Road	3984	3984	
Stewartstown	3644	3644	
Stormont	3791	3791	

Stranmillis	4391	4184	
Sydenham	3732	3732	
Turf Lodge	3521	3521	
Twinbrook	3475	4198	
Upper Malone	3707	4218	
Water Works	4307	3954	
Windsor	4865	4178	
Woodstock	3793	3793	
Woodvale	3498	3694	

## Chapter 7. Next Steps

- 7.1 The public consultation on my Revised Recommendations is now open. The deadline for written representations is 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022.
- 7.2 Full details on how to access and respond to the consultation on my Provisional Recommendations is at <https://www.lgbc-ni.org.uk/consultation>.
- 7.3 Once I have considered the representations made in response to these proposals, I will submit my final report to the Department for Communities. The timeline for my Review can be accessed at [www.lgbc-ni.org.uk/milestone-timeline](http://www.lgbc-ni.org.uk/milestone-timeline).
- 7.4 Finally, I would encourage everyone to participate in the consultation process, either through the online portal at: <https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/dfc/consultation-on-lgbc-revised-recommendations> or by e-mail to: [consultation@lgbc-ni.org.uk](mailto:consultation@lgbc-ni.org.uk).

If you need any assistance accessing the proposals or need them in an alternative format please contact my team on [info@lgbc-ni.org.uk](mailto:info@lgbc-ni.org.uk). I look forward to hearing your views.

**BELFAST CITY COUNCIL**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**SUBMISSION**

**RE**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARIES REVIEW IN  
NORTHERN IRELAND**

**PROVISIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

**(September 2021)**

## **Introduction**

This submission in response to the Local Government Boundary Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations 2021-22 is made on behalf of Belfast City Council.

The Commissioner will wish to note that, as with previous decisions in relation to boundaries review in Northern Ireland, the Council have advised individual parties to submit their own responses to the recommendations, particularly in relation to proposed changes to ward boundaries.

The following Council response can be categorised into:

- (i) General Points pertaining to broad issues concerning the Commission's approach to the identification of boundaries; and
- (ii) Specific Points in relation to Belfast.

### **(i) General points re boundary delimitation**

A number of General Points on the approach to boundary delimitation can be distilled under the headings of (a) statutory parameters and (b) additional factors.

#### Statutory parameters

Please note from the outset that we understand how the Commission has arrived at its recommendations, having regard to the statutory parameters it has to work within. In this respect, we understand that Belfast has to be equipped with a certain number of wards that falls within the range of 55 to 65. We appreciate that the Commission, in the desire to appear even-handed, would have a tendency to advocate the medium of this range, namely the 60 ward figure.

We also accept that a degree of interpretation has to be made in respect of what constitutes readily identifiable boundaries, in terms of the importance attached to physical features on the ground – whether they be man-made (roads, railway lines, etc.) or natural features (rivers, lakes or uplands).

To this end, we recognise that the existing urban footprint and Development Plans, such as the BUAP and Draft BMAP, can act as reference points for deciding what constitutes 'readily identifiable boundaries' for District Council areas. This is because Development Plans define settlement limits and apply land use zonings, particular those relating to green spaces between built areas, which need to be respected when defining boundaries.

Taking on board these points, the Council would refer the Commissioner back to the Final Recommendations from the previous Local Government Boundary

Review in Northern Ireland in 2008 which made clear those features which the Commissioner adjudged to constitute 'readily identifiable boundaries' in the Belfast City Council area. As the Council argued at that time, such 'readily identifiable boundaries' provided support for the principle of expansion of the Belfast Council Area.

#### Additional factors

Having stated the above, we would, however, like to make the Commissioner aware of a number of additional factors that may help inform her of the need to facilitate the expansion of Belfast's council area. There are essentially two of these: -

1. Firstly, we are well aware that the definition of Local Government Districts is very much premised on achieving greater efficiency in the delivery of services, in terms of securing better value for money and quality of service.

The definition of such boundaries must allow for the creation of a critical mass of population within the Belfast Council Area upon which to sustain and improve upon efficiency in the delivery of services. We say this for the very good reason that Belfast City Council has a disproportionate number of deprived wards in Northern Ireland.

Following the 2008 review a number of wards of similar socio-economic standing were included within the new Belfast City Council area (Twinbrook and Collin Glen, which are ranked the twentieth and the twenty first most deprived wards), making it even more imperative that the Belfast Local Government District be equipped with an optimum population size and geographical area capable of sustaining and improving services.

2. Secondly, we attach appreciable significance to the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland and its aspirations (under SPG-BMA 1) to create a thriving Belfast Metropolitan Area based on a revitalised City of Belfast. In this regard, we view Belfast as the regional driver of growth in Northern Ireland and all efforts to promote this objective in the form of bolstering its population size should be welcomed. This is especially so when it is considered that, in recent times, Belfast has endured significant population loss to surrounding districts.

#### **(ii) Specific Response in relation to Belfast**

Against the background of the general points outlined above, we would like to make the following comments in respect of the existing Belfast City Council district boundary.

## Boundary with Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

The previous Local Government Boundary Review for Northern Ireland - Final Recommendations 2008 included a recommendation to place the Galwally area (including Forestside) within the new Belfast City Council district area. However, as the Commissioner will be aware, the NI Assembly ultimately approved the Final Recommendations with some amendments, one of which included the placement of the Galwally area within the new Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council area. Belfast City Council would contend that this decision by the NI Assembly disregarded the logic governing the need to have regard to the 'readily identifiable boundaries' guidelines and was in contravention of the clear recommendations of the Boundary Commissioner.

This decision, as Belfast City Council argued at the time, amounted to an irrational departure from those features that have helped to shape the delimitation of the District Boundary in this part of Belfast, namely the readily identifiable boundaries of the Outer Ring Road and the upland topography in this area. Indeed, when viewed on a map, it graphically stands out as an aberration in boundary demarcation.

### Forestside catchment area

There are different ways to approach the calculation of catchment area figure as it can be done on a spend or population (customer) basis, both of which could be further refined in many ways to take account of the different days, times of travel, population / household composition, socio/economic group.

The Council however believe that that the simple drive time catchment analysis could be utilised as it is based on published data and standard tools.

The appended diagram shows the extent of the catchments generated for 0-5, 5-10, 10-15 and 15-20 minutes. For the table these polygons were used to determine the number of residential properties (using the OSNI Pointer Domestic Address from 27/07/2021).

Drivetime Catchment	Percentage of Pointer Domestic Addresses by Council Area				
	Belfast	Lisburn & Castlereagh	Ards & North Down	Newry, Mourne & Down	Antrim & Newtownabbey
0 - 5 mins	<b>69.6</b>	30.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
0 - 10 mins	<b>84.3</b>	15.6	0.1	0.0	0.0
0 - 15 mins	<b>74.4</b>	19.5	4.8	1.1	0.2
0 - 20 mins	<b>62.7</b>	20.4	8.5	2.5	5.9

There have been no major applications at Forestside that could provide an assessed catchment for the Centre although the Centre was assessed as part



of the Lisburn & Castlereagh Retail Capacity Study 2018. In para 6.5.4 (page 25) of that study the concluding statement is at best a simplification in terms of potential draw from outside *"In the Forestside catchment, it was estimated that 50% of the comparison turnover of the centre came from outside the area; principally from the Belfast suburbs, as the shopping centre is right on the border of the Council area"*. Both the average household size and available income would have to be significantly higher to sustain such a conclusion.

Belfast City Council also note that the various objections from the former Lisburn and Castlereagh councils to the Final Recommendations in 2008 in respect of this area, (whilst not being deemed sufficient at that time to change the Final Recommendations), which carry less weight now given that i) the majority of LCCC council services have since been transferred to the Island Civic Centre in Lisburn, and ii) a range of new bus routes has been introduced since 2008 (including the Glider service and the proposed Phase 2 of Glider) which extend routes into the Lisburn and Castlereagh district.

The Council would also make a case based on which authority is best placed to manage and address the wider implications of the District Centre's operations, accessibility and servicing. The A55 Outer Ring Road is a significant physical barrier and much of the potential for improvements in accessibility with potential for better integration into the surrounding urban areas would naturally lie with Belfast City Council in relation to the geography of the site and the potential for integration with existing services.

Taking into account each of these points, and the Commissioners previous recommendations, the Council does not agree with the Provisional Recommendation at para 7.3.1 which recommends that the Belfast "district boundary line should remain unchanged".

Belfast City Council would therefore request that the Local Government Boundary Commissioner reassess the findings of the 2008 Local Government Boundary Review including the "Final Recommendations" report and the "Report of the Assistant Commissioner Sarah Havlin on Belfast City Council district" which clearly recommended that the Galwally area containing Forestside should reside within the Belfast district boundary based on the statutory parameters highlighted above.

### **District Boundary with regards to the Harbour Ward**

The Council also wish to highlight an issue with the district boundary as it pertains to the Harbour ward, and in particular the extension to the harbour which has resulted in part of the harbour infrastructure existing outside of the district boundary (see image below).

### **Existing Situation (area currently beyond the BCC boundary)**



The exercise of powers and responsibilities are normally linked to the LGD geography. This creates an issue for the Council not only in terms of rates but also for enforcement with regards to any event which may happen beyond our line and therefore jurisdiction. The Council would note that there is a further approved extension (planning permission at appendix 1) beyond the currently constructed area shown on the plans – see red line below. The Commissioner when considering any modification to the district boundary may wish to take this into account also.

### **Example of potential new boundary to encompass the extension of the Harbour**



## **Conclusion**

In summary, Belfast City Council does not agree with para 7.3.1 of the Provisional Recommendations report which states that the district boundary line should remain unchanged. The Council would refer to the following two issues in relation to the district boundary.

### **Galwally Area (including Forestside)**

The Council request that the Local Government Boundary Commissioner reassess the findings of the 2008 Local Government Boundary Review including the "Final Recommendations" report and the "Report of the Assistant Commissioner Sarah Havlin on Belfast City Council district" which made clear recommendations that the Galwally area containing Forestside should reside within the Belfast district boundary.

The Council would argue that the principles upon which the 2008 recommendations were made and those features which the Commissioner determined to constitute 'readily identifiable boundaries' in respect of this area (namely the A55 Outer Ring Road and the upland topography in this area) have not changed.

### **Harbour Area**

The Council also wish to highlight the issue with the district boundary as it pertains to the Harbour ward, and in particular the extension to the harbour which has resulted in part of the harbour infrastructure being outside of the district boundary.

The Council would note that there is a further approved extension beyond the currently constructed area shown on the plans. The Commissioner when considering any modification to the district boundary may wish to take this into account also.

**John Walsh**

City Solicitor

On behalf of Belfast City Council  
September 2021

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**REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARIES  
COMMISSIONER FOR THE PROPOSED DISTRICT OF  
BELFAST CITY**

Brendan Patterson, Assistant Local Boundaries Commissioner

**November 2021**

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents	1
Section One: <b>Background and Statutory Framework</b>	2
Section Two: <b>District Boundaries</b>	4
Section Three: <b>Ward Boundaries</b>	7
Section Four: <b>Names of District and/or wards</b>	13
Section Five: <b>Other Issues</b>	19
Section Six: <b>Summary of Conclusions</b>	21
Section Seven: <b>References and List of Submissions</b>	22
Part One: <b>List of Written Submissions</b>	
Part Two: <b>Oral Submissions at Public Hearing</b>	
Section Eight: <b>Appendices</b>	30

## Section One: **Background and Statutory Framework**

### **Background**

- 1.1 The commencement of the current Review of Local Government Boundaries in Northern Ireland was announced in a Public Notice on 3rd February 2021 which explained the role and remit of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner and advised that in due course the Commissioner would publish Provisional Recommendations and may cause a public hearing to be held in each of the current eleven Local Government Districts. The Notice and a subsequent information video placed on the Commissioner's website (<https://www.lgbc-ni.org.uk/>) explained the process and the opportunities for participation in the consultation on the Provisional Recommendations.
- 1.2 The terms of the Review are set out in Section 50 and Schedule 4 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 as amended. Copies of the legislative framework are available on the Commissioner's website.
- 1.3 The Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations with proposed boundaries and names of 11 Districts and their 462 constituent wards were published on the Commissioner's website on 27th July 2021 and announced by way of Public Notice, inviting comments on the proposals made. The consultation was launched on Citizen Space to enable ease of public inspection and maximum public participation. Accessibility points for online access to the Proposals and the consultation portal was facilitated at public facilities including Council premises and public libraries by the Commissioner's team in partnership with local councils and with Libraries Northern Ireland. Hard copies of any part of the Proposals or the associated maps as required by any person were made available on request. Other accessibility requirements were promoted on the Commissioners website including language translation, braille and sign language.
- 1.4 The consultation portal was open for 8 weeks and closed on 21st September 2021. Details of the programme of public hearings was notified by press release, social media channels and on the Commissioner's website in September 2021
- 1.5 The Commissioner received 35 representations in respect of the proposals, specifically applicable to the District of Belfast City, being 29 responses received to the consultation on the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations through the online portal, 2 written submissions submitted via email, and 4 oral submissions during the public hearing held on 5th October 2021.
- 1.6 All written representations received were acknowledged and have been made available for inspection on the Commissioner's website.
- 1.7 I was appointed as an Assistant Commissioner by The Department of Communities on 1st August 2021. My task is to gather, assess and report on the representations made in relation to this proposed District of Belfast City and to submit a report to the Commissioner including my conclusions and recommendations, within 4 weeks of the end of the relevant public hearing. I conducted a public hearing in this proposed District at Crowne Plaza Hotel, Belfast on 5th October 2021.

- 1.8 The Public Hearing was staged under the requirements of government guidance and observance of public health recommendations in respect of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Numbers in the room at any one time was limited to 20 persons with alternative participation facilitated by a simultaneous online interactive platform.

## **Written Representations**

- 1.9 Written representations of relevance to this District are listed in Section Seven of this report. All written representations were considered by me in advance of the public hearing and in anticipation of the preparation of this Report.

## **Public Hearing**

- 1.10 The Public Hearing on the Provisional Proposals was attended by nine people, being four attendees in person and five attendees via the online platform. The hearing was facilitated in an informal and accessible manner where all participants were afforded the opportunity to give their views and to question the submissions and viewpoints expressed by others. Participants were asked to either identify as individuals or representatives of an organisation. The list of organisations represented and a brief summary of their submissions is at Section Seven: References and List of Submissions - Part Two: Oral Submissions at Public Hearing (held on 5th October 2021)

## **My Report**

- 1.11 This report presents and addresses the written and oral views of interested parties in respect of the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations for the proposed District of Belfast City. In particular it addresses the relevant local information and opinion about the boundaries and names of the District and its wards. I have set out details of support of the Commissioner's proposals and objections and/or counter-proposals. I have also set out my conclusions on the issues raised which are permissible matters for consideration under the legislative framework of this Review. Any matters submitted that are not relevant or permissible considerations under the legislative parameters of the Review have been outlined in this report as having been submitted, but those issues will not have formed part of my deliberations.
- 1.12 As part of my research for this report I have studied and tested any areas of the District where alternative boundaries have been proposed by use of GIS mapping systems of the Land and Property Services of Northern Ireland. This has been facilitated by the staff of Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland and I am indebted to their technical assistance.



## Section Two: **District Boundaries**

- 2.1 Within the written and oral submissions received from Belfast City Council, it is noted that there was a request to change the district boundary at two locations. The outline and considerations of these are detailed here:

### **Forestside (Galwally Ward)**

- 2.2 On 17th September 2021, Belfast City Council (BCC) made a written submission (full copy of which can be found in Section 8: Appendices C or online at [Belfast City Council - Submission to the LGBC.pdf \(lgbc-ni.org.uk\)](https://lgbcc-ni.org.uk/Belfast-City-Council-Submission-to-the-LGBC.pdf)).
- 2.3 In relation to Forestside, the main points from the BCC written submission received were:
- Clarity on the statutory parameters when defining 'readily identifiable boundaries';
  - Belfast District, being the regional driver of growth in NI, necessitates the increase of population within the district wherever possible;
  - The previous Local Government Boundary Review (2008) recommended placing Galwally Ward (including Forestside) within BCC, however a subsequent review by the NI Assembly ultimately placed Galwally Ward within Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) and that this decision amounted to an irrational departure from the 'readily identifiable boundary' concept (in this instance being the A55 Outer Ring Road);
  - Drive Time Catchment Analysis that shows the close proximity of Belfast residents to Forestside, in comparison to other Council areas;
  - BCC making the case that their authority is best placed to manage and address the wider implications of the District Centre's operations, accessibility and servicing; and
  - Request that the LGB Commissioner reassess the findings of the 2008 Local Government Boundary Review which clearly recommended that the Galwally area containing Forestside should reside within the Belfast district boundary.
- 2.4 This written submission was further referenced by BCC during the public hearing on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021 and highlighted two main points for consideration:
- 1) Forestside (Galwally Ward) issue
  - 2) Harbour extension issue
- 2.5 The submission regarding Forestside requested that the Forestside Retail Park (the area to the West of the A55 Outer Ring Road within the Galwally Ward, and not the entire Galwally Ward) which currently sits within the Lisburn and Castlereagh District, be brought into the District of Belfast City under this review.
- 2.6 The detail in the written submission was further supported during the public hearing by BCC who again provided the content of the submission and the rationale for the proposed changes, summarized mainly as:

*The final recommendations in 2008 included a recommendation to place the Galwally area, including Forestside, within the new Belfast City Council district area. However, the Northern Ireland Assembly ultimately approved the final recommendations with some amendments, one of which included the placement of the Galwally area within the new Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area. Belfast City Council contend that this decision by the Northern Ireland Assembly was not based on the rules regarding the desirability of determining readily identifiable boundaries and was a departure from the recommendations of the Commissioner.*

*This decision as Belfast City Council argued at the time, amounted to an irrational departure from those features that helped to shape the delimitation of the district boundary in this part of Belfast, namely the readily identifiable boundaries of the outer ring-road and the upland topography in this area. The Council would argue that the principles upon which the 2008 recommendations were made and those features which the Commissioner determined to constitute readily identifiable boundaries in respect of this area, namely the A55 Outer Ring Road and the upland topography in this area have not changed.*

*The Council would also make a case based on which authority is best placed to manage and address the wider implications of the district centres operations, accessibility and servicing. The A55 Outer Ring Road is a significant physical barrier and much of the potential for improvements in accessibility with potential for better integration into the surrounding urban areas would naturally lie with Belfast City Council in relation to the geography of the site and the potential for integration with existing services. The designation of Forestside as a district centre will not be affected by any changes to the local government boundary (taken from BCC verbal submission during public hearing held on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021)*

- 2.7 During the public hearing held on 5th October 2021, representatives from Sinn Fein expressed support from the party for the BCC submission to adjust the boundary at Forestside Retail Park and to bring it within the Belfast District boundary area. The suggested approach from Sinn Fein was “*in regards to Forestside Retail Park we would ask the Commission to have a look at the industrial lands at the cuts which we would actually find is a more natural boundary.*”
- 2.8 It is noted that The Commissioner’s approach in her Recommendations is only to intervene in the district boundary line if there is compelling reason to do so. I have considered the evidence submitted to determine if there is compelling reason in this instance to recommend a change to the district boundary line.
- 2.9 I have considered the permissible matters for consideration under the legislative framework of this review and whilst the BCC submission that the previous review placed Forestside within the District of Belfast City is noted, it is also evident that subsequent to the final recommendations being made in the previous review, there was a further process that took place within the NI Assembly that ultimately placed Forestside within the Lisburn & Castlereagh District. The fact is that this decision was made by the NI Assembly and is historically agreed, therefore I do not see compelling evidence to convince me that we should deviate from the

Commissioner's approach in this review where minimum disruption is preferred and I recommend in this instance to follow the Commissioner's recommendation: *I recommend that the district boundary line should remain unchanged.* (Section 7.3.1 Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations Report, 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021)

## Harbour

- 2.10 On 17<sup>th</sup> September 2021, Belfast City Council (BCC) made a written submission (full copy of which can be found in Section 8: Appendices C or online at [Belfast City Council - Submission to the LGBC.pdf \(lgbcc-ni.org.uk\)](https://lgbcc-ni.org.uk/Belfast-City-Council-Submission-to-the-LGBC.pdf)). This submission was also further detailed by BCC during the Public Hearing held on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021 and highlighted the issue with the district boundary as it pertains to the Harbour Ward. The rationale for this submission is as follows:
- In particular, there is an extension to the Harbour which has resulted in part of the Harbour infrastructure being outside of the district boundary;
  - There is a further approved extension beyond the currently constructed area showing on the current plans; and
  - This creates an administrative issue for the council, not only in terms of rates evaluation but also for enforcement with regards to any event which may happen beyond our line and therefore, jurisdiction.
- 2.11 I believe that there is defacement to the existing district line between the District of Belfast City & Belfast Lough. Therefore it is reasonable to suggest that the district line should be amended to encompass existing and future development of the Harbour estate.

## Section Three: **Ward Boundaries**

### **Belfast District Wards**

- 3.1 On 21st September 2021, Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP) made a written submission (full copy of which can be found in Section 8: Appendices D or online at [South Belfast SDLP Boundary Review Consultation Response September 2021.pdf \(lqbc-ni.org.uk\)](https://lqbc-ni.org.uk) and this written submission was further referenced by SDLP during the public hearing on 5th October 2021 and highlighted the following main points for consideration:
- Concern that the current proposals within the Botanic DEA *“carve up what are continuous communities within the wards which I feel would be deleterious to the sense of community cohesion within those wards, not to mention I suppose a sense of common purpose in terms of the continuity there is between streets currently that exists within those wards which enables them to operate collectively in terms of local issues and engage with local representatives.”* (Taken from Public Hearing, 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021). Note - a review of DEA's is not applicable to this review, therefore where submissions are made in relation to DEA's, these have been noted, but not considered;
  - Concern that the current proposals are based more on the required mathematical balancing than taking into account the actual experience and liveability of these wards on the ground and are therefore artificially separating communities and goes against the essence of democratic participation where established communities work with their recognised elected representatives for the ongoing enhancement of their area;
  - Suggest the addition of one additional ward within each of the Balmoral DEA & the Botanic DEA, to therefore have 12 wards as opposed to the current 10 within these areas (additional ward in each DEA) to take account of natural population growth within this area and to redesign the 12 wards in such a way as to accommodate, facilitate and recognise the natural growth of this part of the city rather than artificially cleaving it apart and splitting up communities; and
  - Clarity that the possibility of adding additional wards has been done in the past when required (citing the example of a precedent being set when additional wards were added in Newry, Mourne and Down and in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon during previous reviews).
- 3.2 Concern that the current proposals will artificially split existing communities (citing an example of the proposed changes adjacent to the Ravenhill Road along the Park Road, North Parade and South Parade with these being very distinct and unified communities and part of the Ormeau Road community and the problems that would occur if they were moved into the Ravenhill Ward)
- Concern that the current proposals will lead to a lack of community cohesion in areas where there is already an existing issue with low voter turnout

- Concern that the current proposals will negatively affect what are diverse communities and will create shells of communities, tilting the wards towards vast tracks of under populated areas where you have a transient population such as The Holylands or the wider university area or parts of the inner city

3.3 The Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations Report, 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021 states that:

*Number of Wards in a District*

4.8

*Paragraph 18(1) presumptively sets the number of wards in each district at 60 for Belfast and 40 for the other ten districts, subject to sub-paragraphs 18(2) and (3), which give me the discretion, having regard to factors in paragraph 17, to recommend that the number of wards can be increased and decreased by a maximum of 5. I have been mindful of this discretion in developing my provisional recommendations.*

- 3.4 In response to this submission and the potential allowance of additional wards as stated in the Provisional Recommendations Report, the feasibility of adding additional wards (whilst adhering to the Report's guidance that *'Within any one district there shall, as far as is reasonably practicable having regard to paragraph 17, be substantially the same number of local electors in each ward'*) to the area was examined by the OSNI team.
- 3.5 Based on this exercise, it would be feasible to add an additional ward to this area, which would take cognizance of the valid arguments put forward in the SDLP submission, and provide an enhanced model which would give a more evenly distributed electorate within these wards.
- 3.6 Counter to the Commissioners recommendation (Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations Report, 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021) at 7.3.2 which states that *I recommend that Belfast district should remain comprised of 60 wards*, the counter proposal put forward in the SDLP submission has merit and it is achievable under the required balancing of electors within each ward as being 'substantially the same'. I recommend that the Commissioner should consider my revised recommendation that the SDLP submission is partially accepted and that an additional ward is added to the District of Belfast City.
- 3.7 Pursuant to Section 50 of The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, Schedule 4 of that Act sets out the statutory basis on which the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner shall be appointed, regulate his own procedure and make recommendations (hereafter referred to as the legislation) and under Part III, paragraph 18 (1) (a) states that *in the district of Belfast the number of wards shall be 60. However Part III, paragraph 18 (2) states that Where, having regard to the matters mentioned in paragraph 17, the Commissioner considers it desirable that the number of wards in any district should be more than that specified in sub-paragraph (1), the number of wards in that district may be increased by not more than 5. Part III, paragraph 17 states in determining the number and boundaries of*

*wards within a district regard shall be had to- (a) the size, population and physical diversity of the district.*

- 3.8 I believe that with the submission, relevant legislation and revised proposal considered, it is a desirable outcome to increase the number of wards within the district and therefore, I recommend the revised 61 ward model for the District of Belfast City with new ward boundaries for Blackstaff, Central, Stranmillis and Windsor, and the addition of a new ward boundary (revised ward boundaries and new ward can be seen in Section Eight: Appendices A) be approved.
- 3.9 In reaching the recommendation of adding another ward to the District of Belfast City, I have considered the given legislation in Part III, paragraph 17a in determining the number and boundaries of wards within a district; and in these particular wards (Blackstaff, Central, Stranmillis and Windsor), there has been a significant population growth since the last review in 2009.
- 3.10 To consider the implications of the proposal of adding a 61st ward to the District of Belfast City area, I explored options with assistance from the OSNI team and this looked at the four inner city wards of Blackstaff, Central, Stranmillis and Windsor as they had a particularly high electorate count and thus, I reasoned that this would be the preferable area to add an additional ward.
- 3.11 This additional ward would help to ensure the electorate was substantially the same across the district and to support the legislation at Part III, paragraph 19 (1) which states that Within any one district there shall, as far as is reasonably practicable having regard to paragraph 17, be substantially the same number of local electors in each ward.
- 3.12 This proposal may have knock-on effects on all the wards across the District of Belfast City, which will need further examination by the Commissioner
- 3.13 The above process necessitated the addition of a new ward, which I recommend to be called 'University' due to the campus of Queen's University falling within its catchment area, the immediate surrounding student accommodation and other features being aligned to the University in this locality.
- 3.14 It is noted that the SDLP submission made a proposal to request an additional two wards but my recommendation is that the addition of one new ward is a sufficient compromise that meets the needs set out in the submission.
- 3.15 In summary it is noted from the SDLP submission that:
- Issue 1 – Proposal to add additional wards(s) – this has been partially accepted with the recommendation of one additional ward, but not two
- Issue 2 – Proposal to review the Boundary between Ormeau and Ravenhill – this is accepted subject to the following potential solutions:
- Solutions to issue 2:
- a. If the 61 ward model is adopted then there will be no need to implement the given boundary changes that moved sections off the Ravenhill Road (parts of Park Road, North Parade and South Parade being moved from Ormeau ward to the Ravenhill ward) as per the Commissioner's Provisional

Recommendations Report, 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021, which was one of the concerns raised in the SDLP submission;

Thus, Ravenhill reverts to the current ward boundary as per prior to this review, however with a small change at the boundary between Ormeau and Rosetta (in Hampton Drive) as required to balance the electorate count - See ward maps in Section Eight: Appendices B; and

- b. If the 61 ward model is not adopted, I believe there will be a need to make changes between the Cregagh and Ravenhill wards and these are shown in the revised ward maps for Cregagh and Ravenhill in Section Eight: Appendices B. Whilst the Commissioner's provisional recommendations as per the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations Report, 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021 split a residential street, this solution uses a stream-line which allows the residential street to remain intact, therefore providing a more readily identifiable boundary and I believe this proposal should be accepted

3.16 Please see below for table and additional notes regarding ward electorate numbers that will be changed based on the 61 ward model, with the other ward electorate numbers remaining as per *Table 3. Belfast* in the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations Report, 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

3.17 It should be noted that if the revised 61 ward model is approved for Belfast City, the District will still have the lowest representation of councillors per electorate across NI.

#### **61 ward model**

Average ward size – 3774

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Current electorate</b>	<b>New electorate (based on new 61 ward model)</b>
Blackstaff	4398	3698
Central	5282	3982
Stranmillis	4391	4088
Windsor	4865	3617
New ward 'University'	-	3551

3.18 Note - Changes made to Finaghy, Malone, Musgrave & Upper Malone for provisional recommendations would be unnecessary and could be discarded with those wards reverting to their original boundaries which gives less disruption to the area.

#### **60-ward model (shown below is the solution if the change to 61 ward model is not adopted)**

This would impact on the ward electorate numbers as follows:

Average ward size - 3837



Ward	Current electorate	New electorate (60 ward model)
Ormeau	4200	4200
Ravenhill	3399	3485
Cregagh	3577 (after initial recommendations)	3491

- 3.19 A further proposal contained within the SDLP submission (verbal submission during the public hearing held on Tuesday 5th October 2021) was also noted:
- 3.20 I think it is something the Commissioner should take under consideration, the transfer of those eight houses (on the Glencregagh Road) into Belfast District and transfer the Drumkeen, the whole of Drumkeen Court Retail Park into the Belfast District as well
- 3.21 Whilst this proposal was noted, I recommend that the boundary line is not amended in this instance as although considered, I do not deem a change to be practical due to the existing district boundary currently following a readily identifiable boundary. It is noted that The Commissioner's approach in her Recommendations is only to intervene in the District Boundary line if there is compelling reason to do so, and having considered the evidence submitted I have determined that there is not a compelling reason in this instance to recommend a change to the District Boundary line.
- 3.22 There was also an Individual Submission received during the written consultation period as follows:
- Individual
- Parts of the borders are very arbitrary, especially in North Belfast area. Rather than having based decisions based on shared characteristics and accessibilities (e.g. Alexandra Park area being divided on socio-economic factors), the way that area has been split between Duncairn, Fortwilliam and Waterworks seem to be based on the shape and names of streets. Duncairn near Fortwilliam/Waterworks shares the area nearby Sydenham and Ballymacarett, which have very different residential concerns.*
- While some arbitrary judgement might be required to split area into different wards, unfortunately, the recommendations fail to put the emphasis on the shared concerns and characteristics of the residents, and seem to take a 'ruler and scissors' approach based on the shapes and names of streets cutting across the residential area. Perhaps making more importance of this element in future recommendations might be useful to learn more about effective policy making and improving social statistics information.*
- 3.23 While the above Individual submission was noted and considered and the Individual raises interesting points, these points are not permissible under the scope of this review, so therefore I deem that this does not constitute compelling evidence to make any further changes to the Commissioner's initial proposals, in this instance.



## Section Four: Names of District and Wards

- 4.1 I am aware that there has been a wider representation across the whole Review in terms of the adoption of a bilingual or trilingual naming policy for the whole map of the Local Government Districts and Wards in Northern Ireland. This is a matter for wider consideration by the Commissioner rather than a District of Belfast City specific issue.
- 4.2 Submissions which support the use of Irish/Ulster Scots/Ullans language across the Review proposed by, for example, language lobby groups which have been made in terms of the naming of all District and Wards in either bilingual or trilingual terms will be fully considered by The Commissioner on the basis of the comprehensive submission made on a wholesale basis across the Review and her conclusions will be published in the Revised Proposals Report.

The Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations Report, 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021, states that:

### 5.5

*I have to date received a representation that both districts and wards should be named in Irish or bilingually with English or in a trilingual naming convention with both English and Ulster Scots. I have not included this in my provisional recommendations; I would invite further representations on this issue in the course of the wider public consultation that is now open.*

- 4.3 In response to this, and specific to the District of Belfast City, there were a number of written submissions received following the Report being published on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021, in addition to two verbal submissions during the public hearing held on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021. The written submissions specifically related to the District of Belfast City that were received to the consultation on the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations through the online portal are listed at Section Seven: **References and List of Submissions** page 22 (note general submissions on a region-wide basis are not listed here). These can also be viewed at [Consultation Responses | Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for Northern Ireland \(lgbcc-ni.org.uk\)](https://lgbcc-ni.org.uk/consultation-responses/).

These written submissions contained diverse and conflicting opinions on whether bilingual/trilingual naming of districts and wards should be taken forward.

- 4.4 The main arguments for the use of bilingual naming of the District of Belfast City and wards in English and Irish were as follows:
- Support large numbers of Irish-medium schools and pupils who are learning Irish language every day;
  - Original place names are derived from Irish;
  - Increase visibility of the Irish language and be more inclusive of Irish speakers;
  - Requirement under International Law, e.g. European Charter for Regional & Minority Languages;

- Create awareness and tolerance around the Irish language; and
  - Promotes heritage and history.
- 4.5 In a general regard, from all the written submissions received, both specific to the District of Belfast City and more generally across the entire NI region, there were 83 written submissions that were supportive of a bilingual approach.
- 4.6 The main arguments against the use of bilingual naming of the District of Belfast City and wards in English and Irish were as follows:
- Creates more division and unrest;
  - Would be divisive and separate communities; and
  - The proposed bilingual languages are dead.
- 4.7 In a general regard, from all the written submissions received, both specific to the District of Belfast City and more generally across the entire NI region, there were 63 written submissions that were not supportive a bilingual approach.
- 4.8 There were two general written submissions in support of a trilingual approach to include English, Irish and Ulster Scots and a further general written submission in support of a bilingual approach to include English and Ullans.
- 4.9 There were a further three general written submissions received by email which can be viewed at Consultation Responses | Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for Northern Ireland ([lgbc-ni.org.uk](http://lgbc-ni.org.uk)). These represented 2 submissions against bilingual naming of districts and wards from individual submissions and 1 submission in support of bilingual naming of districts and wards from Foras na Gaeilge.
- 4.10 Given the amount of respondents that expressed a general viewpoint on the issue of bi-lingual or tri-lingual district and ward names, I would reaffirm the Commissioner's view that there needs to be a further process in terms of the adoption of a bilingual or trilingual naming policy for the whole map of the Local Government Districts and Wards in Northern Ireland.

#### **Specific to District of Belfast City:**

- 4.11 During the public hearing on 5th October 2021, there were a further two verbal submissions in relation to this topic.
- 4.12 Sinn Fein made a submission with regard to the bilingual place names issue which included:
- What we're looking to do and what many constituents have asked myself, and I totally agree with this, is that they're asking that Irish language is respected and they're allowed to use the median of Irish with regards to some of the place names in the areas where they live and the areas where they work and play and go to have their education as well.
- 4.13 Further email correspondence from Sinn Fein received on the 5th October 2021 clarified that their submission is not a request to change ward names, but that Irish should be reflected in wards, for example – Shaw's Road is Bóthar Seoighe in Irish, so when the ward title is being used it should be Shaw's Road/Bóthar Seoighe

(Shaw's Road used as an example because of the rich history of the urban Gaeltacht in that area.)

- 4.14 The submission suggests that a mechanism should be set up whereby if constituents in a particular ward wish to see their ward name bilingually, then a process is established to facilitate that. The submission suggests that the Commissioner looks at a mechanism in which residents within individual wards can have a petition or other trigger mechanism so that the residents of a particular ward can request their signage in bilingual or trilingual languages – a mechanism that is currently absent (Belfast City Council currently have a Street Signage Policy).
- 4.15 Further to a written submission sent to the Commissioner in April 2021, Conradh na Gaeilge representatives also made a verbal submission at the public hearing held on 5th October 2021 and highlighted the following main points for consideration:
- Expressed disappointment that the initial proposals submitted in April 2021 weren't included in the provisional recommendations;
  - That Conradh na Gaeilge, as a public body, believe that the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner, the Commissioner and the Department of Communities have international obligations under Irish Language that are included in the European Charter for Regional Minority Languages around the use and visibility of place names, around signage and around public bodies promoting and developing the Irish language;
  - Recommend that place names that derive from Irish and other languages such as Scots should be legally recognised, and council and ward names should have legal recognition of their bilingual versions;
  - Evidence of the breadth of use of the Irish language currently in NI, citing around 7,000 to 7,500 people who are being educated through the medium of Irish, around 180,000 people who have some knowledge of Irish and a lot more who are learning Irish;
  - Expressed a hope that this will be the beginning of normalising and encouraging bilingualism, bilingual signage and that shared spaces can have bilingual signage and an increased visibility of the signage;
  - Cited the fact that at least 90% of NI place names derive from Irish, for example Newry & Mourne, Belfast, Giant's Causeway, Coast & Glens, Derry and Strabane all derive from Irish. Examples given such as Belfast being Beal Feirste, or the electoral ward of Black Mountain being Sliabh Dubh or the area of Whitefort which would be Ballydownfine. Stated that there are many examples throughout the North and that body of work and research has been completed by the likes of Queen's University, the Ulster Place Name Society (although this does not include a comprehensive list of all ward names);
  - Expressed the point that the visibility of the language has a huge role in normalising but also increasing tolerance to the language; and
  - Suggested that as NI is a region within the wider European context which is seen as a global leader in language revitalisation, that there is a place for bodies such as the Local Government Boundaries Commission to support this process, particularly as the New Decade, New Approach legislation and the fifth COMEX Report from the Council of Europe are now urging government bodies to ensure that correct forms of place names are now visible.

- 4.16 In response to the Assistant Commissioner's offer to visit areas as required, I was requested by Sinn Féin representatives during the public hearing on 5th October 2021 to visit the urban Gaeltacht area of Shaw's Road, Belfast to develop greater understanding and awareness of the bilingual naming issue.
- 4.17 This visit was conducted on 18th October 2021 and included a tour of the Shaw's Road area, where the urban Gaeltacht area exists, mainly to display the relevance of the Irish language on the locality, and in particular with reference to the impact of Irish medium schools within the locality. The visit was hosted by representatives from the Irish Language Medium Education Sector and Conradh na Gaeilge and I was supported by a representative from the LGBC Secretariat.
- 4.18 The visit on 18th October 2021 was an informative, fact-finding exercise and provided further support for the submissions regarding future implementation of bilingual ward and district naming. In particular, the visit provided:
- Clear evidence of the widespread use of the Irish language in the locality, especially as a result of the well-established Irish medium schools in the area;
  - Discussion around the issue that the use of Irish shouldn't be seen as a threat to others, but moreover as a shared opportunity to promote learning and understanding of heritage and culture;
  - Insight into how local people feel they have the right to use their indigenous language in everyday life;
  - Information on how the issue is supported by International Law, such as the European Charter for Regional Minority Languages;
  - Awareness of the difficulty for local Irish speakers to be immersed in the language in certain settings, e.g. at Irish medium schools or when communicating at home, but then feeling isolated due to the lack of Irish usage in official documentation/official recognition; and
  - Discussion on what potential mechanism could be used for populations living within wards who wished to see their wards named bilingually, e.g. public petitions. However the argument was validly made that this would be time consuming, potentially costly and a further requirement for the local population to prove their desire when a much simpler and effective mechanism is already available due to the indicator of an Irish medium school within the ward area.
- 4.19 An important point raised through the various submissions is that the proposals in support of bilingual naming do not mean that there should be a universal, region-wide renaming of all wards and/or Districts in bilingual/trilingual languages. This could obviously have major negative implications where the vast majority of residents within any given ward have an express desire that this should not occur – a point clearly made within the submissions of those not in favour of bilingual naming.
- 4.20 Instead, based on the relevant submissions and evidence provided during the visit on 18th October 2021, and having considered the rationale for bilingual naming of certain wards, I recommend that wards within the District of Belfast City that reflect the use of Irish language within their locality via the indicator that they contain an Irish medium school within their ward boundary, have official recognition of the

inclusion of Irish, alongside English, in a bilingual approach, e.g. in official documentation, electoral communications, relevant signage and digital media, etc.

- 4.21 This is based on my evaluation of the submissions received and the visit on 18th October 2021 that provide compelling evidence that where a ward contains an Irish medium school, it has, in effect, already evidenced the use of local bilingualism within the locality, therefore it would be a rational conclusion to enable bilingual naming of these wards.
- 4.22 With regard to the areas within the District of Belfast City that contain a recognised Irish medium school, supporting information was provided by Conradh na Gaeilge via Language Profiles – The Status of the Irish Language in Local Councils, 2018 - full document available at [Próifílí na gComhairlí](http://Próifílí na gComhairlí) ([peig.ie](http://peig.ie)) which details the following:

**Gaelscoileanna/Aonaid | Irish-medium Primary Schools/Units**

Bunscoil an tSléibhe Dhuibh | Ballymurphy Rd. [Ward: Ballymurphy]

Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagáin | Cliftonville Rd. [Ward: Cliftonville]

Bunscoil Mhic Reachtain | Lancaster St. [Ward: New Lodge]

Bunscoil Phobail Feirste | Shaws Rd. [Ward: Shaw's Road]

Gaelscoil an Lonnain | Falls Rd. [Ward: Beechmount]

Gaelscoil na bhFál | Iveagh Crescent [Ward: Beechmount]

Gaelscoil na Móna | Turf Lodge [Ward: Turf Lodge]

Gaelscoil Éanna | Glengormley [Ward: N/A as located in Antrim & Newtownabbey District]

Scoil na Fuiseoige | Twinbrook [Ward: Twinbrook]

**Gaeloideachas dara leibhéal | Secondary Level Irish Medium Provision**

Coláiste Feirste, Bóthar na bhFál | Falls Road [Ward: Beechmount]

- 4.23 Thus, given the above, I would recommend that the following wards within the District of Belfast City have Irish, alongside English in a bilingual format, officially recognised in their ward names:
- Ballymurphy;
  - Cliftonville;
  - New Lodge;
  - Shaw's Road (for example the official recognition would be Shaw's Road/ Bóthar Seoighe - this example is available as it was submitted by Sinn Féin during the public hearing process – the other wards listed here would need to be translated into Irish as part of a future process);
  - Beechmount;
  - Turf Lodge; and
  - Twinbrook.

- 4.24 Given that the greater District of Belfast City is made up of a divergent population, the bilingual naming of the district itself would need further consideration and consultation before a potential consensus decision could be reached. Therefore I would not recommend a bilingual naming of the district at this point.

## Section Five: **Other Issues**

- 5.1 There were certain issues raised during the written consultation and public hearing which, whilst noted and considered, are not perceived to be relevant or permissible considerations within the remit of this current review. The matters raised but which could not be considered within this current review are:

### **Alliance Party of Northern Ireland (APNI) Submission (Written Consultation):**

- 5.2 The proposed changes to the boundary between Bloomfield and Knock wards makes the boundary between Titanic and Ormiston DEAs more complicated. For clarity, the boundary should remain at North Road. This could be achieved by keeping Kerrsland Drive and Parade in Knock ward as well as both including both sides of Trolland Drive. These changes clarify the boundary as the Kerrsland are off the section of the Newtownards Road currently in Ormiston DEA;

Additionally, the proposed changes to the boundary between Ravenhill and Ormeau wards again removes a clear line of demarcation. The boundary remaining on the Ravenhill Road gives a clear boundary line between the DEAs of Botanic and Lisnasharragh; and

An additional layer on the map showing DEA boundaries would be extremely useful for political parties. It would make the impact of any changes more accessible.

- 5.3 While the above APNI submission was noted and considered, and valid arguments have been provided, some of these are not within the parameters of this review and therefore I deem that parts of this submission are not relevant to the scope of this review (The impact of ward boundary delineation on DEAs (District Electoral Areas) cannot be considered under the remit of this review. DEAs are important to council strategy but they will be subject to their own Review process immediately following the settlement of new Ward Boundaries).
- 5.4 The concern raised in 5.2 paragraph two above has been addressed as it was the subject of the recommended changes as per the similar SDLP submission.

### **Sinn Fein Representatives' Submission (Public Hearing):**

- 5.5 Query was raised as to whether the Electoral Office is going to engage in a Polling Station Scheme (that representations could be made to) due to concerns about movements within wards that would affect the distance in which people have to walk, cycle or drive to some of the polling stations. By way of an example, Lagmore Ward was highlighted, which had around 5,000 electors but the proposals will mean it's now around 4,000 electors.
- 5.6 Nearly all of the Altan electorate, on the right-hand side of Lagmore Avenue, vote in a very local polling station, but if this was moved into Twinbrook Ward, the concern relates to those electors being moved further away from their polling station. The suggestion may be to have a split ward polling station as a local solution.
- 5.7 In response, LGBC Secretariat confirmed during the public hearing that following this review, there would be a DEA Review, and the review of polling stations would be addressed as part of that or subsequent to the DEA Review.

## Section Six: **Summary of Conclusions**

### **District Boundaries: Forestside (Galwally Ward)**

- 6.1 I recommend that the Forestside area remains within the existing Galwally Ward and remains within the Lisburn & Castlereagh District area and I reaffirm the Commissioner's recommendation: *I recommend that the district boundary line should remain unchanged.* (Section 7.3.1 Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations Report, 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021).

### **District Boundaries: Harbour**

- 6.2 I am of the opinion that there is compelling evidence to move the district boundary line in relation to the Harbour and I therefore uphold the BCC submission and recommend that the district boundary line is amended to incorporate the newly extended Harbour area and to take into account the future planned Harbour extension.

### **Ward Boundaries:**

- 6.3 I recommend a revised 61 ward model for the District of Belfast City with revised ward boundaries for Blackstaff, Central, Ormeau, Stranmillis, Windsor, Cregagh and Ravenhill and the addition of the new ward boundary, 'University'. The new revised wards can be seen in Section Eight: Appendices A/B.

### **Names of District and Wards:**

- 6.4 I recommend that the wards within the District of Belfast City that contain a recognised Irish medium school (being Ballymurphy, Cliftonville, New Lodge, Shaw's Road, Beechmount, Turf Lodge and Twinbrook) have Irish, alongside English in a bilingual format, officially recognised in their ward names, e.g. in official documentation, electoral communications, relevant signage and digital media, etc.
- 6.5 Given that the greater District of Belfast City is made up of a divergent population, the bilingual naming of the district itself would need further consideration and consultation before a potential consensus decision could be reached. Therefore I would not recommend a bilingual naming of the district at this point.



## Section Seven: References and List of Submissions

Part One: List of Written Submissions (note submissions listed below relate to specific submissions relevant to the District of Belfast City and do not include general submissions)

Responses received to the consultation on the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations through the online portal after close on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2021

<b>Individual</b>	<p>Parts of the borders are very arbitrary, especially in North Belfast area. Rather than having based decisions based on shared characteristics and accessibilities (e.g. Alexandra Park area being divided on socio-economic factors), the way that area has been split between Duncairn, Fortwilliam and Waterworks seem to be based on the shape and names of streets. Duncairn near Fortwilliam/Waterworks shares the area nearby Sydenham and Ballymacarett, which have very different residential concerns.</p> <p>While some arbitrary judgement might be required to split area into different wards, unfortunately, the recommendations fail to put the emphasis on the shared concerns and characteristics of the residents, and seem to take a 'ruler and scissors' approach based on the shapes and names of streets cutting across the residential area. Perhaps making more importance of this element in future recommendations might be useful to learn more about effective policy making and improving social statistics information.</p>
<b>Individual</b>	Ba chóir glacadh leis an moolah faoi ainmneacha dhá theangach. Gaeilge agus Béarla
<b>Individual</b>	<p>This will again create more division</p> <p>More interference with something that's not broken leads to more unrest and division.</p>
<b>Individual</b>	<p>The wards should remain the same name as they currently are, I do not want to see divisive ward names which are used to separate communities, Irish and Ulster Scots names will be used to mark out territory, we already have this with sectarian graffiti and this will just add to it in a more official way.</p> <p>It will also be discriminatory to our new communities, English language is the default language used by 99% of people for communication, I see no benefit to any community in changing this.</p>
<b>Individual</b>	<p>No need for Irish or Ulster Scots naming of wards or districts.</p> <p>Do not support naming wards in bi or tri lingual fashion.</p>
<b>Individual</b>	<p>Names of wards should be kept as they are presently.</p> <p>The names of local government wards should be kept as they are presently or changed to bilingual wards with the ward name in both English and Ullans.</p>

<b>Individual</b>	<p>Is údar mór díomá dom é nach bhfuil leagan dátheangach de na toghbhardaí agus na ceantair thoghchánaíochta ar fáil. Mar Ghaeilgeoir a chaitheann mo shaol ar fad trí Ghaeilge, ba chóir go mbeadh an ceart agam níos mó rochtana a bheith agam ar an Ghaeilge, go háirithe in údaraí phoiblí. Mholfainn go láidir an moladh seo a chur san áireamh.</p> <p>Ní thuigtear dom cén fáth nach bhfuil leagan dátheangach de na toghbhardaí ar fáil. Gaeilge agus Béarla le do thoil.</p>
<b>Individual</b>	I do not agree that the names be in Irish which is a dead language or ulster scots which is also a dead language.
<b>Individual</b>	I do not agree with bilingual nor trilingual district or ward naming.
<b>Individual</b>	<p>It would be great, particularly given the large number of Irish-medium schools in this district, if the names of electoral wards and districts were made available in Irish as well as English.</p> <p>These recommendations should include an Irish translation of the placenames, given that for many of the district areas and electoral wards, these names are originally derived from Irish. Therefore, there should be no question as to the inclusion of Irish.</p>
<b>Individual</b>	<p>Street names should be available in both Irish and English.</p> <p>Given the large number of Irish Medium schools in the area, I feel it is only right that the boundaries reflect this by increasing visibility of the Irish language where possible.</p>
<b>Individual</b>	<p>I think that names should be bilingual in both English and Irish.</p> <p>As a member of the Irish speaking community, and as a mother of two children who are bilingual and attending Irish medium schools along with the high demand for and presence of Irish medium schools in my area, I feel it is very important to increase the visibility of the Irish language in the area to be more inclusive of Irish speakers.</p>
<b>Individual</b>	<p>Signage should be bilingual. The UK and NI central and local governments have a requirement to promote the Irish language under the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. This is a clear opportunity to do so.</p>
<b>Individual</b>	<p>Conaím sa cheantar comhairle seo. Creidim gur cheart go mbeadh na logainmneacha ar fad a thágann ón Ghaeilge aitheanta go hoifigiúil, faoi mar atá luaite sa Cháirt Eorpach do Theangacha Reigiunacha agus mionlaigh, cáirt atá daingnithe ag Rialtas na Breataine don Ghaeilge anseo ó 2001. Mar sin, tá dualgas idirnáisiúnta ann an Ghaeilge i logainmneacha áitiúla a aithint. Ní athrú nua é seo, ach éileamh a aithníonn bun-fhoinsí dúchasacha na logainmneacha a thágann ón Ghaeilge.</p> <p>Cuireann aitheantas oifigiúil go mór le hathbheochan na teanga, agus leis an 7000+ dalta atá ag foghlaim na teanga gach lá ar Ghaelscoil ó thuaidh.</p>

	Molaim gur cheart an obair seo a dhéanamh agus an t-aitheantas seo a dhéanamh i gcomhar leis an NI Placenames Project, QUB.
<b>Individual</b>	<p>I believe that due attention and prominence be given to the native placenames as part of this ongoing consultation on local government boundaries. The vibrancy and heritage of these ward titles can be found in an example below in Béal Feirste Ballymurphy – Baile Uí Mhurchú – (meaning – the townland that belongs to Murphy.)</p> <p>The Irish Language is the indigenous language of the island of Ireland. It is estimated that over 95% of the placenames that exist in Ireland derive from the Irish Language.</p> <p>I wish to make the case that due attention and importance is given to the native versions of placenames and due consideration is given to their inclusion in this ‘Consultation on the Provisional Recommendations of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner’</p> <p>Local Governments across the north have begun to step up to the mark in recent years in lieu of their obligations to the Irish Language. There is an opportunity that the boundaries and names of the wards reflect that progress and build upon on it.</p> <p>The European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages was ratified by the British Government on behalf of the Irish Language in 2001. This charter places a particular emphasis on the use of traditional placenames to promote visibility and tolerance by wider society.</p> <p>In fact, there is precedence under Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 for local government to provide bilingual street signage. Due diligence and attention has and should be placed on the native form of the placename.</p> <p>Challenging stereotypes and perceptions that have been carefully fostered over the past few years in relation to the language, is an obligation on everyone in this society and all actors that represent the state. There is a very meaningful opportunity within this consultation to create awareness and tolerance around the language while informing society at large of the heritage and history of our shared spaces.</p> <p>It is therefore my consideration that the possibility of bilingual titles be given to the wards upon the completion of the consultation progress to reflect the everchanging attitudes towards the Irish Language and other minority languages at an international level.</p>
<b>Individual</b>	<p>I am happy that this has come to consultation, as someone employed as a heritage coordinator and lover of local history, I believe that we have an opportunity to give more prominence to native placenames of wards, as part of this ongoing consultation on local government boundaries.</p> <p>Ballymurphy – Baile Uí Mhurchú – (meaning – the townland that belongs to Murphy.)</p>
<b>Individual</b>	<p>I believe that bilingual signage should be included in the naming conventions recommended in the report. The European Charter for</p>

	<p>Minority Languages which was ratified in 2001 by the British Government strongly recommends the protection and promotion of local place names. Especially those which derive from a native language. In 2011 the census at the time reported over 100,000 people in the north can speak Gaeilge. There is a significant section of the population that use Irish on a daily basis and would refer to the place names using the original Irish from which the English, anglicised 'versions' are derived. The original Irish names, as I'm sure you will know, have a far richer semantic meaning than their anglicised counterparts. They connect intrinsically to the landscape to which they refer to, which many local people, and visitors to different areas in this part of Ireland may find they want to understand and decipher. Thank you for taking the time to read this comment.</p>
<b>Individual</b>	<p>As there is no official recognition for placenames. It is estimated that 95% of our placenames here derive directly from Irish! Those names should be protected as a central part of our linguistic landscape.</p> <p>I request official recognition for placenames in the Belfast Area. The European Charter for Regional Minority Languages, ratified by the UK Gov for the Irish here in 2001, strongly recommends the protection and promotion of the local placenames, especially those which derive originally from the local indigenous language.</p> <p>I request the official recognition for placenames in the Belfast Area.</p>
<b>Individual</b>	<p>There is a need for official recognition for place names in the Belfast area.</p>
<b>Individual</b>	<p>In addition, I believe that due attention and prominence be given to the native placenames as part of this ongoing consultation on local government boundaries. The vibrancy and heritage of these ward titles can be found in an example below in Béal Feirste:</p> <p>Ballymurphy – Baile Uí Mhurchú – (meaning – the townland that belongs to Murphy.)</p>
<b>Individual</b>	<p>5.5 I have to date received a representation that both districts and wards should be named in Irish or bilingually with English or in a trilingual naming convention with both English and Ulster Scots. I have not included this in my provisional recommendations; I would invite further representations on this issue in the course of the wider public consultation that is now open.</p> <p>Maidir leis an phointe thuasluaite, bheinn go mór i bhfabhar comharthaíocht dhátheangach fud fad an toghcheantair. Tá sé ríthabachtach go mbeadh aitheantas oifigiúil tugtha do logainmneacha na háite seo.</p> <p>Regarding the above point, I would welcome the introduction of bilingual signage in English and Irish throughout the entire district. It is of the utmost importance that local place-names are officially and publicly recognised in both languages.</p>

<p><b>Individual</b></p>	<p>My own view is that where the origins of the name come from Irish or Scots before the names were anglicised then the original name in its Irish or Scots form should be included in bilingual form in the name of the area, by state bodies. State bodies are after all are funded by all of us and we should all be entitled to have our culture respected by such bodies.</p> <p>Indeed, many of these placenames mean absolutely nothing in English. What does Belfast or Antrim or Derry or Armagh or Strabane, or Down or Newry or Ards mean in English?</p> <p>It is only when we go to the origins of the names (in these cases, Irish) that we get to understand why the places were so named in the past.</p> <p>Belfast, for example clearly comes from Béal Feirste, Antrim from Aontroim, Derry from Doire, Armagh from Ard Mhacha, Strabane from An Strath Bán, Down from Dún, Newry from Iúr CinnTrá (an Iúraigh), Ards from Aird, etc.</p> <p>If a name has no clear Irish or Scots origin then it seems to be that it is a bit artificial to try to create a version of that name which never existed in current or historical normal parlance. However, where there is or has been a use of alternate (from English) versions of a placename in normal day parlance then that version should be accepted as legitimate, as reflective of the cultural diversity in our local communities, if we are really serious about inclusion. In the case of Derry for example, it seems to me that the name should be Derry/Doire.</p> <p>The name Belfast means nothing in English although it is obviously used today. The original name was Béal Feirste which clearly has a meaning (mouth of the Farset/sandbank) which reflects the geography of the place to original inhabitants. Béal Feirste is also a name still widely used in Belfast and throughout Ireland. The name should therefore be Belfast/Béal Ferste.</p>
<p><b>Individual</b></p>	<p>I believe a bilingual (Irish/English) naming convention should be included in the report. 2001 European Charter ratified by British Gov recommend protection and promotion of local place names especially those from a native language. Original Irish names have a far more integral connection with the local area and environment. Local people and visitors to the area in this part of Ireland may seek to investigate them further and engage more with Gaeilge. Thank you for taking the time to read this comment.</p>
<p><b>Individual</b></p>	<p>No, I would prefer if Belfast was named bi-lingualy (Irish, English). As a parent raising my children in Irish I would deeply appreciate if you could recommend that place names that derive from Irish are visible. It would be great to see more Irish and awareness around place names and this is a great opportunity to do so.</p> <p>This is really important to us as a family and hope you understand the difference this makes to us as community of speakers who are doing our best to revive the language.</p>

<b>Individual</b>	The vast majority of our placenames derive from the ancient Irish language. It gives meaning to where we live and the history that has shaped this place. It offers a glimpse into the past and informs about the nature of the area in which we live. For too long this topography has remained hidden, there is an onus to bring back the Irish placenames to provide protection to these names in the future and to facilitate the transition to a more tolerant and diverse society where the native language is respected by all.
<b>Individual</b>	I would like to see traditional Placenames protected and displayed as part of our linguistic landscape.
<b>Individual</b>	<p>I believe that the legal name of the district should be in both Irish and English. Irish language is the indigenous language that gave its name to most of the towns, townlands of the area. The use of Irish gives meaning to the Anglicized form of these place-names including the name of the district itself.</p> <p>The names of over 95% of the towns and townlands in all of the districts originate in Irish and any resistance towards the use of the Irish language in the legal name of the districts is completely irrational.</p> <p>There is a real need to address the ignorant and often bigoted objection to the use of the Irish language signage or use within our society. Those who object to the use of or visibility of Irish on the basis that this is something that belongs to Irish Republicanism is simply propagating their own misconceptions.</p> <p>The Irish language belongs to us all and the sooner it is promoted through Government and public-sector policies, including adopting the official Irish names of the Councils, the sooner it will be disassociated with Irish Republicanism in the minds of those who are too ignorant or bigoted to accept the validity of the Irish language to exist in the public eye.</p>
<b>Alliance Party of Northern Ireland</b>	<p>The proposed changes to the boundary between Bloomfield and Knock wards makes the boundary between Titanic and Ormiston DEAs more complicated. For clarity, the boundary should remain at North Road. This could be achieved by keeping Kerrsland Drive and Parade in Knock ward as well as both including both sides of Trolland Drive. These changes clarify the boundary as the Kerrsland are off the section of the Newtownards Road currently in Ormiston DEA.</p> <p>Additionally, the proposed changes to the boundary between Ravenhill and Ormeau wards again removes a clear line of demarcation. The boundary remaining on the Ravenhill Road gives a clear boundary line between the DEAs of Botanic and Lisnasharragh.</p> <p>An additional layer on the map showing DEA boundaries would be extremely useful for political parties. It would make the impact of any changes more accessible.</p>
<b>Individual</b>	Irish should be included and official recognition should be given to the place names in Belfast and the local areas

	There should be official recognition for place names within the Belfast and in my local area within the falls road, Beechmount and Springfield road areas
<b>Individual</b>	I think that there should be official recognition for Irish place names particularly given the large number of Irish medium schools within the area. People should have the right to see their language on the names of electoral wards. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages places particular emphasis on the importance of minority language visibility. It was a source of much frustration that the Commissioner's original recommendations omitted the original Irish forms of the electoral wards and districts. I would be extremely grateful if this view could be taken into account in this consultation and in future recommendations.

## **Full written submissions received and available in full at Section Eight: Appendices C&D**

Received 17<sup>th</sup> September 2021 – Submission from Belfast City Council

Received 21<sup>st</sup> September 2021 – Submission from Social Democratic and Labour Party

## **Part Two: Oral Submissions at Public Hearing (held on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021)**

### **Sinn Fein Representatives:**

- 1) Support for Forestside Retail Park to be included in the Belfast District boundary area;
- 2) Supportive of the recommended 60 wards and the given adjustments;
- 3) Query that the Electoral Office is going to engage in a Polling Station Scheme to consider the distance in which people have to walk, cycle or drive to some of the polling stations; and
- 4) Support to establish a mechanism for bilingual/trilingual place names to include Irish/other languages in the naming of districts and wards.

### **Belfast City Council Representatives:**

- 1) Request that Forestside Retail Park which currently sits within the Lisburn and Castlereagh District, be brought into the District of Belfast City; and
- 2) Extend the existing district boundary line at the Harbour to include a current and planned extension.

### **Social Democratic and Labour Party Representatives:**

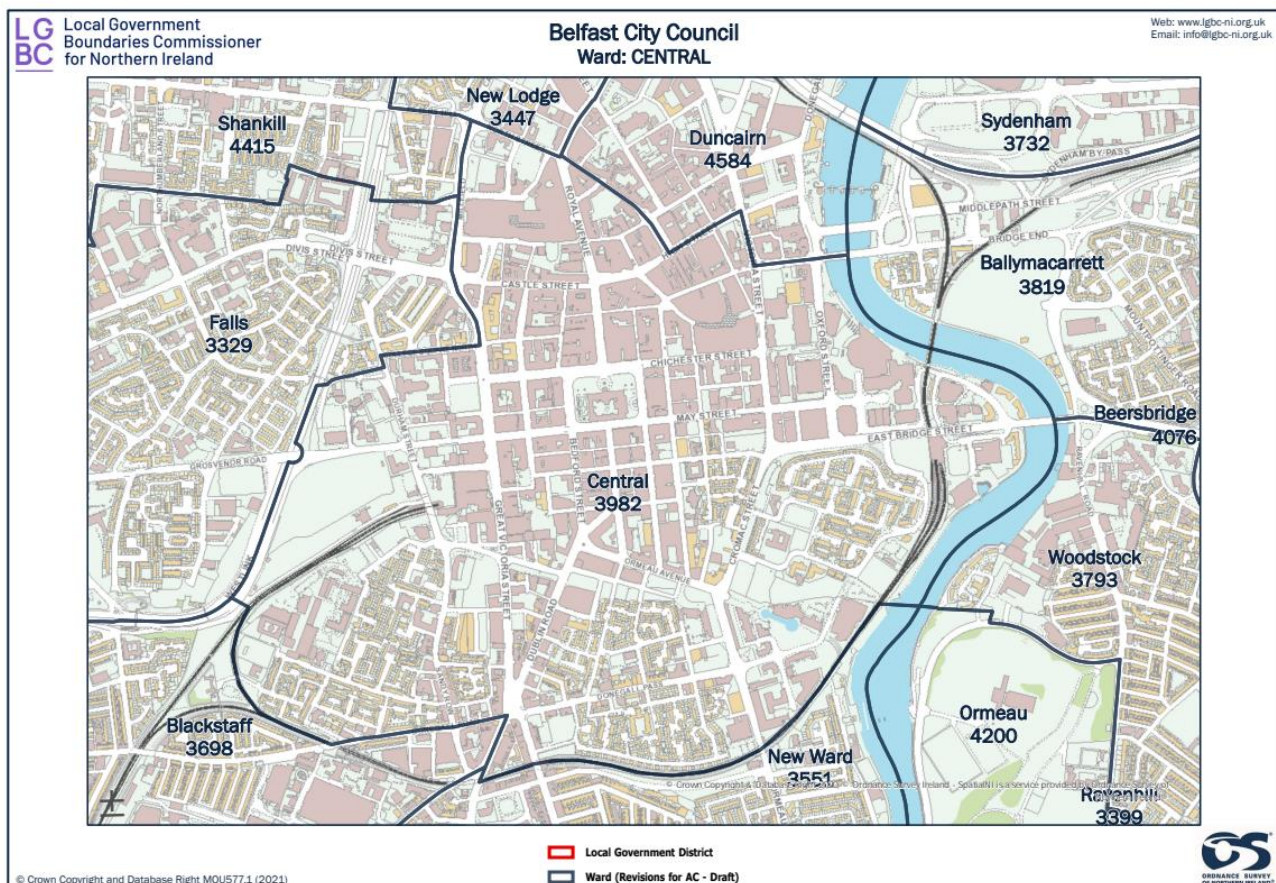
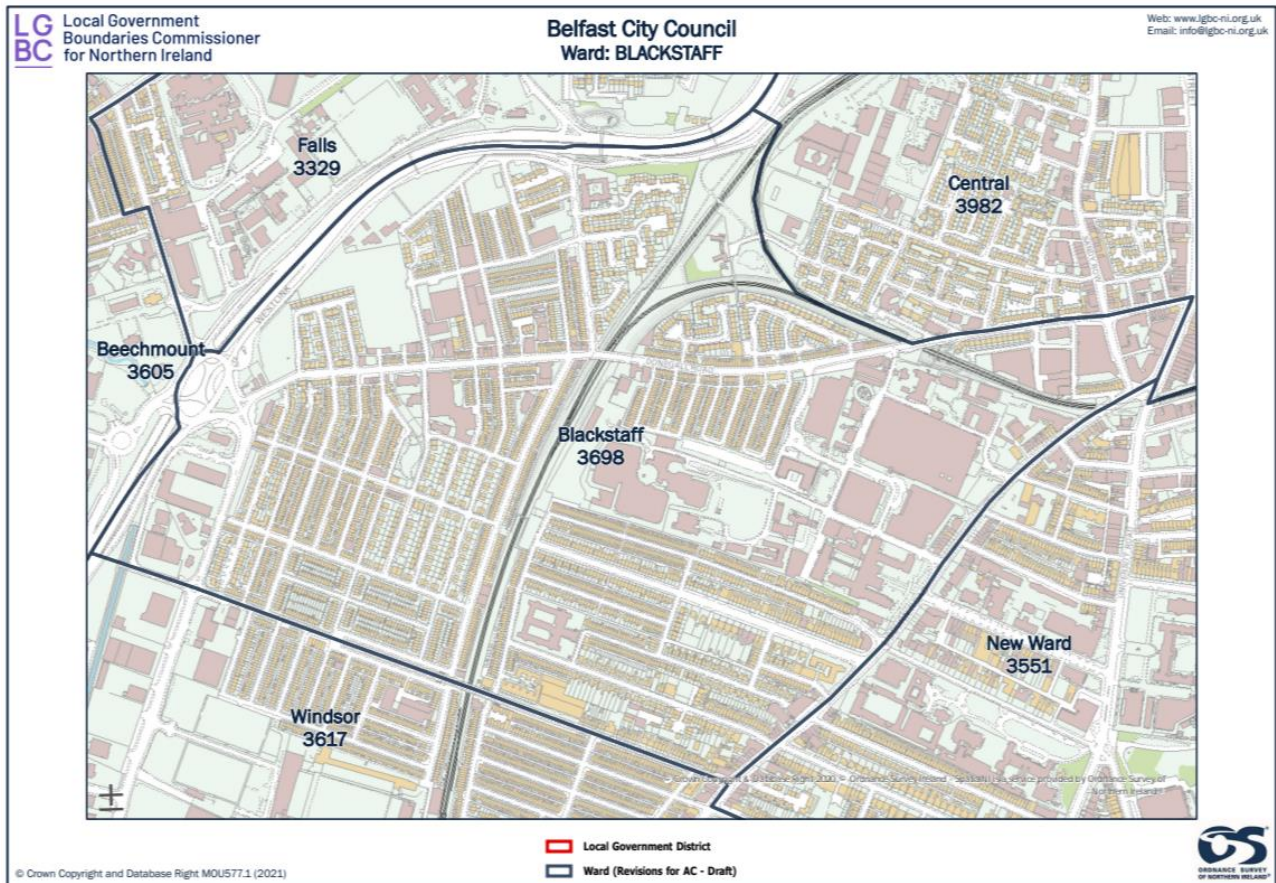
- 1) Proposal to reassess the ward boundary changes within Balmoral and Botanic DEA; and
- 2) Consideration of the Glencregagh Road area and consideration for the transfer of Drumkeen Retail Park into the Belfast District.

### **Conradh na Gaeilge Representative:**

- 1) Request that as per international law, correct forms of place names that derive from Irish and other languages such as Scots should be legally recognised;  
and
- 2) Request that the bilingual version of place names of wards or local councils are used and are visible.



## Section Eight: **Appendices A** 61 ward model (from Page 9 - Issue 1)







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Local Government District  
 Ward (Revisions for AC - Draft)



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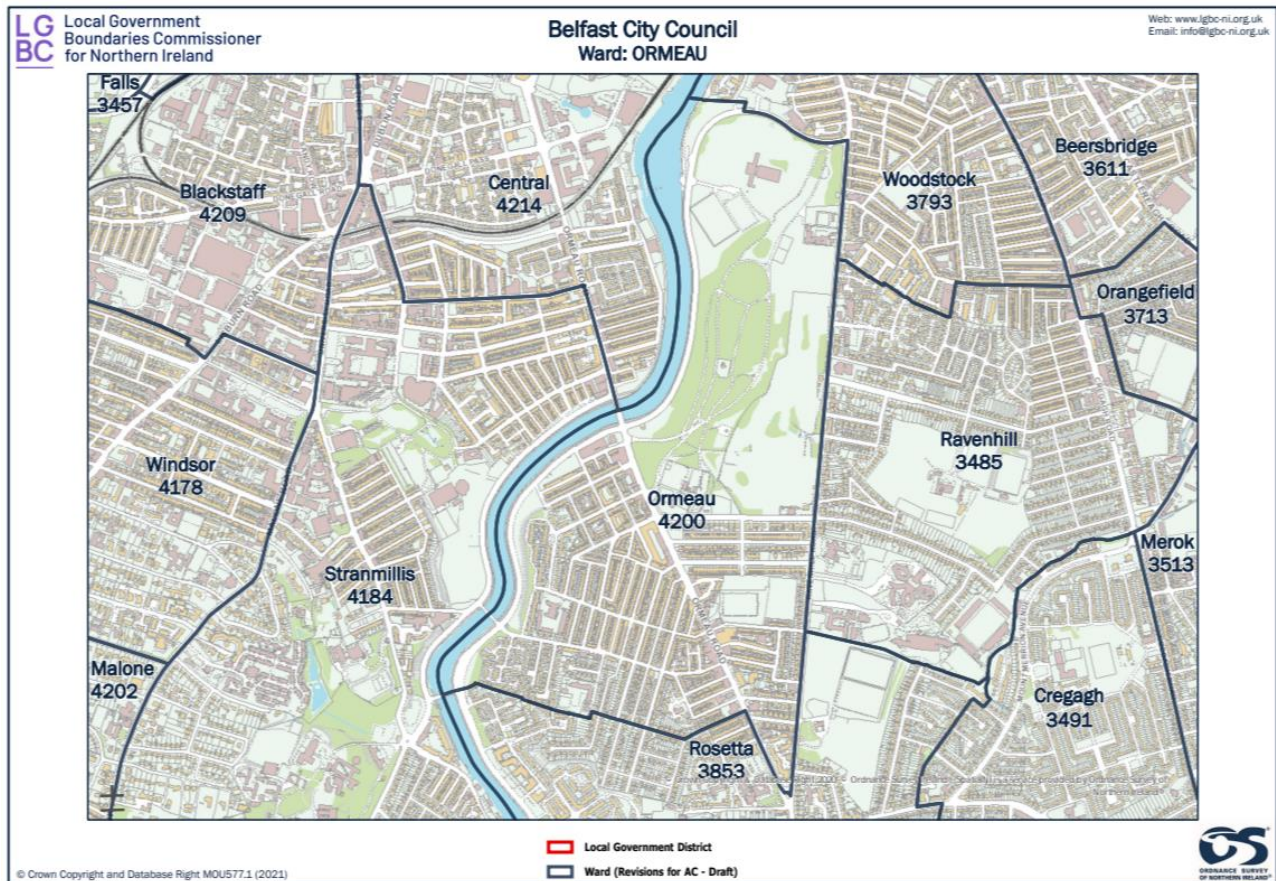
Local Government District  
 Ward (Revisions for AC - Draft)







## Section Eight: **Appendices B** (from Page 9 – Issue 1 & Issue 2 – Solution A)



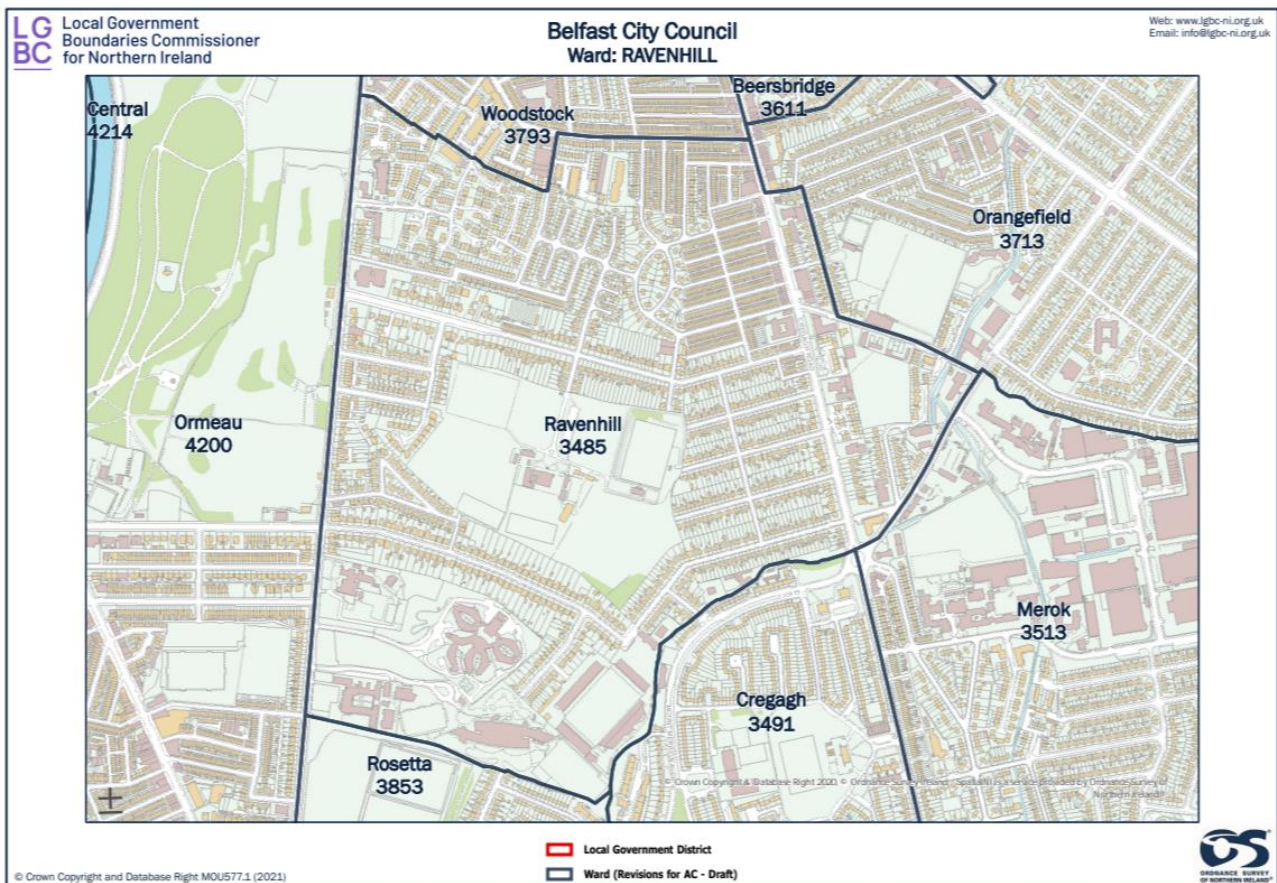
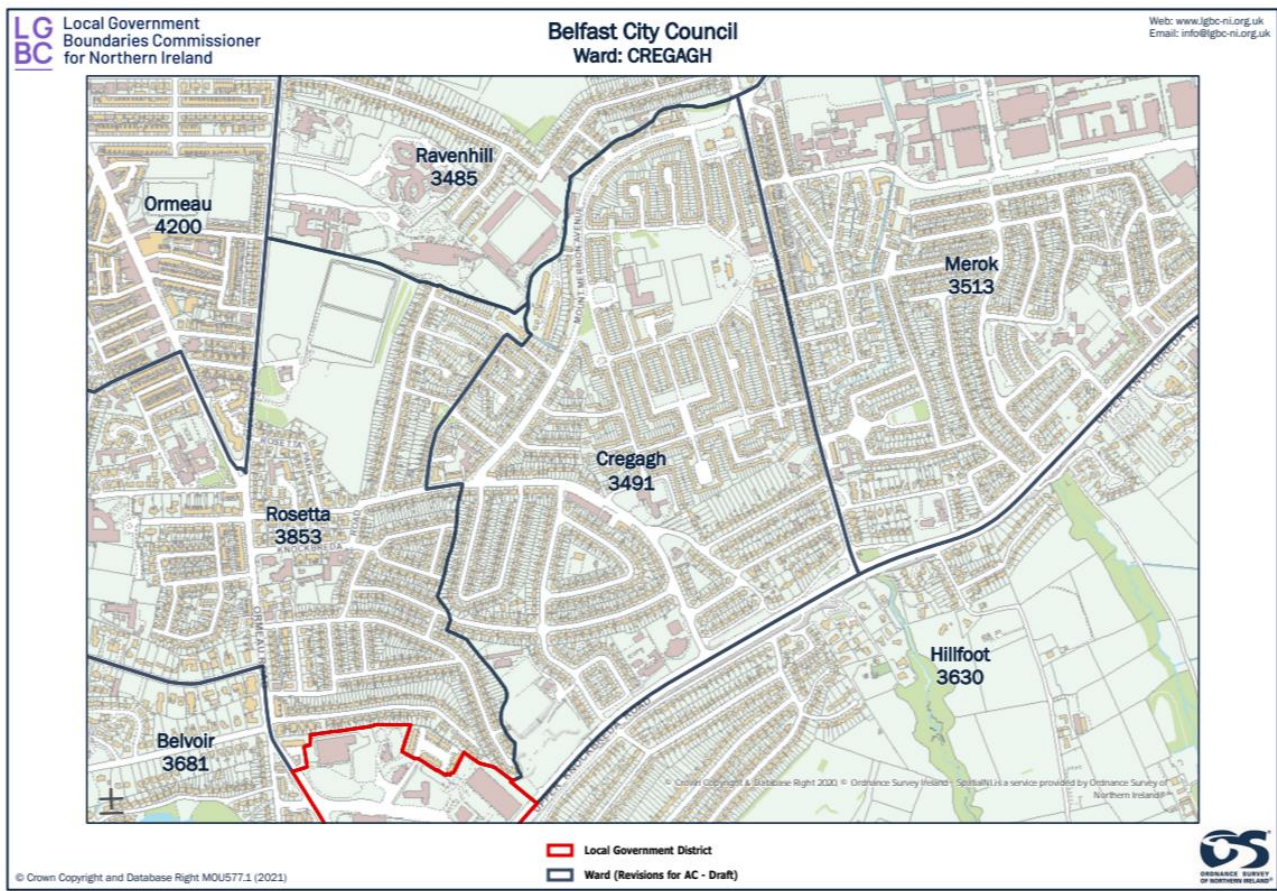
- 8.1 The above Ormeau ward map is based on the 61 ward model, if accepted.
- 8.2 The above Ormeau ward map is also relevant to the 60 ward model with revisions as a result of the submissions received that requested an alternative to moving parts of Ormeau ward into the Ravenhill ward at Park Road, North Parade and South Parade, thus above map is an alternative which moves some electorate from Cregagh ward to Ravenhill ward instead.

As per Page 9 of this report:

- 8.3 Solution (a) 61 ward model - Ravenhill reverts to the current ward boundary, as prior to this review, however with a small change at the boundary between Ormeau and Rosetta (in Hampton Drive) as required to balance the electorate count.
- 8.4 Solution (b) If additional ward recommendation is not approved, then the SDLP proposal is still accepted, and thus the boundary between Ormeau and Ravenhill reverts back to the current ward boundary, as prior to this review, but this means Ravenhill still needs additional electors which is achieved by moving the boundary between Cregagh and Ravenhill, using the stream at the back of the houses at Onslow Parade as the real-world feature for the boundary to follow (these changes are shown in the two ward maps below):



## Appendices B (from Page 9 – Issue 2 – Solution B)



## Section Eight: **Appendices C**

### **BELFAST CITY COUNCIL - SUBMISSION RE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARIES REVIEW IN NORTHERN IRELAND PROVISIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS (September 2021)**

#### **Introduction**

This submission in response to the Local Government Boundary Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations 2021-22 is made on behalf of Belfast City Council.

The Commissioner will wish to note that, as with previous decisions in relation to boundaries review in Northern Ireland, the Council have advised individual parties to submit their own responses to the recommendations, particularly in relation to proposed changes to ward boundaries.

The following Council response can be categorised into:

- (i) General Points pertaining to broad issues concerning the Commission's approach to the identification of boundaries; and
- (ii) Specific Points in relation to Belfast.

#### **(i) General points re boundary delimitation**

A number of General Points on the approach to boundary delimitation can be distilled under the headings of (a) statutory parameters and (b) additional factors.

##### **Statutory parameters**

Please note from the outset that we understand how the Commission has arrived at its recommendations, having regard to the statutory parameters it has to work within. In this respect, we understand that Belfast has to be equipped with a certain number of wards that falls within the range of 55 to 65. We appreciate that the Commission, in the desire to appear even-handed, would have a tendency to advocate the medium of this range, namely the 60 ward figure.

We also accept that a degree of interpretation has to be made in respect of what constitutes readily identifiable boundaries, in terms of the importance attached to physical features on the ground – whether they be man-made (roads, railway lines, etc.) or natural features (rivers, lakes or uplands).

To this end, we recognise that the existing urban footprint and Development Plans, such as the BUAP and Draft BMAP, can act as reference points for deciding what constitutes 'readily identifiable boundaries' for District Council areas. This is because Development Plans define settlement limits and apply land use zonings, particular those relating to green spaces between built areas, which need to be respected when defining boundaries.

Taking on board these points, the Council would refer the Commissioner back to the Final Recommendations from the previous Local Government Boundary 2 Review in Northern Ireland in 2008 which made clear those features which the Commissioner adjudged to constitute 'readily identifiable boundaries' in the Belfast City Council area. As the Council argued at that time, such 'readily identifiable boundaries' provided support for the principle of expansion of the Belfast Council Area.

## **Additional factors**

Having stated the above, we would, however, like to make the Commissioner aware of a number of additional factors that may help inform her of the need to facilitate the expansion of Belfast's council area. There are essentially two of these: -

1. Firstly, we are well aware that the definition of Local Government Districts is very much premised on achieving greater efficiency in the delivery of services, in terms of securing better value for money and quality of service.  
The definition of such boundaries must allow for the creation of a critical mass of population within the Belfast Council Area upon which to sustain and improve upon efficiency in the delivery of services. We say this for the very good reason that Belfast City Council has a disproportionate number of deprived wards in Northern Ireland.

Following the 2008 review a number of wards of similar socio-economic standing were included within the new Belfast City Council area (Twinbrook and Collin Glen, which are ranked the twentieth and the twenty first most deprived wards), making it even more imperative that the Belfast Local Government District be equipped with an optimum population size and geographical area capable of sustaining and improving services.

2. Secondly, we attach appreciable significance to the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland and its aspirations (under SPG-BMA 1) to create a thriving Belfast Metropolitan Area based on a revitalised City of Belfast. In this regard, we view Belfast as the regional driver of growth in Northern Ireland and all efforts to promote this objective in the form of bolstering its population size should be welcomed. This is especially so when it is considered that, in recent times, Belfast has endured significant population loss to surrounding districts.

### **(ii) Specific Response in relation to Belfast**

Against the background of the general points outlined above, we would like to make the following comments in respect of the existing Belfast City Council district boundary.

#### **Boundary with Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council**

The previous Local Government Boundary Review for Northern Ireland - Final Recommendations 2008 included a recommendation to place the Galwally area (including Forestside) within the new Belfast City Council district area. However, as the Commissioner will be aware, the NI Assembly ultimately approved the Final Recommendations with some amendments, one of which included the placement of the Galwally area within the new Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council area. Belfast City Council would contend that this decision by the NI Assembly disregarded the logic governing the need to have regard to the 'readily identifiable boundaries' guidelines and was in contravention of the clear recommendations of the Boundary Commissioner.

This decision, as Belfast City Council argued at the time, amounted to an irrational departure from those features that have helped to shape the delimitation of the District Boundary in this part of Belfast, namely the readily identifiable boundaries of the Outer

Ring Road and the upland topography in this area. Indeed, when viewed on a map, it graphically stands out as an aberration in boundary demarcation.

#### Forestside catchment area

There are different ways to approach the calculation of catchment area figure as it can be done on a spend or population (customer) basis, both of which could be further refined in many ways to take account of the different days, times of travel, population / household composition, socio/economic group.

The Council however believe that that the simple drive time catchment analysis could be utilised as it is based on published data and standard tools.

The appended diagram shows the extent of the catchments generated for 0- 5, 5-10, 10-15 and 15-20 minutes. For the table these polygons were used to determine the number of residential properties (using the OSNI Pointer Domestic Address from 27/07/2021).

Drivetime Catchment	Percentage of Pointer Domestic Addresses by Council Area				
	Belfast	Lisburn & Castlereagh	Ards & North Down	Newry, Mourne & Down	Antrim & Newtownabbey
0-5 mins	69.6	30.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
0-10 mins	84.3	15.6	0.1	0.0	0.0
0-15 mins	74.4	19.5	4.8	1.1	0.2
0-20 mins	62.7	20.4	8.5	2.5	5.9

There have been no major applications at Forestside that could provide an assessed catchment for the Centre although the Centre was assessed as part 4 of the Lisburn & Castlereagh Retail Capacity Study 2018. In para 6.5.4 (page 25) of that study the concluding statement is at best a simplification in terms of potential draw from outside “In the Forestside catchment, it was estimated that 50% of the comparison turnover of the centre came from outside the area; principally from the Belfast suburbs, as the shopping centre is right on the border of the Council area”. Both the average household size and available income would have to be significantly higher to sustain such a conclusion.

Belfast City Council also note that the various objections from the former Lisburn and Castlereagh councils to the Final Recommendations in 2008 in respect of this area, (whilst not being deemed sufficient at that time to change the Final Recommendations), which carry less weight now given that i) the majority of LCCC council services have since been transferred to the Island Civic Centre in Lisburn, and ii) a range of new bus routes has been introduced since 2008 (including the Glider service and the proposed Phase 2 of Glider) which extend routes into the Lisburn and Castlereagh district.

The Council would also make a case based on which authority is best placed to manage and address the wider implications of the District Centre’s operations, accessibility and servicing. The A55 Outer Ring Road is a significant physical barrier and much of the potential for improvements in accessibility with potential for better integration into the surrounding urban areas would naturally lie with Belfast City Council in relation to the geography of the site and the potential for integration with existing services.

Taking into account each of these points, and the Commissioners previous recommendations, the Council does not agree with the Provisional Recommendation at



para 7.3.1 which recommends that the Belfast “district boundary line should remain unchanged”.

Belfast City Council would therefore request that the Local Government Boundary Commissioner reassess the findings of the 2008 Local Government Boundary Review including the “Final Recommendations” report and the “Report of the Assistant Commissioner Sarah Havlin on Belfast City Council district” which clearly recommended that the Galwally area containing Forestside should reside within the Belfast district boundary based on the statutory parameters highlighted above.

### **District Boundary with regards to the Harbour Ward**

The Council also wish to highlight an issue with the district boundary as it pertains to the Harbour ward, and in particular the extension to the harbour which has resulted in part of the harbour infrastructure existing outside of the district boundary (see image below).

### **Existing Situation (area currently beyond the BCC boundary)**



The exercise of powers and responsibilities are normally linked to the LGD geography. This creates an issue for the Council not only in terms of rates but also for enforcement with regards to any event which may happen beyond our line and therefore jurisdiction. The Council would note that there is a further approved extension (planning permission at appendix 1) beyond the currently constructed area shown on the plans – see red line below. The Commissioner when considering any modification to the district boundary may wish to take this into account also.

## **Example of potential new boundary to encompass the extension of the Harbour**



### **Conclusion**

In summary, Belfast City Council do not agree with para 7.3.1 of the Provisional Recommendations report which states that the district boundary line should remain unchanged. The Council would refer to the following two issues in relation to the district boundary.

#### **Galwally Area (including Forestside)**

The Council request that the Local Government Boundary Commissioner reassess the findings of the 2008 Local Government Boundary Review including the “Final Recommendations” report and the “Report of the Assistant Commissioner Sarah Havlin on Belfast City Council district” which made clear recommendations that the Galwally area containing Forestside should reside within the Belfast district boundary.

The Council would argue that the principles upon which the 2008 recommendations were made and those features which the Commissioner determined to constitute ‘readily identifiable boundaries’ in respect of this area (namely the A55 Outer Ring Road and the upland topography in this area) have not changed.

#### **Harbour area**

The Council also wish to highlight the issue with the district boundary as it pertains to the Harbour ward, and in particular the extension to the harbour which has resulted in part of the harbour infrastructure being outside of the district boundary.

The Council would note that there is a further approved extension beyond the currently constructed area shown on the plans. The Commissioner when considering any modification to the district boundary may wish to take this into account also.

On behalf of Belfast City Council

September 2021

## Section Eight: **Appendices D**

### **South Belfast SDLP Consultation Response regarding the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations**

This submission to the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner (the Commissioner) is on behalf of the Social Democratic and Labour Party in South Belfast.

May we take this opportunity to state that we recognise the difficult and delicate task the Commissioner has been given and commend her and her colleagues for the diligent manner in which they have approached this work. We do however respectfully come to different conclusions on a number of the suggestions and so have laid out some proposals we feel would be better suited to South Belfast, factoring in the broad range of statutory and desirable parameters.

We acknowledge that a degree of interpretation has to be made in the assignment of *readily identifiable* boundaries, that is, the importance and impact of man-made or natural physical features.

We note the fact that legislation has determined that all wards should be composed of a broadly equal number of electors that is within a 10% tolerance of the district average.

The district average for Belfast is 3,837, therefore a 10% tolerance is +/- 383.7 which gives us a range of between 3,453 and 4,221 (rounded).

#### **Balmoral**

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Comparison to DAv</b>
Belvoir	3681	3681	95.9%
Finaghy	3539	4217	109.9%
Malone	3754	4202	109.5%
Musgrave	3705	4219	109.9%
Upper Malone	3707	4218	109.9%
		Total: 20537	Electors per Cllr: 4107

#### **Botanic**

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Comparison to DAv</b>
Blackstaff	4398	4209	109.6%
Central	5282	4214	109.8%
Ormeau	4200	3911	101.9%
Stranmillis	4391	4184	109.0%
Windsor	4865	4178	108.8%
		Total: 20696	Electors per Cllr: 4139

While we accept that each proposal for the above wards is within the accepted range, we would also highlight that four of the five redrawn wards generally within the extant Balmoral DEA – Finaghy, Malone, Upper Malone and Musgrave – and four of the five

wards generally within the extant Botanic DEA – Central, Blackstaff, Stranmillis and Windsor – are all within close proximity to the upper threshold, and therefore even after the review there would still be a significant democratic deficit and under-representation in these areas, not to mention little capacity for natural populations growth. We would suggest a much smaller transfer of electors between the above wards and the creation of a new ward to go alongside Central, Blackstaff, Windsor, Ormeau and Stranmillis and a new ward to go alongside Belvoir, Finaghy, Malone, Musgrave and Upper Malone to organically accommodate the changing nature of these areas, as is permitted in the legislation.

While we appreciate the need to satisfy the legislative requirement for each ward within the district of Belfast to have substantially the same number of electors, we have grave concerns that the plans to decimate a number of the wards within the existing Botanic DEA in particular will have a detrimental impact on their residents and the city more generally; the plans do not seem to take into account the unique character of these wards, the sense of community within them, or their diverse make-up, and therefore will have a negative impact if implemented.

The wards that make up the existing Botanic DEA collectively had the second lowest turnout of any in Belfast in 2019 – 44.76% – a full eight percentage points below the next lowest set of wards. This is based on the existing ward boundaries. However, the proposals will remove many of those areas from within these wards which traditionally have a higher turnout, meaning that turnout in the reshaped wards under the proposed boundaries would collapse, creating a substantial democratic deficit and effectively resulting in ‘ghost constituencies’ characterised by vast tracts of largely unpopulated areas such as the city centre. Added to this is the fact that increasingly we are seeing plans being approved and implemented for student accommodation in the most urban parts of several of the wards such as Blackstaff and Central which may overinflate the numbers of registered voters, but which will not result in a healthy turnout. It will also lead to a paucity of democratic engagement given the skewing of the wards towards this type of accommodation.

We accept that there may be a need to adjust some aspects of a number of the wards within the existing Botanic DEA, but feel that the nature of how this is proposed takes no account of the diverse communities within the five wards that currently make up Botanic, is focused primarily on the southern parts of Stranmillis and Windsor so therefore lops off entire neighbourhoods of a similar cohesive nature rather than being done in a way which is equitable across the wards, and will effectively create a shells of wards with isolated and unconnected neighbourhoods, skewing the wards away from the current age, race, religious, economic and social diversity that they currently enjoy. Indeed, collectively Central, Blackstaff, Windsor, Ormeau and Stranmillis form the most diverse area on the island of Ireland – this is at risk under these plans.

In particular, we believe that too much of the Windsor and Stranmillis wards are being transferred to Malone – while we accept that some move across may be required and support this, the wholesale lifting of entire sections of this part of the community across is too focused on this one area – to cleave the patch between Hillside Drive and Deramore Park South, and the area around the Marlborough Park South, Central and North, focuses too much change on one specific area of Stranmillis and Windsor, and will result in a seismic impact on the demographic nature of these wards, not to mention on the residents

of these areas themselves. For example, the Holyland area which has no link with Stranmillis, is being brought within the ward to reduce the number of electors within the current Central ward, while parts of Stranmillis itself are being taken out of the ward altogether, unnecessarily splitting natural communities. Likewise, parts of Blackstaff are being moved into Windsor, only for communities at the south end of Windsor to be cut off from neighbouring streets and moved into Malone.

With regard to the proposed transfer of electors from Ormeau to Ravenhill, the location of this transfer is not appropriate – to carve up streets such as Park Road, North Parade, South Parade and the Ravenhill Road will cause confusion in those communities, split streets apart and create an issue of streets being arbitrarily divided between wards, especially as it will mean one part of a street falling under East Belfast for council administrative purposes, and another falling under South Belfast. If electors need to be transferred from Ormeau, we believe this could be done in a much less detrimental way in locations such as the northerly sections of Ailesbury Road and Florenceville Avenue (where the anomaly of the ward boundary between Ormeau and Rosetta running up the middle of the road could actually be rectified) or in the streets around Hampton Drive, which is a discrete community already contiguous to the Rosetta ward. Streets such as Knockeden Park and adjacent streets could then be moved from Rosetta to Ravenhill to satisfy the requirements for the number of electors in those respective wards.

Rather than responding to the population growth of Central, Blackstaff, Windsor, Ormeau and Stranmillis, which will largely be focused on student and apartment living in the urban parts of the northernmost areas of the wards around the city centre and university area, by jettisoning residential areas with diverse communities, which would ultimately result in wards being starved of the character that they currently enjoy and will see a collapse in democratic engagement and turnout, we would advocate for a much smaller transfer of electors, and for the location of transfers to be reconsidered, and the creation of a new ward to go alongside Central, Blackstaff, Windsor, Ormeau and Stranmillis within the general area of the extant Botanic DEA and a new ward to go alongside Belvoir, Finaghy, Malone, Musgrave and Upper Malone within the general area of the extant Balmoral DEA to organically accommodate the changing nature of these areas and keep communities together, as is permitted in the legislation.

While the overriding purpose of this review is to ensure that there is equality of representation for electors, to do this in a way which is purely focused on numbers without taking into account the character of the communities which make up a Central, Blackstaff, Windsor, Ormeau and Stranmillis and the unique set of circumstances within them (a combination of a city centre, inner-city communities and suburbs, alongside the increase in student and apartment-based accommodation) risks creating a situation which will damage these areas and their ability to make their voices heard within the democratic structures of the city.

Social Democratic and Labour Party

21st September 2021

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Subject:	<b>Request from Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland</b>
Date:	18th February, 2022
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor / Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officers:	John Walsh, City Solicitor / Director of Legal and Civic Services, Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
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"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To ask the Committee to consider a letter from the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland. The letter contains a request for the Council to make a financial contribution to a centenary event to be held by the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland in Belfast on 28th May, 2022.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	The Committee is recommended to consider the attached letter and request.

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>The Deputy Chief Executive has received a letter from the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, a copy of which is attached. The letter states that the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland is planning a major event in Belfast on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2022.</p>
3.2	<p>The letter includes a request for the Council to consider contributing £15,000 towards this event. The letter states that the Council's contribution will be specifically used to help ease congestion, promote local shopping, enhance the experience of those attending and minimise inconvenience to local residents.</p>
3.3	<p>The Committee is asked to consider this letter and request.</p>
	<p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p>
3.4	<p>The requested amount is £15,000. The request falls within the Council's discretionary expenditure policy however Members are asked to note that there is no established budget for this.</p>
3.5	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>Any decision to accede to the request would be subject to the Council's screening processes.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Document Attached</b>
	<p>Letter from the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland.</p>



Document is Restricted

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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee</b>
<b>Date:</b>	18 February, 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Walsh, City Solicitor / Director of Legal & Civic Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Sandra Robinson, Protocol and Public Affairs Manager

### Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? Yes ☐ No ☒

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

☐  
☐  
☐  
☐

### Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? Yes ☒ No ☐

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. outline a proposed programme of events to be organised by Council to mark HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee; and</li> <li>ii. consider a request for funding for events to be organised by local communities across the city which was included in the Motion referred to the Committee following the July 2021 Council meeting.</li> </ul>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is requested to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. approve the proposed programme of events to be organised by the Council over the bank holiday weekend of Thursday 2nd to Sunday 5th June 2022, inclusive;</li> <li>ii. approve costs in the region of £35,000- £40,000 to deliver this programme; and</li> </ul>

	<p>iii. agree funding of £50,000-£100,000 for events to take place in local communities across the city over the Platinum Jubilee weekend. This fund will be administered by the Community Foundation NI, with a maximum of £1,000 for any group.</p>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
	<p><b>Background</b></p> <p>3.1 Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend will take place from Thursday 2nd June to Sunday 5th June, inclusive. Members may wish to note that the May Bank Holiday weekend at the end of that month will be moved to Thursday 2nd June and that an additional bank holiday will be held on Friday 3rd June, culminating in a four-day weekend.</p> <p>3.2 There will be a number of main themes to mark the Platinum Jubilee, including a focus on community, inter-generational activity and new communities. A specially designed Jubilee emblem in purple has been selected from entries to be used for official events and across digital and social media.</p> <p><b><u>Proposed Programme of Events</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Thursday 2nd June</u></b></p> <p>3.3 Belfast City Council has been invited to join other local authorities, amongst others, in lighting a Jubilee Beacon. The Spring Market will be held in the grounds of City Hall during the Platinum Jubilee weekend and, therefore, an alternative location will be identified if the lighting of a beacon is approved.</p> <p><b><u>Friday 3rd June</u></b></p> <p>3.4 Themed Tea Dances will be held in City Hall during the afternoon and one retro dance in the evening, reviving styles and fashion of the time.</p> <p><b><u>Saturday 4th June</u></b></p> <p>3.5 Create a programme entitled "Belfast 1952" and transform the venue at 2 Royal Avenue into Belfast of the 1950's. This event will showcase some of city's best local talent through photography, film, fashion, songs, and storytelling by taking a creative look at how lives were lived during that period. The programme of activities will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tales of the city – inter-generational workshops and story-telling events related to families growing up in Belfast in the 1950's. The café menu will be adapted and take on a 1950's theme.</li> <li>• Songs of the city - Workshops and performances on music in the 1950's</li> <li>• Photography Exhibition of the city in the 1950's</li> <li>• Film reel telling the story of the city from 1950's through to the present day.</li> </ul>

<p>3.6</p>	<p><b><u>Sunday 5th June</u></b></p> <p>Host a Big Community Lunch, which is a key element of the Platinum Jubilee weekend, with a focus on encouraging celebration of connections to bring the Jubilee into the heart of local communities. A Big Community Lunch could be hosted at City Hall with the guest list focussing on the main themes whilst encouraging communities in the city who wish to join in by holding their own events.</p> <p>Illumination of City Hall in purple, as the chosen colour for the Jubilee emblem and programme of activities, bringing the weekend to a close.</p> <p>Members are also advised that a service to mark HM The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee will be held in St Anne’s Cathedral on Sunday, 5 June at 3.30 p.m.</p> <p><b><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>3.7 All events will take equality and good relations implications into account.</p> <p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>3.8 The cost of delivering the council’s programme of events is estimated between £35,000-£40,000 and will be met from the existing civic hospitality budget if approved.</p> <p>An additional budget of up to £100,000 would be required to fund events to take place in local communities across the City.</p>
<p><b>4.0</b></p>	<p><b>Documents Attached</b></p>
	<p>None</p>

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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Minutes of Meeting of Shared City Partnership</b>
<b>Date:</b>	18th February, 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Ryan Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Nicola Lane, Good Relations Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
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"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to bring to the Committee's attention the key issues discussed at the Shared City Partnership meeting held on 7th February 2022 and to present its recommendations for approval.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is requested to approve the minutes and the recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 7th February, including:</p> <p><b>PEACE IV</b></p> <p><b><u>Secretariat</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To stand down the Thematic Steering Groups, with all operational matters to be considered by the PEACE IV Programme Board; and</li> <li>To note the concern of the Partnership Members at the lack of co-operation from the SEUPB regarding the proposed project modifications and its lack of flexibility in terms of delivery and extensions.</li> </ul>

### **Shared Spaces and Services**

- To extend the Interpretative Panels contract with Mediation NI to June 2022 and agree delivery amendments;
- To agree in principle a further delivery modification request to increase the tolerance for contact hours to 60% (7 hours), to engage with participants in schools through a “self-directed learning” approach and field trips and facilitated walks, as necessary; and
- To note that the approvals will be subject to the agreement of the SEUPB.

### **Building Positive Relations**

#### **BPR1-NIHE**

- To diversify and extend the participant cohort for the South Belfast Network to include participants from the BAME and PUL communities; and
- To extend the recruitment areas across South and North Belfast to enhance participant uptake.

#### **BPR2 -Creative Communities**

- To condense delivery via residential activity facilitated by Corrymeela and the STA approach with Radius Housing subject to SEUPB approval.

#### **BPR4 - Belfast and the World**

- To realign the budget to enable extended delivery and staffing to April, 22.

#### **BPR6 - St. Comgalls**

- To agree to a presentation on the digital and education resources associated with St Comgalls project by Copius, and their partner, Redhead, and;
- To amend the Study Visit from ROI to NI due to Covid 19 concerns and impacts, subject to SEUPB approval.

### **Good Relations**

- That the Good Relations Manager engages with the Youth Coordinator on their return, to explore ways in which the Partnership can engage with the Youth Council



	<p>productively in the current context which will ensure the views of young people are taken on board;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That a further report be brought back to the Partnership on the outcome of those discussions;</li> <li>• that the status of the nominations of Youth Champions from each political party be confirmed to ensure that views of young people on good relations can be shared;</li> <li>• To approve the response to the consultation on the draft Refugee Integration Strategy for NI 2021-2026 produced by The Executive Office;</li> <li>• To note that the response will be forwarded to The Executive Office in draft, pending Council approval, to ensure timely submission for the deadline of 20th February 2022; and</li> <li>• To note the virtual Briefing Session on Issues facing Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belfast, led by The Red Cross, on 22nd February 2022 from 10 a.m. – 12 noon and that the relevant Council Officers will be invited to attend the briefing to ensure maximum impact across delivery of Council services.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p><b><u>Key Issues</u></b></p> <p>The Shared City Partnership is a Working Group of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, consisting of Elected members and representatives from various sectors across the city. The minutes from the Partnership are brought before the Committee for approval on a monthly basis.</p>
3.2	<p>The key issues on the agenda at the February meeting were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PEACE IV <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Update on PEACE IV Secretariat</li> <li>➤ Update on PEACE IV CYP Theme</li> <li>➤ Update on PEACE IV SSS Theme</li> <li>➤ Update on PEACE IV BPR Theme</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Update on DCGRP Action Plan 21/22</li> <li>• Response to Draft Refugee Integration Strategy for NI 2021-2026</li> <li>• Upcoming Events</li> </ul>

3.3	More details regarding the above issues and recommendations are included in the minutes of the meeting which are attached at Appendix 1.
3.4	<p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>All financial implications are covered through existing budgets.</p>
3.5	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>The recommendations of the Partnership promote the work of the Council in promoting good relations and will enhance equality and good relations impacts.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	<p>Appendix 1 - Minutes of Partnership meeting of 7th February</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Draft Response to the Draft Refugee Integration Strategy for NI 2021-2026</p>

**SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP**

**MONDAY 7th FEBRUARY, 2022**

**MEETING OF SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP  
HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Members present: Councillor Kyle (Chairperson);  
Councillors Lyons and O'Hara.

External Members: Ms. B. Arthurs, Community and Voluntary Sector;  
Miss. G. Duggan, Belfast City Centre Management;  
Mrs. J. Hawthorne, Northern Ireland Housing Executive;  
Ms. J. Irwin, Community Relations Council;  
Ms. K. Jardine, Faith Sector;  
Mr. P. Mackel, Belfast and District Trades Union Council;  
Ms. G. Mornhinweg, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust;  
Mr. M. McBride, Education Authority;  
Mr. I. McLaughlin, Community and Voluntary Sector;  
Superintendent Pollock, PSNI; and  
Ms. Ann Marie White, British Red Cross.

In attendance: Ms. K. Gilliland, Neighbourhood Services Manager;  
Ms. N. Lane, Good Relations Manager;  
Ms. D. McKinney, PEACE IV Programme Manager; and  
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

**Apologies**

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Councillor McMullan and also from Ms. A. Roberts and Ms. A. Tohill.

**Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 17th January 2022 were taken as read and signed as correct.

**Declarations of Interest**

Mrs. B. Arthurs declared an interest in item 2 (d), namely, Peace IV Updates – update on BPR Theme, in that she was an employee of the Forward South Partnership, which acts as the delivery agent for one of the Peace IV projects.

**Peace IV Update Reports**

**Secretariat Update**

The PEACE IV Programme Manager provided the Members with an update in respect of the Secretariat activity associated with the implementation of the Peace IV Local Action Plan.

The Members were advised that, as detailed in the PEACE IV Thematic reports, the Projects were at varying stages of implementation. Project activity continued to be closely monitored with a number of the projects remaining as high risk.

The officer advised that resource issues were continuing to affect both the delivery partners and projects. The Programme Manager for BPR1 and Project Officer within BPR2 had both recently resigned and staff resources were increasingly becoming a concern across the entire programme.

In addition, the need for project modifications and flexibility in delivery and extensions was ongoing due to impact of Covid 19 restrictions. Contract extensions and addendums for projects had been progressed as required. The Members were asked to note that contracts that contained an option to extend did not require any further additional approval. Any further extension requests had been included in the relevant Thematic Updates.

The officer advised that discussions with the SEUPB regarding flexibility and modifications for projects was ongoing, although preliminary enquiries on forthcoming modifications indicated that the SEUPB was not likely to be supportive of the requested changes. She continued that, given the current circumstances and timeframe of the programme, the Programme Board had agreed that the Thematic Chairs would meet to consider options and mitigations and that a further report would be presented to the Partnerships for its consideration. The officer highlighted that the Members should note that escalation of the issues might be necessary.

In terms of Governance, the Peace Programme Manager reminded the Members that meetings at a Thematic Steering Group (TSG) level had paused in March 2020 due to the priority response to the pandemic, government restrictions and resource pressures. During this time the role of the TSGs to oversee the delivery of the PEACE IV Local Action Plan at an operational level had been picked up by the PEACE IV Programme Board, with recommendations being made directly to the Shared City Partnership. This amended governance approach had worked effectively and had enabled prompt decision making and management of the programme. Given the current stage of implementation, in that all projects were now fully developed and that all operational matters were overseen by the PEACE IV Programme Board, the Programme Board was of the view that the Terms of Reference of the TSG had run its course and there was limited value in recommencing the meetings. As such, it was proposed that the Thematic Steering Groups be stood down and that all operational matters would be considered by the PEACE IV Programme Board. The Chairs of the TSG would continue as lead officers for each theme and report to the Programme Board accordingly. The Members were advised that the proposed change in Governance would also be discussed and agreed by Audit, Governance and Risk Services.

The Peace Programme Manager advised that, following a detailed forecasting exercise undertaken in December 2021, preliminary indications of an underspend in project activity was now estimated at £929K. Although, contractual obligations for delivery partners were still to be confirmed with the Legal Services. Given the recent developments and emerging issues, it was recommended that further analysis be conducted and the various options explored to utilise the underspend (within existing projects or assigned across themes). A further report would be submitted in due course for consideration, prior to submission to the SEUPB.

The Members were asked to note that planning for the delivery of the next Culture Café which would focus on the Jewish Community was underway, this event was scheduled to be held on 16th February and an invitation would be issued in due course.

The Members were advised that the Programme Support Assistant (PSA) had recently been recruited to the post of Project Development Officer (PDO), effective from 24th January. A recruitment exercise to fill the vacant PSA post was currently underway, however, resource pressures within the PEACE IV team continued.

The Members noted that, as previously reported, the total spend of the programme to date up to Period 28 (October 21) was £5,683,940. The SEUPB had now reimbursed all Period 26 claims and verification of Period 27 and 28 claims had commenced. The compilation of claims for Period 29 was being progressed and it would be submitted to the SEUPB by 28th February 2022.

Several of the Members expressed concern and disappointment at the lack of co-operation from the SEUPB regarding the proposed modifications and its lack of understanding as to why these were necessary, given the ongoing situation with the pandemic. During discussion several of the Members suggested that the SEUPB's approach and the seriousness of the implications of such needed to be urgently flagged with the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and with the Council's Corporate Management Team.

A number of Members thanked the Peace IV staff for their ongoing commitment during what had been a very difficult period.

The Partnership recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it:

- agrees to stand down the Thematic Steering Groups with all operational matters to be considered by the PEACE IV Programme Board; and
- notes the concern of the Partnership Members at the lack of co-operation from the SEUPB regarding the proposed project modifications and its lack of flexibility in terms of delivery and extensions.

### **Children and Young People (CYP Update)**

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**To provide the Shared City Partnership (SCP) with a progress report in respect of the Children and Young People's (CYP) theme of the PEACE IV Local Action Plan.**

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

**The Partnership is requested to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that they note the contents of the report.**

#### **3.0 Main report**

**Project Updates**

### 3.1 CYP 1 – Tech Connects

#### GIGA Training (Afterschool's and Digital Arts Academies (Tech Camps))

Members are requested to note that current recruitment for February 2022 programmes stands between 40 -50 and will be delivered face to face, with social distancing and additional COVID prevention measures in place.

GIGA have achieved the following in relation to set targets, programme ends September 2022.

Age Group	Target	Completed to Date	Balance
6-11Year Olds:	399	203	196 Remaining
12-16Year Olds:	460	110	350 Remaining
Total	859	313*	546 Remaining

\*Figures adjusted to reflect attrition and non-completion of previous cohorts.

#### Belfast Metropolitan College (Digital Insights Programme) (17- 24 yr. olds)

The Delivery partner has reported that some schools have cut afterschool provision for a period, to reduce COVID transmission. This is impacting delivery of programmes that operate in school premises on an afterschool basis.

Integrated schools involved in the project have requested content to be delivered during school time. However, SEUPB has advised they do not support this delivery approach. Further discussions with SEUPB are ongoing. Belfast Metropolitan College is exploring other potential options with the delivery partner BYTES. The Secretariat will further progress as required, although no approval is required at present.

An additional complexity of this programme is that the age category is a hard-to-reach group (17–24-year olds). Therefore, if the integrated school registrations cannot be delivered then there is potential risk for a reduction in participants currently registered.

<i>Total</i>	<i>49 from a target of 160</i>	<i>111 remaining (contract ends Sept 22)</i>
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### CYP 2 - Playing our Part in the City

Participant groups have now completed group sessions and certificates of completion have been issued via post to participants and parents. Analysis of monitoring and valuation figures illustrate that 122 parents have completed the programme, from a target of 100. Evidence of participation of 656 young people has been received, although the achievement of the required

contact hours indicates that approximately 618 will have completed the programme, from a target of 640. Discussions with SEUPB to confirm final completion numbers are progressing. The Delivery Agent is currently exploring dates for the closure event, with Morrow to compile a final montage of all project clips to show at the event.

<i><b>Total</b></i>	<i><b>618 from a target of 640</b></i>	<i><b>0 remaining Completed Dec 21</b></i>
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### **CYP3 – On the Right Track – Sports and Personal Change elements**

The Delivery Agent of the accredited training element the programme (Active Communities Network – ACN), has highlighted the need for additional costs, including management costs, OCN costs and facilitator costs to cover the extension period. Approximate costs submitted by the delivery agent amount to £33,000. The Project Officer is identifying areas within the budget that are underspent, to enable a potential uplift of the contract. ACN has confirmed virtual delivery of the OCN is a viable delivery option This is to reduce the risk of non-delivery of face-to-face training.

Members should note that a request to enable participants (approx. 40-50 young people) who completed the OCN training to be marked as completed has been agreed by the Programme Board, however this is subject to SEUPB approval.

Members are also reminded of the high risk associated with this programme given the target remains 1800 and there is no further response from SEUPB on the request to reduce the target.

There is also an additional query with regards to the use of an SLA for groups posing a potential concern. This is currently being escalated within SEUPB and no approvals are required at present.

<i><b>Total</b></i>	<i><b>647 from a target of 1800</b></i>	<i><b>1153 remaining</b></i>
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### **Personal Change**

Participants from the final cohort have now completed the programme. Final monitoring and evaluation data including exit surveys and attendance records are to be submitted to confirm the level of achievement.

Morrow communications is compiling all filmed clips from the programme into a short film which Extern will showcase at the closure event. Invitations to the event will be issued to members once a date has been agreed.

<i><b>Total</b></i>	<i><b>42 from a target of 42</b></i>	<i><b>0 remaining – due to finish Dec 21</b></i>
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#### **CYP 4 – Cooperation Ireland (Young Advocates)**

The participant target for Cooperation Ireland to achieve is 80 young people, at present 87 registrations have been received. The over-recruitment is to mitigate the risk of attrition. Delivery is progressing well with all 40 young people in the final cohort having completed the required 60 hours cross community contact time.

The Young Advocates Programme Committee is finalising details to present their campaign to councillor's and community safety officials. Content will be sharing the campaign project idea and an animated sexual harassment awareness animation video.

The Delivery Agent is proposing to combine the final closure event with the young people's conference, which is a key target within the original contract.

<b>Total</b>	<b>87 from a target of 80</b>	<b>0 remaining - Due to finish April 22</b>
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#### **CYP 5 – NIHE Local Area Network Partner Delivery**

*NIHE has progressed an urgent recruitment exercise to replace the Programme Manager who recently resigned, with the new officer due to take up the role on 1 February 2022. This key role oversees both CYP and BPR themes under the PEACE IV local action plan.*

*The SLA approach approved by members for NIHE participant groups is still awaiting SEUPB approval. SEUPB has raised additional queries and a further meeting, with the Financial Control Unit and Joint Secretariat to escalate this, has been requested. Members should note the delay in approval is impacting recruitment and participation for both CYP and BPR. The SLA ensures that costs can be reimbursed without the need for additional layers of procurement and submission of contracts of employment for each youth worker / volunteer involved in the programme.*

*A response from SEUPB on the request to reduce the high targets associated with the Project is yet to be received. SEUPB is considering the approval approach.*

<b>Total</b>	<b>143 from a target of 900</b>	<b>757 remaining (Contract ends Sept 22)</b>
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#### **Financial and Resource Implications**

To date all PEACE IV costs for the CYP Theme totalling £1.29m has been reimbursed by SEUPB. As previously reported, reimbursement of Claims for Periods 27 and 28 valued at £199K is outstanding, although SEUPB vouching of the Period 27 claim has commenced.



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

**The draft plan has been equality screened and discussed at the Equality Consultative Forum on 13 May 2015. The Equality Consultative Forum was further consulted on 18 Nov 2020.”**

The Partnership recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it note the report and the associated appendices.

### **Shared Spaces and Services (SSS Update)**

The Programme Manager provided an update on the progress made to date in respect of the SSS theme, within the Peace IV Local Action Plan. She advised that implementation of the Shared Space and Services theme was progressing and drew the Members' attention to the risks associated with delivery which had been attached as an appendix.

She then referred specifically to the Capital Works at the Forth Meadow Community Greenway.

**Springfield Dam** – The naming process for the Springfield Dam bridge would be progressed following completion of the current naming process of the Divis Path.

**PEACE IV Network Scheme – Capital Works** - The anticipated completion of works at Section 1 Glencairn remained on schedule for late February 2022. The naming of the lighting beacons had been further considered by the Capital Project Board, who had proposed that the names reflect the Council Asset name or the location name that it was best known (e.g., Springfield Dam / Glencairn Park etc.) Following assessment of the PQQ responses for the public art pieces, 6 artists had been provisionally short listed. Clarification points on insurance were currently being addressed. The artists would then be invited to tender for the art pieces.

**Social Value Clause** – officers were liaising with the contractor on implementation of the Social Value Clause and providing guidance on the fundraising and community aspects of the contract.

In regard to the other Programmes:

- **Shared History, Heritage and Identity Content / Narratives for Shared Space**

The Project Lead continued to engage and facilitate discussion groups through Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4 and had linked with GVRT to establish discussion with groups in the Village / Donegall Road / Roden Street areas in Section 5.

- **Programming**

Implementation of the programming aspects was progressing.

- **Shared History, Heritage and Identity Content / Narratives for Shared Space**

Delivery of the project continued to be affected by the impact of Covid 19. The Members were requested to agree a further 3-month extension to the Mediation NI

contract, with the option for an additional 3 months, to assist with the achievement of targets.

The Members were also requested to agree, in principle, a further delivery modification request to increase the tolerance for contact hours to 60% (thereby reducing the contact hours from 12 to 7 hours), to engage with participants in schools through a 'self-directed learning' approach for field trips and facilitated walks, as necessary. This approval would be subject to the agreement of the SEUPB.

- **Shared Space Volunteer Training**

Training of the second group of walking and cycle leads was progressing well. The group was also working closely with the first group on the organised cycles / walks. A promotional video clip had been circulated via the Council's social media channels during late January.

- **Dialogue and Engagement Project (young people, residents and BME groups)**

Officers were currently awaiting the submission of the final Dialogue and Engagement report from MDL which was due at the end of January 2022. The Members noted that they would be advised of the recommendations and next steps contained within the report in due course.

- **Governance / Management Model**

Viatac Limited had submitted its draft interim report which outlined the approach to date and the next stages in developing suggested governance model/s. The Members were advised that comments on the interim report were welcome and that these would be submitted to the delivery agent. The next key stages involved in person workshops and cross community discussions on the extent of the governance structure. The delivery agent would be visiting Belfast from 14th - 17th February 2022.

- **Youth Engagement and Civic Education**

Youth Link NI had confirmed details of the two staff that would co-ordinate the project and engage with the young people. The delivery partner had commenced engagement with local youth organisations and linking up with local youth / community safety forums. Recruitment was currently ongoing with training still anticipated to begin in February 2022. The Members noted that regular update meetings had been scheduled.

- **Modular Building**

The modular building was in the process of being included as a bookable facility, through the Council's Outdoor Leisure Department booking process. Opening of the facility would be in line with current COVID restrictions, guidelines, and recommendations.

- **SSS Activities and Animation Programme Co-ordinator**

Following a project initiation meeting, ArtsEkta had submitted the consultation plan which was due to commence imminently. The consultation would inform the programme of events / activities along the Greenway. It was anticipated that the first

event would take place in March 2022. The Members were advised that regular monthly up-date meetings had been scheduled and agreed.

The Partnership was advised that the SEUPB had reimbursed the Period 26 Claim (£50,171) and the reimbursement of claims up to Period 25 was £1,639, 341. The SEUPB had also commenced the processing of outstanding claims for Period 27 (£85,411) and Period 28 (£97,387).

During discussion, the Peace IV Programme Manager confirmed that active discussion was ongoing with all landowners, including the owners of the Invest NI Site, to ensure that all the necessary approvals were in place before section two was due to open.

Following a query regarding Social Clauses associated with the Capital Works, the Programme Manager undertook to submit an update report to the next Partnership meeting.

The Partnership recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it note the contents of the report and the Thematic Risk Tracker and agree the following, which would be subject to the approval of the SEUPB:

- to extend the Interpretative Panels contract with Mediation NI to June 2022, with the option for an additional 3 months and agree the proposed delivery amendments; and
- to agree 'in principle' a further delivery modification request to increase the tolerance for contact hours to 60% (7 hours), to engage with participants in schools through a 'self-directed learning' approach for field trips and facilitated walks, as necessary.

### **Building Positive Relationships (BPR Update)**

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

#### **"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**To provide the Shared City Partnership (SCP) with a progress report in respect of the Building Positive Relations (BPR) theme of the PEACE IV Local Action Plan.**

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

**The Partnership is requested to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that they note the contents of the report and related appendices and agree the following proposals:**

- **BPR1-NIHE**
  - (i) **to diversify and extend the participant cohort for the South Belfast Network to include participants from the BAME and PUL communities.**
  - (ii) **to extend the recruitment areas across South and North Belfast to enhance participant uptake.**
- **BPR2-Creative Communities- to condense delivery via residential activity facilitated by Corrymeela and the STA approach with Radius Housing subject to SEUPB approval.**

- BPR4- Centenaries- to realign of the budget to enable extended delivery and staffing to April 22.
- BPR6 St Comgalls – (i) to agree to a presentation on the digital and education resources associated with St Comgalls project by Copius, and their partner, Redhead, and;
- (iii) to amend the Study Visit from ROI to NI due to Covid 19 concerns and impacts, subject to SEUPB approval.

### **3.0 Main report**

#### **3.11 Key Issues**

Project activity is continuing to increase although Covid 19 impacts continues to affect elements of delivery and participation. Risks associated with delivery is outlined in Appendix I Risk Tracker and has recently been discussed with SEUPB.

#### **3.1 BPR1 – Cross Community Area Networks (CCAN)**

Community engagement and participation in the project is continuing, with the number of registered participants reaching 92.

Progress has been made in establishing all 6 CCANs.

To enable ongoing delivery NIHE has submitted modification requests which were considered and approved by the PEACE IV Programme Board as follows:

to extend the geographical scope for South and North Belfast to;

- (i) include participants from the BAME community and PUL given that CNR uptake continues to prove challenging.
- (ii) to include South Belfast: Lisburn Road area, North Belfast: Mt Vernon, Twaddell/Woodvale, and Ardoyne areas.

Members are asked to note that the requests for an 8-hour capacity building element and the reprofile of budget to accommodate a 2-day residential were considered and approved though Programme board and SEUPB.

Following the resignation of the NIHE Programme Manager, a recruitment exercise was undertaken via an internal expression of interest approach has been progressed by NIHE and a new manager is due to begin on 1 February 2022.

### **3.2 BPR2 – Creative Communities Project**

Project delivery is progressing with established clusters. The young people in the Woodvale/Ardoyne cluster continue to participate in interactive project workshops.

The artist in residence for the Football cluster has dates scheduled to progress activities throughout February with the steering group leads from St. Malachy's and Albert Foundry assisting with recruitment. A visit to Windsor is scheduled for late February.

The Clusters for North are in further discussions to progress activities and project objectives. The East Cluster is keen to condense delivery and progress a planned residential as per STA request.

Members to note that whilst the project is progressing, delivery is slower and participation lower than anticipated. Further recruitment of participant clusters is required and the recruitment of a new project officer will prioritise this objective.

### **3.3 BPR3 – Transform for Change Project**

#### **Transformative Leadership Programme:**

75 participants have completed the TLP across Belfast for the period of June to Dec 21. Recruitment of new cohorts is progressing and start dates identified by the delivery partners for late January and early February with final participant numbers to be confirmed.

The PEACE IV team continue to be involved in welcome and project development workshops which are now scheduled as part of the leadership programme. A community project for a Springfield Road/Falls Road Garden of Reflection has been approved and the project is now underway. Resource allocation agreements have been progressed allowing for projects to commence activity in the West.

Coordinated dates have been scheduled with partners and S3 Solutions, S3 also attended the virtual networking event on the 27th January. The Neighbourhood Services Manager also attended the event to outline linkages of the programme with Community Planning.

A full schedule of engagement of the Transform for Change progress and activity is outlined in Appendix II. The schedule illustrates the extent and scope of the project.

Planning for the community engagement events and local study visits to take place in early 2022, is progressing.

### **3.4 BPR4 – Belfast and the World (BATW)**

The delivery partner has identified three new cohorts with all groups now actively participating in project activity. Participant numbers for year 4 cohorts is currently confirmed at 37 with overall figures in excess of 170 participants out of the 190 target required. Residentials are scheduled through February and March and delivery hours have reached a mid-point for these groups.

The delivery partner, as previously noted, has submitted a revised implementation plan and budget to ensure staff are in place until the end of the project, as requested in the extension request to April 2022.

Options for the delivery of targets associated with the EU Study trips and alternative trips across NI and ROI are progressing with locations identified and planning underway. A full itinerary is due early February. Cohorts remain keen to partake in this element of the project.

### **3.5 BPR5 – Supporting Connected Communities - LINCS Project**

The Neighbourhood Participatory Forums are embedded in all areas and currently 96 core participants are actively involved in activity. Each area has developed a suitable strategy for engagement in line with participant needs, and capacity. A summary of project progress to date is outlined below.

- South Belfast groups engaged in a total 18 sessions / events / workshops with a combined total of 67 contact hours.
- East Belfast groups engaged in a total 23 sessions / events / workshops with a combined total of 94 contact hours.
- North Belfast participants have engaged in 10 sessions / events with 32 contact hours.
- West Belfast participants have engaged in 21 sessions / events with 71 contact hours.

Due to the delivery partners organisational approach regarding Covid, the planned Symposium due to take place in January has been replaced with a smaller Inclusion forum which the Thematic Project Manager will attend. The symposium is to be rescheduled for later this year.

### **3.6 BPR5 – Traveller Project - Supporting Connected Communities**

Delivery of the Genealogy programme of workshops and exhibition is progressing with 11 regular participants. Delivery has been rescheduled for February, due to the venue closure impacted by Covid.

Discussions regarding other engagement opportunities are continuing, although it is challenging making direct contact with other potential Traveller participants.

The Invitation to Tender for the Capacity Building project was released early January with a closing date of the 28 January 2022. The quotation for Empowering Young women workshops and exhibition is to be reissued due to an unsuccessful submission, a further scoping exercise has taken place to widen possible interested parties.

### **3.7 BPR5 – Roma Project - Supporting Connected Communities**

A significant increase in the use of the Roma Support Hub is evident with 212 referrals during the last quarter.

Capacity Building Sessions are progressing and are structured around a weekly Women's Group. Recent activities include a sewing group and theatre visits. Morrow is scheduled to film community engagements once finalised.

Members should note that the requested non accredited 'conversational English' element has now been approved by SEUPB with specific requirements for delivery outlined and participant numbers are being identified.

The delivery partner has advised that Advocacy and Advice Skills training is to commence. 5 participants for the Advice training have been identified from the Romanian community.

### **3.8 BPR6 – St. Comgalls**

Workshops, seminars and networking events for youth and adult cohorts continue.

Members should note that the St. Comgalls capital build is now scheduled for completion in April 2022 due to material shortages and delays. SEUPB's condition is for delivery of project activity to take place in the building. The project will finish in May 2022.

Members are asked to agree that the project presents at the March Partnership meeting, on the approach it has taken to developing its digital and educational resources alongside various draft examples, which will be used as templates for the final outputs.

Members are also asked to note that the project partner has also now requested flexibility to deliver study trips previously agreed to be to ROI historical museums and landmarks to take place instead in NI museums and landmarks, as a Covid mitigation, subject to SEUPB approval. Delegated authority has been granted to the Programme Mgr. and BPR Thematic Mgr., by the Programme Board, to consider these modification requests. This is in addition to the UK trips modification that was proposed last month.

These will be agreed by all parties in advance of taking place to ensure outcomes are still met.

### **3.9 Cinematography Project**

Filming of project activity and content for the Belfast Peace Journey project and thematic films, as well as for social media clips, is continuing.

Monthly filming opportunities are identified and agreed with Morrow including Traveller, CYP4, Shared Space and others during February. Drafts of the first Project Short Stories, for the CYP2 Playing our Part in the City and CYP3 Personal Change projects will be submitted in January for final agreement ahead of being screened at these projects' final project closure events in February. Officers will also agree the style for the full series of short stories.

Following delivery partner agreement of a contract extension and uplift, a contract addendum and revised targets have been issued to the project.

### **3.10 Financial and Resource Implications**

The financial position for the BPR theme remains as previously reported with £1,792,882 reimbursed by SEUPB for some claims up to Period 26.

Reimbursement of Period 26 claims for NIHE and St. Comgalls (£54,641) has progressed, although payment has not yet been received by Council. SEUPB has commenced the verification for Period 27 (£326,709) and Period 28 claims (£246,521.73).

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

The draft plan has been equality screened and discussed at the Equality Consultative Forum on 13 May 2015. The Equality Consultative Forum was further consulted on 18 November 2020."

The Peace IV Programme Manager advised that under the BPR5 – Traveller Project she could now update that unfortunately, once again, no tender responses had been received for the Capacity Building project by the 28th January deadline and therefore market testing showed there was no suitable organisation with the capacity or resources to deliver the project. As such, it was felt that the delivery of the project with the remaining timeframe would be no longer feasible. She undertook to submit an update report to the next meeting that would include proposals as to how some of the elements might be added to existing projects and give consideration of the reallocation of the remaining funding to other projects.

Several Members expressed their disappointment that no tenders had been received which they felt was another indicator of the current challenges within the sector.

The Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee adopt the recommendations as outlined at 2.0 of the report and note that an update report in respect of the Traveller Project would be submitted to the March meeting of the Partnership.



### **Update on District Council Good Relations Action Plan 2021-2022**

The Good Relations Manager drew the Members' attention to the updated Action Plan that had been attached as an appendix to the agenda.

She advised that officers had engaged with the various partners regarding all the projects within the Action Plan and highlighted that TEO had agreed the reprofile request that had been reported to the Partnership in January 2022 and the change to the budget that had previously been highlighted.

The Members noted that Volunteer Now had been contracted to deliver the Leadership Development Programme, which had arisen as an action from the recent COVID Research report and was being delivered as part of the BCC4 Programme.

Several Members welcomed the updated Action Plan and referred to the need to have a wider conversation as to how the people of Belfast saw it as a 'Shared City'. Also discussed was the need to emphasis this approach across all sectors and to ensure that the programmes offered were as inclusive as possible.

The Partnership noted that a revised Action Plan would be submitted to TEO reflecting the proposed amendments.

Noted.

### **Update on Youth Representation to Shared City Partnership**

The Partnership considered the following report:

#### **"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**At the November meeting of the Partnership, Members agreed that a representative from the Youth Council be invited to join the Shared City Partnership on an advisory capacity. As per the terms of reference, the representative would have the right to participate fully in the discussions of the SCP and to offer advice but would not have any voting rights.**

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

- **That the Good Relations Manager engages with the Youth Coordinator on their return, to explore ways in which the Partnership can engage with the Youth Council productively in the current context which will ensure the views of young people are taken on board.**
- **That a further report is brought back to the Partnership on the outcome of those discussions.**
- **That the status of the nominations of Youth Champions from each political party be confirmed to ensure that views of young people on good relations can be shared.**

### **3.0 Main report**

- 3.1** Further to the decision of the Partnership, the Good Relations Manager met with the Community Development Officer working with the Youth Council to discuss the SCP's wish to involve a representative from the Youth Council to join the Partnership as a nonvoting member.
- 3.2** While keen to ensure that the Youth Council has links with the Shared City Partnership and that its members can input into good relations issues, the Community Development Officer advised the following:
- That the members of the Youth Council would not be able to attend SCP meetings as they are held in the afternoons when young people are in education, training, or employment.
  - That recruitment for the Youth Council had only taken place in October 2021 with the induction for young people beginning in November. Up until the time of writing, the members of the Youth Council had only met each other online.
  - That the age range for the Youth Council is 13 -18 years of age and the recently recruited members are at the younger end of the age range.
  - That there was considerable interest from several quarters in engaging with the Youth Council and therefore, demand on the Youth Council's input and time is likely to be high.
  - That the Community Development Officer was covering the remit of the Youth Coordinator in their absence and that the Youth Coordinator was due to return to post in a matter of weeks.

It is worth noting the following points:

- 3.3** That the Youth Council has formal Special meetings scheduled with the Council's People and Communities Committee three times a year.
- 3.4** At the June meeting of the above special Committee, it was agreed that each Political Party in Belfast City Council nominate a 'Youth Champion' who can liaise with Belfast Youth Council on motions and matters relating to youth in the city as a mechanism to aid communication between Elected Members and BYF members.
- 3.5** That Local Authorities have been given responsibility to deliver a Local Community Peace Action Plan under the PEACE PLUS Programme, managed through the Special European Union Programmes Body. It is envisaged that the guidelines given by SEUPB regarding the composition of the PEACE PLUS Partnership may require changes to governance arrangements and consideration of how the SCP fits with any such arrangements needs to be undertaken as part of this process. There will also

need to be discussion about what engagement and codesign with young people will look like to maximise their participation and may include informal mechanisms.

Given the above points, Members are asked to consider the following:

- That the Good Relations Manager engages with the Youth Coordinator on their return, to explore ways in which the SCP can engage with the Youth Council productively in the current context which will ensure the views of young people are taken on board.
- That a further report is brought back to the Partnership on the outcome of those discussions.
- That the status of the nominations of Youth Champions from each political party be confirmed to ensure that views of young people on good relations can be shared with those champions.

#### **Financial and Resource Implications**

All costs are covered through the District Council Good Relations Action Plan budget 21/22 as agreed by Members in March 2021.

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

All the projects/programmes have been approved in the DCGRP 2021/22.”

The Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee adopt the recommendations as outlined at 2.0 of the report.

#### **Response to Draft Refugee Integration Strategy for NI 2021-2026**

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

##### **“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

The Executive opened their consultation on their draft Refugee Integration Strategy for NI 2021-2026 on 29 November 2021 and Officers have prepared a draft response to the Strategy for Members to consider.

##### **2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Members consider the response to the consultation on the draft Refugee Integration Strategy for NI 2021-2026 produced by The Executive Office and recommend approval to submit the response to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

- 2.2 That Members note the response will be forwarded to The Executive Office in draft, pending Council approval, to ensure timely submission for the deadline of 20 February 2022.
- 2.3 That Members note a virtual Briefing Session on Issues facing Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belfast, which will be led by the Red Cross, has been organised for the Shared City Partnership on 22 February 2022 from 10am – 12pm.
- 2.4 Members are asked to agree that relevant Council Officers be invited to attend this briefing to ensure maximum impact across delivery of Council services.

3.0 **Main report**

**Key Issues**

- 3.1 The Executive's Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025 provides a framework for Government departments to tackle racial inequalities and to promote and encourage good race relations and social cohesion for Irish Travellers, minority ethnic people whose families have been here a number of generations or who have recently arrived, migrant workers and asylum seekers. The Racial Equality Strategy states there is a strong case for a separate Refugee Integration Strategy, to ensure a smooth transition between being an asylum seeker and a refugee and to ensure that refugees can build a new life here and realise their full potential. Accordingly, a draft Refugee Integration Strategy has been developed for consultation.
- 3.2 The draft Strategy has been developed and informed through research and engagement with stakeholders with expertise in the area. A report was commissioned by The Executive Office from Queen's University Belfast on the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees in Northern Ireland. The report helped to focus the Strategy on the main areas raised by those interviewed. The report can be accessed at the link below:
- <https://www.qub.ac.uk/home/media/Media,784971,en.pdf>
- 3.3 This consultation is intended to seek the views of all stakeholders to ensure the final Strategy is focused on the priority issues and needs and sets out the most important actions that must be taken to support refugees and asylums seekers here.
- 3.4 The draft Strategy outlines the draft Vision and 4 high level outcomes to achieve the vision. The document also gives greater detail on supporting actions.

3.5 **Vision**

Our vision is for a cohesive and shared society where refugees and asylum seekers are valued and feel safe, are integrated into communities and are supported to reach their full potential.

### **3.6 High Level Outcomes**

#### **OUTCOME 1 – REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS ARE VALUED AND RESPECTED**

Refugees and asylum seekers are respected as members of our communities and their presence, knowledge and contribution to society is recognised and valued.

#### **OUTCOME 2 – REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS ARE SAFE AND FEEL SECURE**

Refugees and asylum seekers feel welcome and live here safely without fear of persecution or discrimination resulting from their immigration status.

#### **OUTCOME 3 – REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS EXERCISE THEIR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Refugees and asylum seekers are integrated into diverse and inclusive communities and are aware of, and able to exercise, their rights and responsibilities.

#### **OUTCOME 4 – REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS ARE SUPPORTED TO ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL**

Refugees and asylum seekers have access to services and support to achieve their full potential.

- 3.7 A copy of the draft BCC response to the consultation is attached at Appendix 1 (detailed in Section 3 of the template document provided by The Executive for completion.

#### **Briefing Session on Issues facing Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belfast**

- 3.8 A Briefing Session on Issues facing Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belfast which will be led by the Red Cross has been organised for the Shared City Partnership on 22 February 2022 from 10am – 12pm. This will take place via Microsoft Teams and a link will be sent out to members, along with an agenda nearer to the date. A hold the date invite has been previously circulated to members.
- 3.9 Members are also asked if they would agree to invite relevant Council Officers to the briefing session given that this is an opportunity to bring further learning and to ensure delivery of Council services can be examined through this lens.
- 3.10 Members are also asked to note the publication of a new joint report from the British Red Cross and the VOICES Network 'We want to be strong, but we don't have the chance': women's experiences of seeking asylum in the UK'. This is the first-time the

**Red Cross has co-produced a report with the VOICES Network and the first research that specifically looks at experiences of women.**

- 3.11 The research finds that, for many women, the UK's asylum process is not sensitive to gender or trauma and does not provide the support they need. This is despite commitments by the UK government to provide an asylum system that is 'gender-sensitive' in terms of application and decision-making processes, and support services, such as accommodation or healthcare.**
- 3.12 The report includes detailed recommendations – on the asylum interview process, decision-making delays, access to healthcare, education, housing and more. The main recommendation is that the government develop asylum policy with the people these policies affect - with women who have first-hand experience of seeking asylum. A link to the report will be circulated to Members when received.**

#### **Financial and Resource Implications**

**All financial and resource implications are covered under existing budgets.**

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

**The response to the draft Refugee Integration Strategy aims to further promote good relations and equality.”**

During discussion the representative from the Red Cross advised that she would be happy to run a supplementary session for any of the Members who had indicated that they would be unable to attend and suggested that the 'mop up' session could be shared with other external representatives from the Partnership Members organisations if they thought it would be useful.

Following consideration, the Partnership recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that:

- it endorses the draft Refugee Integration Strategy for NI 2021-2026 consultation response and its submission by the 20th February deadline, subject to Council ratification at its meeting on 1st March; and
- it notes the virtual Briefing Session on Issues facing Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belfast, led by The Red Cross, on 22nd February 2022 from 10 a.m. – 12 noon and agrees that the relevant Council Officers be invited to attend the briefing to ensure maximum impact across delivery of Council services.

#### **Events Update**

The Good Relations Manager advised the Members of the following events which they were welcome to attend:

**Event: 'Trapped by the Border': Northern Nationalists, Southern Unionists and the Impact of Partition 1920-25'.**

**Date: Wednesday, 23rd February 2022**

**Time:** 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

**Format:** Online Webinar Talk and QandA with Dr. Éamon Phoenix

**Registration:** <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Events/Trapped-by-the-Border-Northern-Nationalists-Southern-Nationalists>

**Contact Officer:** David Robinson

**Event:** Decade of Centenaries Conference

**Date:** Wednesday, 23rd March 2022

**Time:** 10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

**Format:** Online Webinar

**Registration:** <https://plannd.co.uk/decade-of-centenaries-conference-2022/>

The Members were advised to contact the officer responsible for the event should they require any additional information.

Noted.

Chairperson

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**Draft Refugee Integration Strategy for Northern Ireland 2021-2026**

**Consultation Document**

## **Contents**

<b>Section 1</b>	<b>About this consultation</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Section 2</b>	<b>How to respond</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>Duration and closing date</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>How to record your views</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>Enquiries and responses</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>Alternative formats</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>Complaints</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Section 3</b>	<b>Overview</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>Vision</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>High Level Outcomes/associated Key Areas and Actions</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Section 4</b>	<b>Impact Assessments</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Section 5</b>	<b>Freedom of Information and Privacy Notice</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Section 6</b>	<b>Consultation Questionnaire</b>	<b>19</b>

## Section 1 – About This Consultation

### 1.1 Background

The Executive's Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025 provides a framework for Government departments to tackle racial inequalities and to promote and encourage good race relations and social cohesion for Irish Travellers, minority ethnic people whose families have been here a number of generations or who have recently arrived, migrant workers and asylum seekers. The Racial Equality Strategy states there is a strong case for a separate Refugee Integration Strategy, to ensure a smooth transition between being an asylum seeker and a refugee and to ensure that refugees can build a new life here and realise their full potential. Accordingly this draft Refugee Integration Strategy has been developed for consultation.

The draft Strategy has been developed and informed through research and engagement with stakeholders with expertise in the area. A report was commissioned by The Executive Office from Queen's University Belfast on the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees in Northern Ireland. The report helped to focus the Strategy on the main areas raised by those interviewed.

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/home/media/Media,784971,en.pdf>

Since 2015 we have welcomed over 1800 refugees through the Syrian Vulnerable People Resettlement Scheme. We are keen that the knowledge, experience and systems developed through this are shared and used for the benefit all refugees and new comers. The Executive Office, working with the Department for Communities and the NI Innovation Lab, held a two day Strategic Insight Lab to look at the question **How do we enable refugees and the communities in which they live build a cohesive sustainable future together?** The event was attended by representatives from Government departments, councils, community groups and academia. A number of recommendations were made focusing on gaps in services, challenges and opportunities. These have also been used to inform the development of the Strategy.

## **1.2 Purpose of this Consultation**

We are now seeking views on the draft Refugee Integration Strategy which has been developed. We want to ensure the final Strategy is one that focuses all our efforts on the support required to enable integration at all levels. The Strategy should set the strategic direction for all who have a role to play, whether they are from statutory organisations or the voluntary sector or members of local communities.

This consultation is therefore intended to seek the views of all stakeholders to ensure the final Strategy is focused on the priority issues and needs and sets out the most important actions that must be taken to support Refugees and asylums seekers here.

## **Section 2 – How to respond**

### **2.1 Duration and closing date**

The consultation will commence on **12.00 on 29 November 2021** and last for 12 weeks. It will close on, **23.59 on 20 February 2022** and all responses will be welcomed up to that date. Please note that late responses will not be accepted.

Section 3 of this Questionnaire sets out the key elements of the Strategy to assist you in providing your views.

### **2.2 Submit a written response**

Consultees are encouraged to complete the questionnaire online or, if preferable, submit in hard copy. However, should you wish to provide alternative input or have difficulty responding in this way, you can submit a written response. This can be sent in hard copy or email to the address set out in paragraph 2.5.

### **2.3 Public Consultation Events**

It is intended to hold public consultation events to provide an overview of the draft Strategy and enable stakeholders to ask questions and feed in their views. Given the ongoing pandemic these events will be held virtually and you can contact us at [race.equality@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk](mailto:race.equality@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk) for details.

The key views gathered at these event will be summarised and used as part of the consultation analysis to inform the final Strategy.

### **2.4 Engaging those with lived experience**

In order to ensure we seek the views of those with lived experience, we will be taking forward facilitated engagement with small groups which will be used alongside the other responses to inform the final strategy

## **2.5 Enquiries and Responses**

Please address any enquiries you may have and responses to:

By e-mail:      Race.Equality@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

In writing:      Racial Equality Unit  
E3.18  
Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate  
BELFAST  
BT4 3SG

## **2.6 How we will use your responses**

A summary of responses will be published on the TEO website following the consultation process. Any contact details or information that would identify a respondent as a private individual will be removed prior to publication. All information will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA).

Respondents should also be aware that the Department's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) may require that any responses, not subject to specific exemptions under the Act, be communicated to third parties on request.

## **2.7 Alternative Formats**

An electronic version of this document is available at

<https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/teo/refugee-integration-strategy-for-northern-ireland>. Copies in other languages and formats (including Braille, large print etc.), can be made available on request. If it would assist you to access the document in an alternative format or language other than English, please contact us by e-mail at

[Race.Equality@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Race.Equality@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk) or at the postal address listed above.

## **2.8 Complaints**

If you have any concerns about the way this consultation process has been handled, you should send them to the following address:

Machinery of Government

Room SD03

Stormont Castle

Belfast

BT4 3TT

Email: [info@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk](mailto:info@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk)

Telephone: 028 9037 8055

Please note, if you choose to send your complaint in writing, you should clearly state the reason for your complaint in the 'Subject' bar of your email, or at the top of your letter.

### **Section 3 - Overview**

This Refugee Integration Strategy sets out how the Executive will take action to support refugees and asylum seekers to ensure they are treated fairly, do not suffer injustice, can live here as valued members of our community and have every opportunity to realise their full potential.

#### **3.1 Vision**

Our **vision** is for a cohesive and shared society where refugees and asylum seekers are valued and feel safe, are integrated into communities and are supported to reach their full potential.

#### **3.2 High Level Outcomes and associated Key Areas Actions**

To achieve this vision this Refugee Integration Strategy identifies four **High Level Outcomes and associated actions**.

##### **OUTCOME 1 REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS ARE VALUED AND RESPECTED**

Refugees and asylum seekers are respected as members of our communities and their presence, knowledge and contribution to society is recognised and valued.

##### **Engagement and Inclusion**

- Develop a framework to ensure the lived experience of refugees is taken into account and that the co-production model is embedded in policy making.

##### **Education and Training**

- Ensure involvement of refugees and asylum seekers and teachers in the design of course material and resources, informed by best practice examples internationally, for all pupils in schools to help aid integration for asylum and refugee pupils.



- Ensure the language, cultural and social needs of refugee and asylum seeker pupils are met and consider the need for alternatives to the existing curriculum options, particularly for young people who arrive here aged 14-16.
- Extend coverage of the schools of sanctuary programme.
- Provide support for employment, including ensuring ESOL is available in a timely manner for all who need it and education, training and volunteering opportunities are accessible.

### **Community Support**

- Apply lessons learned and best practice emerging from the review of the Syrian VPRS to the delivery of mainstream services.
- Develop and support formal and informal structures that will facilitate direct engagement with refugees in policy making.
- Under T:BUC, work collaboratively with colleagues across the good relations arena to ensure good relations programmes give due consideration to the needs and input of newcomers.
- Ensure that existing vehicles such as the Community Planning Partnerships and the structures that support them are used to best effect in ensuring the needs of refugees and newcomers are met.

### **OUTCOME 2 – REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS ARE SAFE AND FEEL SECURE**

Refugees and asylum seekers feel welcome and live here safely without fear of persecution or discrimination resulting from their immigration status.

### **Housing**

- Enhance engagement with the Home Office, PSNI, NIHE and other relevant agencies to ensure housing provided to asylum seekers by the Home Office under the Asylum Accommodation and Support Contract (AASC) is safe and secure.
- Build on the positive engagement with Home Office during the Covid19 pandemic to ensure effective consultation with NIHE and other agencies to support those entering the move on process.
- Build on the positive engagement between agencies to ensure a joined up and holistic approach to the provision of housing for refugees which includes taking account of the availability of other services such as schools and healthcare provision.

### **Destitution**

- Develop a pathway out of destitution for refugees and asylum seekers facing destitution and those who have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) status.
- Develop training for policy staff on the issues facing those with No Recourse to Public Funds Status, Right to Work Restrictions and/or Migrant Access to Benefits issues.

Ensure asylum seekers and refugees are identified as an at risk group in strategies, guidance and services tackling human trafficking and modern slavery.

### **Protecting the Most Vulnerable**

- Regularly review safeguarding arrangements for the most vulnerable asylum seekers and the oversight structures developed for the Asylum Accommodation and Support Contract (AASC) and Advice Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE) operating framework.

- Explore the potential for the development of a vulnerability assessment on arrival for Asylum Seekers to ensure appropriate support is in place for those most vulnerable such as victims of trafficking, women, children and LGBT.
- Ensure early health screening is available and easily accessible and pathways to accessing health services including trauma, therapeutic and specialist support services are clearly communicated to asylum seekers and those who work with them.
- Review resourcing to ensure appropriate services and expertise is in place to meet potentially increased numbers and needs of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children here.

### **OUTCOME 3 – REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS EXERCISE THEIR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Refugees and asylum seekers are integrated into diverse and inclusive communities and are aware of, and able to exercise, their rights and responsibilities.

#### **Pathway to Citizenship**

- Ensure the provision of legal advice free of charge, in a timely manner and by appropriately trained individuals to those navigating the asylum system including recognition of the needs of particularly vulnerable groups such as UASC.
- Develop resources to outline the rights and entitlements of asylum seekers and promote awareness of cultural differences including child friendly resources.
- Work with partners across sectors to ensure appropriate advice and guidance at every stage of the journey to citizenship and in particular at transition stages where individuals are often most vulnerable.

### **Partnership with communities**

- Work with partners across sectors to develop programmes to facilitate cultural exchange and increase cultural awareness in both newcomer and indigenous communities.

### **Access to services**

- Ensure front line staff delivering key services receive training to recognise and respond effectively to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers.
- Develop easily accessible and culturally sensitive information to support refugees to understand and access their entitlements.

## **OUTCOME 4 – REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS ARE SUPPORTED TO ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL**

Refugees and asylum seekers have access to services and support to achieve their full potential.

### **ESOL**

- Ensure asylum seeker needs are identified and recognised in the proposed ESOL strategy, and that the direction proposed takes into account their unique and specific needs and circumstances.
- Ensure pre-beginner levels are recognised within ESOL policy.
- Ensure appropriate resourcing for ESOL support in schools for newcomer pupils and the development of parent and child programmes to facilitate whole home learning.

### **Employability and Welfare**

- Ensure pathways to work strategies take account of the circumstances and needs of refugees and asylum seekers.

- Maintain Executive engagement with Home Office on any future review of the right to work restrictions on asylum seekers.
- Develop support to help refugees and asylum seekers to identify equivalent qualifications or access additional or alternative training where necessary.

### **Effective Partnership Working**

- Ensure appropriate structures are in place across departments to develop a coordinated approach to the delivery of services for refugees and asylum seekers.
- Ensure regular engagement between policy makers and organisations working with asylum seekers and refugees as well as directly with those with lived experience.

## **Section 4 – Impact Assessments**

- 4.1 The Executive Office has conducted a rural needs impact assessment and equality screening exercise on the draft strategy.
- 4.2 This strategy's potential impacts are all intended to support equality of opportunity and access for the range of cross-cutting identities represented by the communities it is aimed at. The main aim of the strategy is to support the integration needs of asylum seekers and refugees who have arrived here and the communities in which they find themselves and is not a strategy which impacts on migration patterns or immigration policy. Immigration policy is an excepted matter and as such is exclusively set by the Home Office. This policy will have no impact on the number or scale of arrivals we experience here. As a result we have concluded that a full Equality Impact Assessment was not required.
- 4.3 These screening assessments will be revisited if necessary if there are significant changes to the strategy as a result of consultation responses.

## **Section 5 – Freedom of Information and Privacy Notice**

### **Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Confidentiality of Consultations**

The Department intends to publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process.

Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may also be disclosed on request. The Department can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of consultations and they will give you guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this public consultation.

Subject to certain limited provisos, the Freedom of Information Act gives members of the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, in this case, the Department. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation.

The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential, information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this consultation, including information about your identity should be made public or be treated as confidential.

This means that information provided by you in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances. The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- the Department should only accept information from third parties "in confidence" if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- the Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties "in confidence" which is not confidential in nature;
- acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

Further information about confidentiality of responses is available by contacting the Information Commissioner's Office (or at [www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk)).

## **Privacy Notice**

Data Controller Name: The Executive Office  
Address: The Executive Office,  
E5.19, Castle Buildings,  
Stormont Estate,  
Belfast  
BT4 3SR  
Telephone: 02890 528242  
Email: [DPO@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk](mailto:DPO@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk)

Data Protection Officer: Michael Curran  
Telephone: 028 9052 0694  
Email: [DPO@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk](mailto:DPO@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk)

## **Why are you processing my personal information?**

- TEO is seeking comments from interested parties as part of its public consultation on the draft Refugee Integration Strategy. TEO is not seeking personal data as part of the consultation but is likely to receive names and addresses/e-mail addresses as part of a consultee's response.
- Consultation is a requisite part of the development of public policy and strategy.



**ONLY if you are relying on consent to process personal data.**

- TEO is not relying on consent for processing the data supplied by the applicant. TEO is required to seek consultation responses as part of policy development.

**What categories of personal data are you processing?**

- Responses to the consultation will include names and addresses and/or e-mail addresses.

**Where do you get my personal data from?**

- The personal data will originate from the person responding to the consultation.

**Do you share my personal data with anyone else?**

- We will not share your personal data with other organisations.

**Do you transfer my personal data to other countries?**

- No.

**How long do you keep my personal data?**

- The Department will ensure that personal data is kept no longer than necessary. It manages records effectively from when they are created, including how they are stored and used, through to their destruction or archiving. The disposal of records is determined by the Department's retention and disposal of records schedule, which was approved by the NI Assembly.

**(If you use automated decision making or profiling) How do you use my personal data to make decisions about me?**

- TEO will not use automated processing for responses to this consultation.

### **What rights do I have?**

- You have the right to obtain confirmation that your data is being [processed, and access to your personal data](#)
- You are entitled to have personal data [rectified if it is inaccurate or incomplete](#)
- You have a right to have personal data erased and to prevent processing, [in specific circumstances](#)
- You have the right to 'block' or suppress processing of personal data, [in specific circumstances](#)
- You have the right to data portability, [in specific circumstances](#)
- You have the right to object to the processing, in specific circumstances
- You have rights in relation to [automated decision making and profiling](#)

### **How do I complain if I am not happy?**

- If you are unhappy with any aspect of this privacy notice, or how your personal information is being processed, please contact the Department's Data Protection Officer at the address above.

**If you are still not happy, you have the right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO):**

#### **Information Commissioner's Office**

Wycliffe House

Water Lane

Wilmslow

Cheshire

SK9 5AF

Tel: 0303 123 1113

Email: [casework@ico.org.uk](mailto:casework@ico.org.uk)

<https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>

Yes, Belfast City Council (BCC) agrees with this vision which complements the vision of the Belfast Agenda and Belfast City Council's Good Relations Strategy.

## Section 6 Consultation Questionnaire

Contact name:

Belfast City Council

Name and address of organisation  
(if applicable)

E-mail address:

goodrelations@belfastcity.gov.uk

Please complete this questionnaire by selecting the preferred response to the individual questions. The questions focus on the key elements of the strategy including the vision, outcomes, priorities and actions. However should you have further, additional comments to make, please do so in response to question 49.

### Vision

Section 1 of the draft Refugee Integration Strategy sets out the Vision as: **'Our vision is a cohesive and shared society where refugees and asylum seekers are valued and feel safe, are integrated into communities and are supported to reach their full potential'.**

**Q1 Do you agree that this should be the overall Vision for the Strategy?**

☐

Y

☐☐☐☐

**Strongly Agree**

**Agree**

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

**Disagree**

**Strongly Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or suggest what you would prefer to have as the overall vision in the box below

### High Level outcomes

The draft Strategy has 4 high level outcomes.

**Outcome 1** is **Refugees and asylum seekers are valued and respected**: Refugees and asylum seekers are respected as members of our communities and their knowledge and contribution to society is recognised and valued

**Q2** Do you agree that this should be a key outcome for the Strategy? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☐

Strongly Agree  
Strongly Disagree

☐

Agree

☐

Neither Agree or Disagree

☐☐

Disagree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or

additional commentary in the box below

**Outcome 2** is **Refugees and asylum seekers are safe and feel secure**: Refugees and asylum seekers feel welcome and live here safely without fear of persecution or discrimination resulting from their immigration status.

**Q3** Do you agree that this should be a key outcome for the Strategy? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☐

Strongly Agree  
Strongly Disagree

☐

Agree

☐

Neither Agree or Disagree

☐☐

Disagree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

**Outcome 3 is Refugees and asylum seekers exercise their rights and responsibilities:**

Refugees and asylum seekers are integrated into diverse and inclusive communities and are aware of and able to exercise their rights and responsibilities.

**Q4 Do you agree that this should be a key outcome for the Strategy?** Please tick the box which best reflects your response

y

**Strongly Agree**

**Agree**

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

**Disagree**

**Strongly Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

**Outcome 4 is Refugees and asylum seekers are supported to achieve their full potential:**

Refugees and asylum seekers have access to services and support to achieve their full potential.

**Q5 Do you agree that this should be a key outcome for the Strategy?** Please tick the box which best reflects your response

y

**Strongly Agree**

**Agree**

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

**Disagree**

**Strongly Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

**6 Is there anything else which should be considered as a key outcome?**

**Yes**

If you answered Yes, Please provide details in the box below

**BCC believes that further outcomes that should be considered are:**

**Developing leadership that drives integration**

Strengthened leadership that understands the lived experience of refugees and asylum seekers and that has the capacity to drive integration in policy development and service delivery.

**Receiving Communities that are informed and supported**

Receiving communities that are informed and supported to respond positively to diversity.

**A Resourced and Competent Support Sector**

A support sector that is adequately and securely resourced that has the capacity to continue to provide services to refugees and asylum seekers.

**Settlement Support**

A commitment by the Executive to facilitate the support and settlement of asylum seekers, who arrive here spontaneously, on an equal footing with those who arrive through resettlement routes.

**Priorities and Actions**

Section 6 of the draft Strategy sets out the priorities and associated actions we will take to achieve the 4 high level outcomes.

**OUTCOME 1**

**Under Outcome 1: Refugees and asylum seekers are valued and respected**, the following priorities have been identified:

**I. ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION**

- Develop a framework to ensure lived experience of refugees' voices are listened to and that the co-production model is embedded in policy making.

**Q7 Do you agree that Engagement and Inclusion should be a priority to achieve outcome 1?** Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☐

**Strongly Agree  
Strongly Disagree**

☐

**Agree**

☐

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

☐☐

**Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

**Q8 Do you agree that the actions identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 1?** Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☐

**Strongly Agree  
Disagree**

☐

**Agree**

☐

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

☐

**Disagree**

☐

**Strongly**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

**Belfast City Council** agrees with this approach but also feels that Refugees and Asylum Seekers should have been involved in the co-production of the strategy.

The RIS commits to 'develop a framework to ensure lived experience of refugee voices are listened to and that the co-production model is embedded in policy making', while this is welcome, there is a need for acknowledgement that such work needs to be sufficiently resourced and underpinned by a fully comprehensive training programme whereby refugees and asylum seekers have the capacity to engage as equal partners and that policy makers understand fully the matters and the lived experience of asylum seekers and refugees.

The strategy should define how engagement and inclusion would work in practice and if this framework includes full departmental representation. It is also important that alongside this action there is a commitment to developing the capacity of those asylum seekers and refugees, that are not necessarily networked into organisations so that they can be engaged and included in any proposed framework.



**Q9 Are there any other actions which should be considered to deliver the priority?**

Belfast City Council recommends that the following actions should also be considered.

- Developing the capacity of those not networked into organisations to also have their voice heard.
- Investigate and mitigate against the barriers that will hamper the ability of those with lived experience to contribute to policy making.
- Implement a training programme to develop the expertise of policy makers to understand the lived experience of Refugee and Asylum Seekers.
- Build the capacity of leaders and policy makers to support and promote integrated communities.
- Commit to support sustainability within the sector. The community and voluntary sector provide essential services for refugee and asylum communities. It also plays an important role in providing information to policy makers. The short-term nature of funding hinders integration and the work of support organisations. Limited funding results in organisations competing against each other, which can undermine the effectiveness of the shared work. It would be helpful if the RIS commits to exploring how best the sector can be supported.
- Produce the findings of the review of the Minority Ethnic Development Fund and ensure that the fund is further resourced and operates on a minimum 3-year cycle. Several organisations have reported that they are deterred from applying to the Minority Ethnic Development Fund due to delays in the fund being issued and the need for organisations to have reserve money as they wait for delays in drawing down the fund, thus losing valuable staff and expertise.

**II. EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

- Newcomer and teachers are involved in the design of course material and resources for schools on integration to ensure the language, cultural and social needs of newcomer pupils are met
- Extend schools of sanctuary programme
- Provide support for employment including ensuring ESOL is available for all who need it and education, training and volunteering opportunities are accessible

**Q10 Do you agree that Education and Training should be a priority to achieve outcome**

**1?** Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☐☐☒☐☐

**Strongly Agree**

**Agree**

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

**Disagree**

**Strongly Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

Belfast City Council believe that education and training should be a priority as well as access to lifelong learning opportunities.

**Q11 Do you agree that the actions identified will be the best approach to achieve**

**outcome 1?** Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☐☐☒☐☐

**Strongly Agree**

**Agree**

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

**Disagree**

**Strongly Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or

There is a need for an action to investigate the barriers that currently prohibit refugees and asylum seekers from accessing training and educational opportunities.

Education and training are a priority, however commitment needs to be provided in the strategy for life-long learning opportunities. The strategy also needs to commit to examining and addressing the barriers that are currently inhibiting adult and young refugees and asylum seekers from benefiting and accessing education and training opportunities.

We welcome the commitment in the strategy which states that it will 'Ensure the language, cultural and social needs of refugee and asylum seeker pupils are met and consider the need for alternatives to the existing curriculum options, particularly for young people who arrive here aged 14-16.'

We believe that a specific task group is required to look at the lack of structured education provision for young refugee and asylum seekers, aged 16 and above, who have limited or no English language. Many of these young people, have also experienced interruptions in their educational journey. The issue for this young group, aged 16 and above, is that they are not necessarily entitled to a school place as they are over the compulsory school age. These young people, excluded from accessing a school place, then often find themselves on waiting lists for ESOL places that are oversubscribed.

As we prepare to welcome Afghan Refugees, as well as continuing to receive people through the asylum process, this is an issue which will continue to grow in significance.

We ask that the strategy recognises that finding school places is a particular challenge currently in the Belfast City Council area and that this is an issue which requires urgent attention.

We believe that it is crucial that young asylum seekers and refugees have immediate access to study opportunities on arrival. Failure to provide such opportunities will have long-term negative effects for individuals and wider society. Specifically, without education, the young people will have very limited pathways into employment. This could lead to lifelong social security dependency with associated costs for the public purse. Further, uneducated, marginalised and excluded young people are susceptible to exploitation.

We believe also that there is a significant need for developing the capacity of teachers who are teaching young people whose first language is not English, many of whom have had significant gaps in their education as well as dealing with the impact and trauma associated with the refugee journey.

**Q12 Are there any other actions which should be considered to deliver the priority?**

Please detail in the box below

Belfast City Council would recommend the following actions.

- Enhanced resources and skilling up of teachers to enable them to teach in a more culturally and linguistically diverse society.
- A specific task group should be set up to look at the lack of structured education provision for young refugee and asylum seekers, aged 16 and above, who are past the compulsory school age. We would suggest that a post-16 specific strand to the new ESOL strategy should be developed.
- Enhanced resourcing and provision of ESOL
- Targeted skills development programme for Refugees and Asylum Seekers
- Build on the models of good practices developed during covid that distributed digital devices to school children to ensure that asylum seeker and refugee children are not digitally excluded from their education and participation.
- A commitment to develop specialist interventions to help refugees overcome the barriers they can encounter when seeking employment.
- A commitment to providing tailored support to build the confidence and skills of refugees to take up employment opportunities.
- We recommend that the Dept of Education work closely with EA and schools to identify options for increasing capacity in Belfast area.
- We recommend that the DE and DfC work closely with Belfast Met and other providers to assess current ESOL provision.

**III COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

- Apply lessons learned and best practice emerging from the review of the VPRS to the delivery of mainstream services
- Develop and support structures which will facilitate engagement directly with refugees in policy making

- Under T:BUC, work collaboratively with colleagues across the good relations arena to ensure good relations programmes give due consideration to the needs and input of newcomers

**Q13 Do you agree that Community Support should be a priority to achieve outcome 1?**

Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☐

**Strongly Agree**  
**Strongly Disagree**

☐

**Agree**

☐

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

☐
☐

**Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

There is little mention of how the strategy will work with local government to promote integration at a local neighbourhood level and understand the challenges of integration at a local level.

The strategy needs to reflect the role of all communities in supporting integration and commit to working with local authorities to support localised integration and to resource community and voluntary groups, faith groups, schools etc to respond appropriately.

**Q14 Do you agree that the actions identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 1?** Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☐

**Strongly Agree**  
**Strongly Disagree**

☐

**Agree**

☒

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

☐☐

**Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

The strategy, rightly, recognises integration as being the responsibility of refugees, government and receiving communities. However, it does not contain any outcomes in relation to how we can build a better support basis within the receiving community to understand asylum patterns and to better respond to asylum trends.

The local community level is pivotal in providing the conditions for successful integration as it is in local neighbourhoods, streets, and communities where integration really happens. Although the Executive design the policy frameworks, local communities play a key role in creating conditions conducive to integration and we believe that the strategy needs to identify how it will work with local government and receiving communities to support tailored local plans and interventions to address the issues specific to places.

**Q15 Are there any other actions which should be considered to deliver the priority?**  
Please detail in the box below

**Q16 Are there other higher priority areas and associated actions that should be considered to achieve outcome 1: Refugees and asylum seekers are valued and respected?**

Please tick the box which best reflects your response

y	
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A commitment to review and transform current TBUC funding schemes to ensure that the definition of good relations supports the promotion of better relations between all communities.

Resourcing and support for receiving communities to enable them to welcome and support refugees and asylum seekers.

Engagement with local government to support tailored solutions to integration.

The strategy also needs to reflect how the pandemic has created serious challenges for integration and inclusion. Lockdown and social distancing measures have transformed how people connect with others. While virtual efforts, enabled family and friends to stay in touch these have been less accessible for refugees and asylum seekers who continue to be impacted by digital poverty.

The UK Government is currently proposing to introduce new legislation to reform the asylum and immigration system, which is set to have major consequences for the integration of refugees in the years ahead. The Nationality and Borders bill which is proceeding through Parliament is set to make widespread changes to current asylum rules. From the perspective of integration, one of the most significant changes in the bill is a new distinction between refugees based on their mode of arrival to the UK. The bill will give the government the scope to treat differently those who have not come to the UK 'directly' from a country or territory where their life or freedom was threatened, who have not presented themselves without delay to the UK authorities, or who have come to the UK unlawfully without good cause (Nationality and Borders Bill 2021). This will allow the Home Office to introduce a new limited protection status for this cohort if their asylum claim is successful, which only offers temporary protection and does not allow for recourse to public funds (other than in instances of destitution). The bill therefore risks undermining the integration of these refugees by inhibiting a pathway to settlement and restricting access to welfare support.

**Yes**

**No**

If you have selected 'yes', please detail in the box below

## **OUTCOME 2**

Under Outcome 2: Refugees and asylum seekers are safe and feel secure, the following priorities have been identified:

### **I. HOUSING**

- Formalise engagement with the Home Office, PSNI and NIHE to ensure housing provision is safe and secure for housing provided under the AASC and to facilitate a smooth transition in the move on process
- Develop a clear and accessible support pathway/resource for refugees and those who support them on access to housing

**Q17 Do you agree that Housing should be a priority to achieve outcome 2?** Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☐

**Strongly Agree**

**Strongly Disagree**

☐

**Agree**

☐

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

☐☐

**Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

**Q18 Do you agree that the actions identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 2?** Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☐

**Strongly Agree**

**Strongly Disagree**

☐

**Agree**

☒

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

☐☐

**Disagree**



If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

We agree with this outcome and believe that safe and secure housing solutions are an essential aspect of integration. We believe that the issue of asylum and refugee integration needs to be included in future housing policy and homelessness strategies.

Enhanced and sensitive communication is needed for receiving communities to dispel misunderstandings in relation to asylum and refugee matters.

**Q19 Are there any other actions which should be considered to deliver the priority?**

Please detail in the box below

We believe that the strategy does not reflect the current reality and the significant increase in asylum seekers arriving in Belfast. This includes the shortage of housing stock and the pressures on public services as well as the community and voluntary groups supporting asylum seekers and refugees. The strategy needs to recognise the challenges that the increased use of contingent asylum accommodation, such as hotels, brings to integration and inclusion.

**II. DESTITUTION**

- Develop a pathway for supporting refugees and asylum seekers facing destitution and those who have NRPF status
- Ensure asylum seekers and refugees are identified as an at risk group in strategies tackling human trafficking and modern slavery.

**Q20 Do you agree that Destitution should be a priority to achieve outcome 2?** Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☒

**Strongly Agree**  
**Strongly Disagree**

☐

**Agree**

☐

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

☐☐

**Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

**Q21 Do you agree that the actions identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 2?** Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☐

**Strongly Agree**  
**Strongly Disagree**

☐

**Agree**

☒

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

☐☐

**Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

We welcome that the strategy commits to developing pathways out of destitution but feel that more detail should have been provided in terms of what this would look like on a practical level.

**Q22 Are there any other actions which should be considered to deliver the priority?**

We would recommend an integrated approach across all Government Departments to address the impact of destitution and the No Recourse to Public Funds condition.

Please detail in the box below

**III. PROTECTING THE MOST VULNERABLE**

- Safeguarding of the most vulnerable asylum seekers is regularly reviewed and oversight structures developed for the AASC and AIRE operating framework
- Early health screening is available and easily accessible and pathways to accessing health services are clearly communicated to asylum seekers and those who work with them
- Review of resourcing of support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children to ensure support is sufficient to adequately meet increasing needs in this area

**Q23 Do you agree that Protecting the Most Vulnerable should be a priority to achieve outcome 2? Please tick the box which best reflects your response**

☐

**Strongly Agree**  
**Strongly Disagree**

☐

**Agree**

☐

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

☐☐

**Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

**Q24 Do you agree that the actions identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 2?** Please tick the box which best reflects your response

		y		
--	--	---	--	--

**Strongly Agree**  
**Strongly Disagree**

**Agree**

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

**Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

Racism and discrimination are key features of the refugee and asylum experience in NI. This needs to be reflected in the strategy as well as a commitment to working with the DOJ to provide long-term interventions.

**Q25 Are there any other actions that should be considered to deliver the priority?**

Please tick the box which best reflects your response

y	
---	--

**Yes**

**No**

If you have selected 'yes', please detail in the box below

Understanding the inequalities and discrimination encountered by Refugees and Asylum Seekers and the impact that this has on the integration process and their future life chances.

**Q26 Are there other higher priority areas and associated actions that should be considered to achieve outcome 2: Refugees and asylum seekers are safe and feel secure?**

Please tick the box which best reflects your response

y	
---	--

**Yes**

**No**

If you have selected 'yes', please detail in the box below

Develop a framework for ethnic monitoring to understand the inequalities and discrimination encountered by Refugees and Asylum Seekers and the impact that this has on the integration process and their future life chances.

### **OUTCOME 3**

Under Outcome3: Refugees and asylum seekers exercise their rights and responsibilities, the following Priority Areas have been identified:

#### **I. PATHWAY TO CITIZENSHIP**

- Ensure the provision of legal advice free of charge, in a timely manner and by appropriately trained individuals to those navigating the asylum system
- Develop resources to outline rights and entitlements for asylum seekers to signpost to services and support and facilitate awareness of cultural differences
- Work with partners across sectors to ensure appropriate advice and guidance at every stage of the journey to citizenship and in particular at transition stages where individuals are often most vulnerable

**Q27 Do you agree that Pathway to Citizenship should be a priority to achieve outcome 3? Please tick the box which best reflects your response**

☐

**Strongly Agree**  
**Strongly Disagree**

☐

**Agree**

☐

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

☐☐

**Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

**Q28 Do you agree that the actions identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 3?** Please tick the box which best reflects your response

y

**Strongly Agree**  
**Strongly Disagree**

**Agree**

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

**Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

Enhanced support and provision of qualified immigration practitioners.

**Q29 Are there any other actions that should be considered to deliver the priority?**  
Please tick the box which best reflects your response

y

**Yes**

**No**

If you have selected 'yes', please detail in the box below

A commitment to resourcing and growing the immigration advice sector

A commitment to build the knowledge and capacity of the advice sector to respond to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers as well as developing specialist interventions where necessary.

## II. Partnership with Communities

- Work with partners across sectors to develop programmes to facilitate cultural exchange and increase awareness in both newcomer and indigenous communities

**Q30 Do you agree that Partnership with Communities should be a priority to achieve outcome 3?** Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☐

**Strongly Agree**

**Strongly Disagree**

☐

**Agree**

☐

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

☐☐

**Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

**Q31 Do you agree that the actions identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 3?** Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☐☐☒☐☐

**Strongly Agree**  
**Strongly Disagree**

**Agree**

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

**Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

We agree that partnership with Communities is critical to the promotion of integration and we would also welcome enhanced partnership working with local government.

**Q32 Are there any other actions that should be considered to deliver the priority?**

Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☒

y

☐

**Yes**

If you have selected 'yes', please detail in the box below

- Provision and resourcing of a structured orientation programme for Refugees and Asylum Seekers.
- Develop opportunities that will support receiving communities to understand matters relating to changes in their community and how they can welcome Asylum Seekers and Refugees.
- Enhanced partnership working between TEO and local government to support localised integration.

**III. ACCESS TO SERVICES**

- Ensure front line staff receive training to adequately recognise and respond to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers
- Development of easily accessible information to support refugees to understand and access their entitlements



**Q33 Do you agree that Access to Services should be a priority to achieve outcome 3?**

Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☐

**Strongly Agree**  
**Strongly Disagree**

☐

**Agree**

☐

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

☐☐

**Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

**Q34 Do you agree that the actions identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 3? Please tick the box which best reflects your response**

☐

**Strongly Agree**  
**Strongly Disagree**

☐

**Agree**

☒

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

☐☐

**Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

Ensure that policy makers / departments have the skills and training to understand the lived experience of Refugees and Asylum seekers and are competent in considering the requirements of diverse communities when developing policy and practice.

**Q35 Are there any other actions that should be considered to deliver the priority?**

Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☒

**Yes**

☐

**No**

If you have selected 'yes', please detail in the box

Develop a training programme to build the capacity of policy makers / departments to understand the lived experience of Refugees and Asylum seekers and how policy impacts these communities.

**Q36 Are there other higher priority areas and associated actions that should be considered to achieve outcome 3: Refugees and asylum seekers exercise their rights and responsibilities?**

Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☒

y

**Yes**

☐

**No**

Structured orientation programme that is available to all Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Investment in ESOL classes

Capacity Building / cultural competence training within the advice sector

Resourcing of Immigration Advisors.

#### **OUTCOME 4**

Under Outcome 4: Refugees and asylum seekers are supported to achieve their full potential, the following Priority Areas have been identified:

##### **I. ENGLISH AS A SECOND OR OTHER LANGUAGE (ESOL)**

- Ensure asylum seekers are identified as a key area of need in the proposed ESOL strategy to take account of their unique and specific needs and circumstances
- Ensure pre-beginner levels are recognised within the ESOL framework

- Ensure appropriate resourcing for ESOL support in schools for newcomer pupils and the development of parent and child programmes to facilitate whole home learning.

**Q37 Do you agree that ESOL should be a priority to achieve outcome 4?** Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☐ y

☐
☐
☐
☐

**Strongly Agree**  
**Strongly Disagree**

**Agree**

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

**Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

**Q38 Do you agree that the actions identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 4?** Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☐
☐
☒ x

☐
☐

**Strongly Agree**  
**Strongly Disagree**

**Agree**

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

**Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

The current provision of ESOL is not meeting demand. Further investment in provision is required by the Department.

Acquiring English is key to unlocking other avenues of integration. The RIS needs to review the current provision and ensure that early access to ESOL is available to those Refugees and Asylum Seekers who require it.

**Q39 Are there any other actions that should be considered to deliver the priority?**

Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☒

y

**Yes**

☐

**No**

Further investment in provision of ESOL classes

Review the fees for other further education / vocational and academic courses that deter refugees and asylum seekers from accessing educational opportunities and furthering their life opportunities.

## **II. EMPLOYABILITY AND WELFARE**

- Pathways to work strategies take account of the circumstances and needs of asylum seekers and refugees

- The Executive continues to engage with Home Office to urge a review of the right to work restrictions on asylum seekers
- Support is developed to help refugees and asylum seekers to identify equivalent qualifications or access additional or alternative training where necessary.

**Q40 Do you agree that Employability and Welfare should be a priority to achieve outcome 4?** Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☐ y

☐
☐
☐
☐

**Strongly Agree**  
**Strongly Disagree**

**Agree**

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

**Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

**Q41 Do you agree that the actions identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 4?** Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☐
☐
☒ x

☐
☐

**Strongly Agree**  
**Strongly Disagree**

**Agree**

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

**Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

Belfast City Council would recommend the need for targeted programmes to address the loss of confidence, matters around trauma and the gaps that many Refugees have in their employment history that deters them from entering the labour market.

**Q42 Are there any other actions that should be considered to deliver the priority?**

Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☒

y

**Yes**

☐

**No**

If you have selected 'yes', please detail in the box

- Address loss of skills and confidence due to the asylum journey and the restrictions placed on asylum seekers and their access to the labour market.
- Investigate the impact of trauma and how that is preventing many from accessing the labour market.
- Investigate the extent of racial discrimination within workplaces and within recruitment practices.
- Difficulties with transferring qualifications.
- Targeted programmes to create pathways into professions.

**III. EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

- Ensure appropriate structures are in place across departments to develop a coordinated approach to the delivery of services for refugees and asylum seekers
- Policy makers engage regularly with both organisations working with asylum seekers and refugees as well as directly with those with lived experience

**Q43 Do you agree that Effective Partnership Working should be a priority to achieve outcome 4?** Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☐

**Strongly Agree**  
**Strongly Disagree**

☐

**Agree**

☐

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

☐☐

**Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

**Q44** Do you agree that the actions identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 4? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☐

**Strongly Agree**  
**Strongly Disagree**

☐

**Agree**

☒

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

☐☐

**Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

Belfast City Council agree that policy makers engage regularly with both organisations working with asylum seekers and refugees as well as directly with those with lived experience. However we believe for this engagement to work, it needs to be underpinned by a training programme to enable refugees and asylum seekers understand how decisions are made and how to effect change.

**Q45 Are there any other actions that should be considered to deliver the priority?**

Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☒

y

☐

**Yes**

**No**

If you have selected 'yes', please detail in the box

- Ensure that any engagement structure is sufficiently resourced and underpinned by a training programme for participants and that it is representative of asylum seekers and refugees not necessarily networked into organisations.
- Develop links with local government to support targeted programmes to improve employability pathways.

**Q46 Are there other higher priority areas and associated actions that should be considered to achieve outcome 4: Refugees and asylum seekers are supported to achieve their full potential?**

Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☒

y

☐

**Yes**

**No**

If you have selected 'yes', please detail in the box below

All asylum seekers arriving in NI receive the same level of support as those that arrive through the resettlement programme.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**



The Strategy does not make it clear as to which department is the designated lead.

The absence of robust and coherent data and the limitations of ethnic monitoring will make it difficult to monitor the impact of the strategy. The Executive needs to commit to developing guidance on ethnic monitoring.

Section 7 of the draft Strategy sets out how we intend to monitor and evaluate the Strategy. It proposes that implementation will be monitored by the Strategic Planning Group through regular updates from departments and an annual report on progress.

**Q47 Do you agree with the approach to monitoring progress thorough the Strategic Planning Group?** Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☐☐☒☐☐

**Strongly Agree**

**Agree**

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

**Disagree**

**Strongly Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

The monitoring arrangements should be made clearer. For example, when will the Monitoring and Evaluation plan be published? How will departments consult with those with lived experience?

The RIS recognises the scarcity of routinely collected administrative data. This acknowledgement needs to be translated into a commitment to improve and expand the availability of data and provide direction for future ethnic monitoring.

**Q48 Do you agree with the approach to consider research taking into account the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers here to provide a wider and more informed**

**picture on the effectiveness of the strategy?** Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☐☐☒☐☐

**Strongly Agree**

**Agree**

**Neither Agree or Disagree**

**Disagree**

**Strongly Disagree**

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below

The Migrant and Minority Ethnic Council has developed a portal bringing together a rich array of research that has been carried out to date, we would recommend that the Executive review this as a starting point. In addition, Belfast City Council has commissioned research, looking at the lived experience of people from BAME communities in Belfast, this is due to complete in June 2022. We would also recommend that the Executive office also review any findings / recommendations arising from the NI Affairs Committee investigation.

We believe that there is a need to improve data so that the dept and range of ethnic inequalities are understood and addressed.

#### **OTHER COMMENTS**

**Q49 Do you have any other comments to inform the final strategy?**

Please tick the box which best reflects your response

☒☐

**Yes**

**No**

If you have selected 'yes', please detail in the box below

**Belfast City Council notes that the strategy does not reflect the full range of actions that will be taken to progress the outcomes and that further work to fully implement the**

**strategy will be taken forward by departments across the lifetime of the Strategy, however we have noted some key areas for action below:**

The strategy must reflect the current reality and the significant increase in asylum seekers arriving in Belfast including the shortage of housing and the increased pressure of finding school places and of ensuring access to health and other services.

The strategy needs to recognise also the challenges to integration that the increased use of contingent asylum accommodation, such as hotels brings. It also needs to plan for the capacity of services to respond appropriately.

The strategy also needs to reflect how the pandemic has created serious challenges for integration and inclusion. Lockdown and social distancing measures have transformed how people connect with others. While virtual efforts, enabled family and friends to stay in touch these have been less accessible for refugees and asylum seekers who continue to be impacted by digital poverty.

In addition, the strategy also needs to reflect the concerns articulated by the Refugee and Asylum Forum in relation to the proposed Nationality and Borders Bill. The UK Government is currently proposing to introduce new legislation to reform the asylum and immigration system, which is set to have major consequences for the integration of refugees in the years ahead. The nationality and borders bill which is proceeding through Parliament is set to make widespread changes to current asylum rules. From the perspective of integration, one of the most significant changes in the bill is a new distinction between refugees based on their mode of arrival to the UK. The bill will give the government the scope to treat differently those who have not come to the UK 'directly' from a country or territory where their life or freedom was threatened, who have not presented themselves without delay to the UK authorities, or who have come to the UK unlawfully without good cause (Nationality and Borders Bill 2021). This will allow the Home Office to introduce a new limited protection status for this cohort if their asylum claim is successful, which only offers temporary protection and does not allow for recourse to public funds (other than in instances of destitution). The bill therefore risks undermining the integration of these refugees by inhibiting a pathway to settlement and restricting access to welfare support.

### **Integration as a shared responsibility**

The strategy rightly recognises integration as being the responsibility of refugees, government and receiving communities. However, it fails to outline any outcomes in relation to building a better support basis within receiving communities to understand asylum patterns and to better respond to asylum trends and the arrival of new neighbours.

Experience shows that real integration doesn't happen in action plans; it happens in neighbourhoods and communities. The varied nature and scale of challenges with integration means that tailored local plans and interventions are needed to address the issues specific to particular places. BCC would welcome enhanced working relations with TEO to support effective integration and to improve understanding of how integration is experienced in neighbourhoods across Belfast.

We believe that a further outcome of the strategy should focus on receiving communities and supporting them to respond positively to diversity.

### **Learning from Lived Experience**

BCC welcomes the commitment in the strategy to develop a framework to ensure the lived experience of refugees' voices are listened to and that the co-production model is embedded in policy making. We believe that any engagement structure needs to be sufficiently resourced and underpinned by a training programme for participants. Such a structure must also be representative of asylum seekers and refugees not networked into organisations.

### **Leadership and expertise that can drive integration**

We believe that there is a need for strengthened leadership that understands the lived experience of refugees and asylum seekers and that has the capacity to drive integration in policy development and service delivery.

We believe that there is a need for policy makers across all sectors to understand better the lived experience of Refugee and Asylum Seekers.

### **A resourced and competent support sector**

We would recommend a commitment and action around supporting the capacity of the community and voluntary sector to continue to provide high quality advice and services to refugees and asylum seekers, as well as for policy makers. This includes funding of the community and voluntary sector, significant investment in immigration practitioners as well as targeted training for the advice sector.

### **Settlement support**

We would recommend a commitment by the Executive to facilitate the support and settlement of asylum seekers, who arrive here spontaneously, on an equal footing with those who arrive through the resettlement route. We believe also that the Executive should consult with the Home Office about exploring accommodation outside of Belfast for asylum seekers, as the current provision in hotels is not conducive to promoting integration and inclusion. It is also putting a significant demand on services and the support that can be offered to asylum seekers.

### **Tailored support and opportunities for people to reach their full potential**

Being in secure work and progression in work is key to supporting integration. Refugees should have the opportunity to upskill and reskill into the jobs of the future. There needs to be tailored support and opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees to reach their full potential.

### **A comprehensive orientation programme.**

The RIS strategy commits to ‘work with partners across sectors to develop programmes to facilitate cultural exchange and increase cultural awareness in both newcomer and indigenous communities’. We welcome this but recommend a commitment to invest in a comprehensive and coordinated orientation programme for new arrivals. Cultural orientation accelerates the process of achieving self-sufficiency and participation in community life.

### **Trauma support services**

Poor psychological wellbeing through traumatic experiences can hinder the integration process as can poor physical health arising from persecution and the asylum journey. It is critical that models of trauma support are available to enable refugees and asylum seekers to reach their full potential.

### **Racism, inequalities and discrimination**

Racism and discrimination are key features of the refugee and asylum experience in NI. This needs to be spelt out in the strategy and clarity provided as to how the strategy will complement work undertaken by DOJ to address hate issues.

### **Family Re-Unification**

The strategy would also need commit to working with the home office on matters relating family reunification, this is one of the first priorities for asylum seekers and refugees that arrive here. Unification of families is critical to the integration process.

### **Data and understanding ethnic inequalities**

The RIS recognises the scarcity of routinely collected administrative data. This acknowledgement needs to be translated into a commitment to improve and expand the availability data and to advise local government in this area. Without adequate data it is impossible to understand the depth and impact of ethnic inequalities.

### **Monitoring arrangements**

The monitoring arrangements should be made clearer. For example, when will the Monitoring and Evaluation plan be published? What indicators will be used to monitor integration and the outcomes within the strategy? How will Departments consult with those with lived experience?

Lastly, which Minister will have overall responsibility for the strategy?

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**Belfast**  
City Council

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Requests for use of the City Hall and the Provision of Hospitality</b>
<b>Date:</b>	18th February, 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Walsh, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Aisling Milliken, Functions and Exhibition Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
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"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	This report and the accompanying appendix contain the recommended approach for requests from external organisations for access to the City Hall function rooms received up to 7th February, which appear to the Function Management Unit to comply with the criteria previously established by the Committee and are recommended for approval.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	The Committee is requested to approve the recommendations made in respect of applications received up to 7th February, as set out in the attached schedule.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
	<b><u>Background Information</u></b>
3.1	Members will recall that the Committee, at its meeting on 6th January, 2017, agreed to modify the criteria governing access to the City Hall function rooms for external organisations.

3.2	<p>The Committee also agreed to implement room-hire charges for some categories of function and revised the approach to the provision of civic hospitality for functions, on foot of the agreed efficiency programme. Some further modifications to this approach were agreed by the Committee on 24th March and 23rd June, 2017 and 23rd June and 25th October, 2019.</p> <p><b><u>Key Issues</u></b></p>
3.3	<p>The existing revised criteria and scale of charges have been applied to the various requests received and the recommendations herein are offered to the Committee on this basis for approval.</p>
3.4	<p>The attached schedule covers four applications for functions, scheduled for 2022 and 2023, however, approval is linked to City Hall recovery and functions will be planned in line with NI Executive guidance.</p> <p><b><u>COVID implications</u></b></p>
3.5	<p>In managing and delivering future functions, liaison with and guidance for organisers will be provided by officers to ensure compliance with any relevant social distancing guidelines at the time of their function. Committee approval for their function to take place in City Hall is recommended on the basis of their compliance to this caveat and what is permissible and feasible in City Hall function rooms.</p> <p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p>
3.6	<p>The implementation of charging for external functions has commenced, in line with the Committee's decisions in the matter.</p> <p><b><u>Equality and Good Relations / Rural Needs Implications</u></b></p>
3.7	<p>There are no direct good relations, equality or rural needs implications arising from this report.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Document Attached</b>
	Schedule of function requests received up to 7th February, 2022



## FEBRUARY 2022 CITY HALL FUNCTION APPLICATIONS

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
<b>2022 EVENTS</b>						
Dept for Communities and Eventful	7th June 2022	<b>Welcome Reception and entertainment showcase for Harkin Belfast 2022</b> – a globally significant International Disability Employment Event  Numbers attending - 150	A & B	No (waived as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
Irish Legal History Society	6th July 2022	<b>Welcome Reception</b> for guests attending the 3-day Irish Legal History Society conference taking place in QUB.  Numbers attending - 150	A & B	No (waived as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
Church of Ireland Young Men's Society Rugby Football Club	26th November 2022	<b>Centenary dinner</b> to celebrate the last 100 years of the club, its history and contribution to sport and social life in the city.  Numbers attending – 250 - 400	C	No (Voluntary/ NFP)	Yes, Wine Reception as significant anniversary	Approve No charge Wine Reception <i>or £500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on tables</i>
<b>2023</b>						
Belfast Solicitors Association	10th June 2023	<b>80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala Dinner</b> to celebrate the BSA promoting highest standard of legal practice.  Numbers attending – 130	C	No (Voluntary/ NFP)	Yes, Wine Reception as significant anniversary	Approve No charge Wine Reception <i>or £500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on tables</i>

*\*For all events noted above numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of each event.*

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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Request for use of the City Hall Grounds – Belfast Mela Festival Carnival</b>
<b>Date:</b>	18th February, 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Walsh, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Aisling Milliken, Functions and Exhibition Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
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"/>

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
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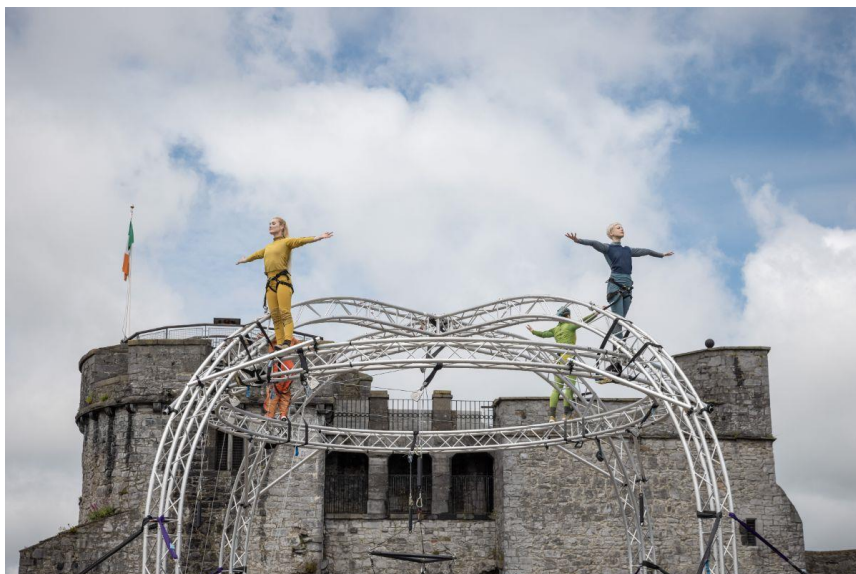
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To present a request from ArtsEkta for the use of City Hall grounds on 20th August, 2022 to host a Belfast Mela Carnival Parade Party.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	The Committee is requested to grant approval for the City Hall grounds to be used on 20th August, 2022 for the Belfast Mela Carnival Parade Party, with ArtsEkta being required to submit an event management plan and risk assessments to ensure the delivery of a safe public event.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<u>Background Information</u> Members will be aware that requests for the use of City Hall are normally dealt with under the authority delegated by the Committee to the Director of Legal and Civic Services using

	<p>criteria agreed for this purpose. Occasionally, however, it is necessary to place such requests directly before the Committee, and the request set out below falls into this category.</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>3.2 A request has been received from the organiser of the Belfast Mela to host a flagship event in the grounds of City Hall. Mela is produced by ArtsEkta, a multi-award-winning cultural organisation that works to develop intercultural relationships at the heart of the community and transform communities through shared creative experiences.</p> <p>3.3 Over the last decade, ArtsEkta has grown dramatically in size and scope and is now recognised as one of the region's leading arts charities and a pioneer in the development of intercultural arts for Northern Ireland.</p> <p>3.4 Belfast Mela began in 2007 and takes place annually in Botanic Gardens and is one of Northern Ireland's largest arts festivals bringing together music, dance, arts and food from across the world to celebrate our city's proud cultural diversity. Mela is now one of four signature cultural events supported by Belfast City Council under the <i>A City Imagining</i> cultural strategy and is an 8 day festival.</p> <p><u>The Proposed event</u></p> <p>3.5 In 2022, ArtsEkta will launch a new event as part of the festival titled '<b>Mela Carnival</b>'. This event will act as a spectacular opening to the festival and begin a series of 50 events across a full week which will culminate in the traditional event at Botanic Gardens.</p> <p>3.6 The 800-participant carnival parade will begin at Writers Square, proceed onto Royal Avenue into Donegal Place and end at City Hall grounds. Following the parade ArtsEkta request the use of the City Hall grounds for a free to access carnival party and celebration event for the participants, family/friends and wider audiences. The carnival party would be similar in size and scale to the Lord Mayor's Day previously organised by Belfast City Council City Events Team.</p> <p>The proposed event would include the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage based family entertainment</li> <li>• Street performers</li> <li>• Craft and workshop marquees</li> <li>• Food traders (<i>subject to securing a market licence</i>)</li> <li>• Outdoor aerial and music show</li> </ul>
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3.7	<p>A key feature of the Carnival Party is the performance by outdoor arts group Fidget Feet to be hosted on one of the front lawns. 'A Handful of Dreams' is an outdoor show that combines aerial and circus arts with live Irish traditional music and dance. The show features 5 aerial dancers performing on an outdoor rig accompanied by 2 live musicians and is inspired by the poem The Stolen Child by Irish poet William Butler Yeats.</p> <p><i>(See attached visuals of the show)</i></p>
3.8	<p>The Function Team will work closely with Tourism, Culture, Heritage &amp; Arts Unit and Corporate Communications to promote the event and work closely with Corporate Health and Safety Unit to review the Event Management Plan, logistics for the outdoors rig and event risk assessments to ensure delivery of a safe, entertaining and free event in the grounds of City Hall.</p>
3.9	<p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>There are no direct resource implications in terms of staff time or additional costs associated with this request and hosting this carnival party. The normal event support in the form of electrical provision in the grounds will be provided.</p>
3.10	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>There are no direct good relations, equality or rural needs implications arising from this report.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	A Handful of Dreams images

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**Belfast Mela Carnival Parade – 20<sup>th</sup> August 2022**  
**Proposed Outdoor Show – ‘A Handful of Dreams’**



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## Working Group on the Climate Crisis

Monday, 31st January, 2022

### MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Members present: Councillor Smyth (Chairperson);  
Alderman Copeland; and  
Councillors de Faoite, Hutchinson and  
McReynolds.

In attendance: Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;  
Ms. C. McKeown, Sustainable Development Manager;  
Mr. R. Connelly, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer;  
Mr. R. McLernon, Resilience Co-ordinator; and  
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

#### **Apologies**

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman Dorrian and Councillor Baker.

#### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 6th October 2021 were taken as read and signed as correct.

#### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were reported.

#### **Just Transition - London School of Economics**

Mr. B. Curran, Grantham Research Institute - London School of Economics, attended in connection with this item and was welcomed by the Chairperson.

Mr. Curran provided the Working Group with an overview and definition of just transition, its objectives and outcomes necessary in the delivery of a net-zero emissions economy. He stated that just transition placed people and social outcomes at its central core, providing them with support mechanisms, including financial support to enable transition from a reliance on fossil fuels to more sustainable forms of energy which required social and behavioural transformation.

The Members were informed of the challenges which lay ahead, including the re-training of employees from fossil-based industries and providing them with the necessary employment skills required for an emerging green economy. He referred to the potential impact, on a regional basis, in the transition to a zero-base emissions economy and highlighted the work that the Institute had undertaken in engaging with both government and large financial institutions, to reinforce their role in providing the necessary financial support to ensure that a just transition economy was achieved.

Mr. Curran emphasised that Just Transition was about the development of opportunities and ensuring that those opportunities were shared equitably, amongst all social groups and communities, while limiting risk. He stated that a just transition required to be managed and was estimated that it could create one hundred million jobs world-wide. The Members were informed of the potential risks associated with the transition to a just transition economy, including stranded assets, communities, and entire geographical areas. The Working Group was reminded that, at the COP 26 conference, a declaration in support of the conditions for a just transition had been signed with the EU and sixteen governments. The Members were informed that the policies to achieve that objective were now in place and that it was necessary to move to the implementation phase. Mr. Curran reinforced the need to ensure that lower income families were protected from the impact of climate change and that the negative social outcomes were identified and remedied.

The Members were informed that just transition, as identified by Lord Stern, was predicated on three key areas, namely place, people and space. Mr. Curran stated further that Northern Ireland faced additional challenges, including a higher reliance on fossil fuels, a large agricultural sector and the need for an extensive retrofit of its extensive public housing stock. He emphasised the importance of providing the right mix of financial and policy support to scale up and minimise the risks of climate change, to vulnerable communities, in the delivery of a just transition.

Mr. Curran referred to the opportunities to encourage investment in renewables in Northern Ireland stating that the offshore wind energy market had matured and had attracted considerable financial capital. He reported that it was important to develop and encourage investment in new and emerging technologies and highlighted the need to focus on energy efficiency programmes. The Members were informed of the tangible benefits, to Northern Ireland, associated with a just transition economy, including opportunities to reduce fuel poverty, the creation of quality green jobs and the health benefits associated with clean air and healthier lifestyles.

The Working Group was informed that, at the COP 26 conference, a sovereign green bond was issued to encourage investment in green technologies and that, since October 2021, £16 billion had been raised in support of that bond issue. Mr Curran stated that other innovative projects might be possible, including opportunities for the Housing Executive to raise both public and private finance in connection with the retrofit of its housing stock and the possibility of raising a local just transition bond, in connection with the implementation of specific green projects.

The Chairperson enquired as to how local authorities and Belfast City Council, in particular, could secure investment in respect of local just transition bonds, given its restrictions on capital raising powers. In response, Mr. Curran suggested that the Council could explore the opportunities to build community engagement partnerships which might include local enterprises, churches, and universities. The Working Group was informed by Ms. K. Arbuckle, NI Community Energy, that such partnerships did exist currently and that she would provide the Working Group more detailed information in the matter, as part of her presentation.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Steering Group, thanked Mr. Curran for his detailed and informative presentation and reinforced the need to endorse and develop community energy as a means to encourage investment and deliver the net-zero emissions target agreed at COP 26.

### **NI Community Energy Co-operative**

Ms. K. Arbuckle, Ms. T. O'Hara, Ms A. Forde, and Mr. R. Davison, NI Community Energy Co-operative, attended in connection with this item and were welcomed by the Chairperson.

Ms. Arbuckle stated that Community Development Projects in Northern Ireland were much less developed than in other parts of the UK and Ireland. The Members were informed that the main reason for this under development was a lack of policy support and investment. Ms. Arbuckle referred to a number of projects which were in operation currently, including Drumlin Wind Energy and Edenderry Village Energy. The Working Group was provided with a definition of community energy which she hoped would be adopted by the Council and highlighted the benefits from community energy projects namely - economic, social and environmental.

Ms. Arbuckle referred to the economic cycle associated with community energy, in that the return on investment provided additional finance to be reinvested, in new energy projects in addition to the provision of lower cost energy for the community energy partnership. Ms. O'Hara stated that community energy was focussed on ownership and referred to the opportunities for the Council to engage with local community energy projects. She stated that, for community energy projects to become more established in Northern Ireland, the Council could offer support, by providing solutions to many of the barriers, including policy, legal and financial, which restricted the expansion of community energy projects currently.

The Working Group was provided with a number of UK examples where public bodies had transferred some of its assets to be developed, as part of local community projects. Ms. O'Hara provided examples of how the Council might act as a facilitator in regard to the promotion and expansion of local community energy projects, including the opportunity to encourage demonstrator projects, providing them with the resources and support to ensure their viability and success.

Ms. Forde provided the Members with an overview in regard to the establishment and work undertaken by Drumlin Wind Energy. She stated that the cooperative had been established to create a range of community owned wind turbines and that it had secured a membership of approximately one thousand members, under a share ownership programme, with profits being redirected back into the community. The Members were informed that the education of young people on climate change, through schools and colleges, was a key objective of the cooperative which was self-financed through its community fund. Ms. Forde outlined an example where NICE had a partnership, with local schools, to provide PV renewable energy for the school buildings. The Working Group was informed of the benefits which additional funding, provided by the Council, could make in terms of an education programme on climate change, within Belfast schools, to assist with the education of young people in the renewable sector.

Mr. Davison provided the Working Group with information in regard to the establishment of the Edenderry Cooperative which aimed to utilise a range of water-based heat pumps and solar panels to develop community based green energy generating capacity. He stated that, as part of a feasibility study, discussions had taken place between DfE and DAERA to progress the Edenderry just transition development project which included the development of a range of local EV charging points within the village. Mr Davison stated that, whilst the project was at an early feasibility stage, the project was developing at pace and that it was anticipated that a community share offer, to potential investors, would be possible in the near future.

Ms. Arbuckle informed the Members that subsidies for the installation of Solar PV panels were now no longer available. She stated that there were opportunities to finance similar projects through other revenue streams and provided the Members with a list of current Belfast community solar PV projects which were operating successfully, throughout the city. Ms. Arbuckle referred to some of the obstacles which required to be addressed in order to expand the network of solar projects namely, securing connection to the electricity grid and securing planning permission in regard to the erection of solar PV panels. She referred also to research being undertaken in regard to battery storage facilities. Ms. Arbuckle highlighted the potential for collaborative working between the Council and NI Community Energy Cooperative, to overcome many of the barriers being faced by community energy projects, including the possibility of working together to develop other similar schemes. Ms. Arbuckle stated that the Council might wish to consider including community energy within its community action plan.

In response to a question from the Chairperson in regard to the most appropriate form of green energy for Northern Ireland and Belfast, Ms. Arbuckle stated that there were a range of community energy options available, including EV charging, hydro, solar and wind and that the energy source used was often geared towards the specific requirements of the area, including the proposed development project under consideration.

A Member suggested that some of the community energy projects, which had been presented, might be suitable for the development site at the North Foreshore both, in terms of providing local community employment and the production of clean renewable energy. The Working Group stated that it wished officers to address the issue of community energy generation projects to be considered by the newly expanded Brexit Committee with its modified Terms of Reference.

The Sustainable Development Manager referred to a number of legal issues which had been raised previously, in terms of the long-term licensing or leasing of Council assets, for the purpose of PV installation. She stated that the long-term leasing of an asset could be regarded as the disposal of an asset and consequently, the Council could be obligated to obtain best value for money by testing the commercial market for its use. She stated further that the process had acted as an inhibitor in the development of those projects. Ms. Arbuckle provided the Working Group with an assurance that, in terms of roof solar panels, there was no restriction in connection with the Council being tied into a closed, long-term lease agreement and that the solar panels could be removed, from any Council owned asset, without any financial penalty. The Sustainability Manager suggested that Legal Services be consulted in any future green energy projects, involving Council assets, to ensure compliance with its policies and legal obligations.

The Working Group noted the information provided and agreed, subject to confirmation by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, that a site visit be undertaken to Edenderry Village, to view the development site associated with the community energy proposals for the village. The Working Group expressed their gratitude to the presenters for their detailed and informative presentations. The Members expressed their hopes that the issues of climate change and future green energy projects would be given the priority attributed to them, given that the issues under discussion had now been elevated to a Council committee decision making forum.

#### **Update on BCC Climate Plan**

The Climate Commissioner provided an update on the progress which had been made on the completion of the Council's climate plan. The Members were informed that evidence continued to be collected to ensure that Council investments, in green energy developments, provided the greatest return and had the maximum benefit, in the reduction of the Council's

emissions. The Climate Commissioner reported that, following completion of the sustainability review, the Council's emissions baseline was being finalised, prior to its publication. She reported that the next stage of the process involved an energy audit of five Council buildings.

The Members were informed that eighty-five per cent of Council generated emissions (scope 1 and 2) came from its buildings with the remainder attributable mostly to its fleet. The Climate Commissioner reported that it was proposed that the terms of reference, in regard to the Council's climate risk assessment, would be presented to the programme board, in the near future, in order to map out those areas of the city which presented the greatest risk to council assets including, the identification of mitigation measures to reduce that risk.

The Members were informed that, within the Council's climate fund, fifteen climate pilot projects had been approved and that a number of other potential projects were being explored. The Climate Commissioner stated that additional external resources would be required to manage and monitor delivery of the climate action plan, including the need to establish accountability and delivery mechanisms, at departmental level, to ensure that Council departments were accountable for their emissions profiles and monitoring programmes.

The Climate Commissioner highlighted the importance attached to the development of a comprehensive investment plan which was required to upgrade Council owned assets and ensure their compatibility with future emissions targets.

A Member voiced concerns in regard to ensuring that climate mitigation actions were communicated, in a clear and concise manner, so that the public were supportive of future climate mitigation measures. He cited the recent adverse publicity created by the Department for Infrastructure's flood defence project, on the Stranmillis Embankment, and the need for the development of a climate communications strategy to avert a similar occurrence. The Member voiced his concern that his proposals, regarding the future development of Beechvale Farm, had not been progressed and suggested that appropriate horticultural apprenticeship schemes be developed to encourage both interest and employment, for young people, in the emerging green economy.

Noted.

#### **All Party Working Group on Climate Change and Brexit Committee Merge**

The Climate Commissioner highlighted her concerns in regard to the resource impact on her team in servicing a Committee, as opposed to a Working Group, and the fact that the issue of broader city resilience (to other shocks and stresses such as a public health emergency, cyber-security, energy crisis etc.) might not be given the same level of priority, given that the focus of the Committee was weighted in terms of climate change. She highlighted her concerns that changes in the Committee reporting mechanisms could impact adversely in determining the allocation of resources in the prioritisation of climate resilience and mitigation measures. The Resilience Coordinator stated that the Committee had the authority to modify its terms of reference to include climate resilience as part of its portfolio.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Working Group, noted the information provided and thanked the reporting officers and staff of Democratic Services in supporting the requirements of the Working Group throughout its tenure.

Chairperson

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