

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



**Belfast
City Council**

9th October, 2023

MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet as Hybrid meeting in the Lavery Room - City Hall on Tuesday, 10th October, 2023 at 5.15 pm, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. **Routine Matters**

- (a) Apologies
- (b) Minutes
- (c) Declarations of Interest

2. **Presentation**

- (a) Causeway Coast Dog Rescue

3. **Restricted**

- (a) Assessment of Odour Nuisance (Pages 1 - 6)
- (b) Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group Update (Pages 7 - 14)
- (c) GLL Annual Leisure Services Customer Survey Feedback and Outcomes (Pages 15 - 28)

- (d) GLL Annual Schedule of Charges Proposal for 2024/25 (Pages 29 - 46)
- (e) Update on Alleygates Consultation (Pages 47 - 50)
- (f) Off Street Parking update (Pages 51 - 78)
- (g) Capacity and Revenue Grant Aid (Pages 79 - 84)
- (h) Potential use of smaller tonnage vehicles for Waste Collection (Pages 85 - 94)
- (i) Update on Social Supermarkets (Pages 95 - 98)
- (j) Animal Welfare Service - Update (Pages 99 - 102)

4. **Committee/Strategic Issues**

- (a) People and Communities Committee Plan 2023/24 (Pages 103 - 110)
- (b) Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy update (Pages 111 - 138)
- (c) Youth Council Update (Pages 139 - 148)
- (d) Reference Group on Older People (Pages 149 - 158)
- (e) BCC Draft Consultation Response on the draft regulations for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR packaging scheme) (Pages 159 - 200)
- (f) DfC Rent Controls (Pages 201 - 212)
- (g) Invite to 2023 WHO European Healthy Cities Network Annual Business Meeting 2023 (Pages 213 - 216)

5. **Physical Programme and Asset Management**

- (a) Páirc an Lonnáin (Pages 217 - 220)

6. **Operational Issues**

- (a) Responsible Dog Ownership (Pages 221 - 240)
- (b) Proposal for Dual Language Street Signs (Pages 241 - 246)
- (c) Dual Language Street Sign Applications for Cardigan Drive and Dunblane Avenue (Pages 247 - 250)
- (d) Dual Language Street Sign Application for Wynchurch Avenue (Pages 251 - 256)
- (e) Verbal update on Christmas waste collections, site visits and Waste Management information sessions

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**STRATEGIC CEMETERIES AND CREMATORIUM
DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP**

Minutes of Meeting of 25th September, 2023

Members Present: Alderman Rodgers;
Councillors Black, Bower, Ferguson and Flynn.

In Attendance: Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City and Neighbourhood
Services;
Mr. S. McBride, City Protection Manager;
Mr. N. Brennan, Project Manager, Property and Projects;
Ms. S. Kalke, Client Manager, Property and Projects;
Mr. D. Armstrong, Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager;
and
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

Election of Chairperson

Nominations were sought to fill the vacant position of Chairperson and it was:

Moved by Councillor Ferguson,
Seconded by Councillor Flynn and

Resolved – that Alderman Rodgers be appointed to the position of
Chairperson for the period ended June 2024.

Alderman Rodgers accepted the appointment and thanked the Members for their
nomination.

(Alderman Rodgers in the Chair.)

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 12th December 2022 were taken as read and
signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Update on New Crematorium

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services provided the Members with
background information in regard to the construction of the new Crematorium facility at
Roselawn, now that planning permission for the development had been approved. Visuals
of the latest design of the new crematorium building were presented to the Members of
the Working Group, these included images of both the proposed interior and exterior
design.

The Director provided the Members with information on the next steps in the lead
up to the construction and development of the new crematorium including wayfinding,
design principles, tender awards, and handover, scheduled to be completed in 2025.

In response to a question from the Chairperson regarding the height clearance of
the entrance to allow for access by the emergency services and including the pitch of the

roof to ensure adequate run-off and drainage, the Project Manager assured the Members that the concerns raised had been taken into consideration and had been incorporated into the design of the new crematorium building. The Client Manager stated that, as part of the design process, crematorium staff had been consulted and problems identified at an early stage to ensure that the design of building met all their operational requirements.

The Project Manager confirmed that the Crematorium had been designed in such a way to ensure respectful throughput of mourners, with each chapel provided with a seating capacity for two hundred mourners. He provided the Working Group with details of the proposed fabric design and materials used, in both chapels, to reflect adequately their unique positioning and design themes.

In response to a question from a Member in regard to alternative use options for the current Crematorium, the Project Manager reported that a number of business models were being explored currently and that the Council continued to wait on a response from DfI Roads Service, in regard to access and egress proposals, as part of the Crematorium development project.

The Working Group was provided with additional information on the signage used to direct mourners which would be constructed sensitively and positioned to ensure that that the circulation of mourners was managed in such a way to ensure that traffic bottlenecks and misdirection of mourners and visitors was avoided.

In response to questions from Members in regard to sensitivity of the information and directional signage, including soundproofing to eliminate noise migration, the Client and Project Manager assured the Working Group that the issues raised had been considered and incorporated into both the layout and design of the Crematorium facility.

The Members thanked the Project Manager and Client Manager for their detailed and informative presentation and agreed to undertake an information gathering site visit to the new Crematorium, in Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, subject to the approval of the People and Communities Committee.

Noted.

New Crematorium Naming

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services provided the Members with a update on proposals to consider appropriate naming of the new ceremony rooms from a list of proposed shortlisted options. The Members agreed that the following preferred options should be forwarded to the People and Communities Committee for consideration:

Option 1

Hawthorn and Rowan

Option 2

Lagan and Creevy

The Members requested that the People and Communities Committee be made aware that the Working Group had a stated preference for Option 1. The Working Group agreed also that the 'City of Belfast Crematorium' should continue to be used as the name for the new crematorium in order to ensure consistency and that the two ceremony rooms should be referred to as 'Chapels, subject to the approval of the People and Communities Committee.

The City Protection Manager reminded the Members that, at the December meeting of the Working Group, it had been agreed, subject to the endorsement by the People and Communities Committee, to extend the timeframe for the statutory submission of cremation forms to two working days for operational reasons.

It was reported that the two-day statutory timeframe had been introduced and was, in the main, being complied with by the majority of funeral directors. The Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager confirmed that the two-day working time frame provided the opportunity for staff to follow up on partially completed cremation forms and to engage with GPs as required.

The City Protection Manager confirmed that Roselawn Crematorium had retained its green flag status. The Chair and Members of the Working Group offered their congratulations to the staff in achieving green flag status in recognition of their hard work and dedicated service in regard to the operation and administration of, both, cremation and burial services at Roselawn.

The Members were provided with an update on the Muslim burial ground within Roselawn which had an estimated future capacity of approximately eighteen months with request for a further extension of approximately fifty to sixty burial plots. The City Protection Manager reported also that work was ongoing to assess if the area designated for the burial of cremated remains, at Section P, was suitable to be extended. He stated that the work associated with the possible extension of land, identified for cremated remains, was being progressed through the Council's capital programme.

The Working Group was informed that the visitor centre, located at the City Cemetery, was opened in February 2023, with a formal launch to be organised once all restoration work had been completed. The Members were informed that headstones in regard to the Commonwealth War Graves had arrived at the City Cemetery after previous vandalism incidents, and that the replacement headstones would be erected in partnership with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The Working Group noted the work which had been undertaken at the City Cemetery, including the erection of the new visitor centre and restoration work. The Members thanked the officers and staff for their dedication and offered their congratulations on the work undertaken as part of the process.

The City Protection Manager stated that a small amount of funding had been received from the Department for Communities (DfC) in regard to the Council's historic graveyards, culminating in the completion of four condition surveys. He reported that the condition surveys had highlighted the reasons why those graveyards were not suitable to be accessed by the public and identified the future work required to remedy that situation, under difficult public finance considerations. In terms of the Shankill Graveyard, it was reported that a conservation architect had been appointed as part of the perimeter rebuild programme. The City Protection Manager advised that the opening hours to the graveyard had now been extended. The Working Group was informed of the future staff resource requirements attached to Roselawn, as the number of graves had increased with associated additional maintenance requirements. The City Protection Manager stated that future staffing models were being assessed, as part of that process, within a restricted budgetary framework.

Noted.

Update on Future Burial Provision

The Director of City and Neighbourhood services provided the Members of the Working Group with an update on future burial land provision and were asked to consider including the proposed burial site at Troop as one of the existing agreed shortlisted

sites at Dundrod and Moira. She referred to the complexities surrounding the previous sites which had been shortlisted and the advantage associated with collaborative working, with other councils, in connection with the Troopers - Lane site.

After discussion, the Working Group agreed to add Troopers - Lane to the list of shortlisted potential burial sites, subject to the approval of the People and Communities Committee.

Date of Next Meeting

The Working Group agreed that its next meeting would be held as a site visit to the new Crematorium, in Antrim and Newtownabbey Council area on Monday, 11th December at 11.00 a.m.

Chairperson

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Subject:	2023-24 Draft People and Communities Committee Plan
Date:	10 th October 2023
Reporting Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Director City Services, City & Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Ann-Marie Mervyn, Performance and Improvement Manager

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒								
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted. Insert number 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime									
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted? <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td style="text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td style="text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td style="text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	☐	After Council Decision	☐	Sometime in the future	☐	Never	☐
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Never	☐								

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

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	This report provides a draft People & Communities Committee Plan summarising the Committee's key priorities for 2023-24.

	The Committee is asked to consider further this report which was deferred from the People and Communities Committee meeting of 12 September 2023.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • Approve the draft People and Communities Committee Plan priorities for 2023-24.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The 2023-24 draft P&C Committee Plan has been developed in the context of the Council's Corporate Plan and the Belfast Agenda and considering the Belfast Agenda Refresh. Consequently, the new Committee Plan contains the commitments within the Corporate Delivery Plan, which fall under the remit of this Committee, plus additional deliverables that have been agreed by the P&C Committee throughout 2022-23 and are relevant to the Standing Orders. The draft Plan sets out the main priorities and programmes of work that the Committee oversees to maximise the Council's contribution the Belfast Agenda.
3.2	At the SP&R Committee on 18th August 2023 the Corporate Annual Delivery Plan 2023-24, setting out the in-year deliverables against the priorities, was agreed as part of the four-year corporate plan.
3.3	The structure of the delivery plan is themed under the following groupings: • Our services • Economic recovery • Community recovery • Environmental recovery • Strategic Planning frameworks, and • Organisational Foundations.
3.4	A series of priorities fall under each theme, each with a number of committed deliverables for 2023-24.
3.5	Members will recall that the People and Communities Committee is responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects aimed at improving life at a local level in the context of the outcomes agreed in the community and corporate plans and other corporate strategy. This includes: • Developing and delivering programmes, events and activities to promote health, safety and well-being at a local level

- Administering and enforcing the Council's powers and duties under the Public Health Acts and all environmental health and building related legislation and regulations
- Securing and providing adequate provision for the recycling, treatment and disposal of commercial and domestic waste including bulky waste and the collection and disposal of abandoned motor vehicles.
- Exercising the Council's powers for improving local environmental quality in relation to housing legislation, managing controlled waste, emergency planning and community safety and anti-social behaviour, clean neighbourhoods and other environmental or regulatory issues not falling within the remit of any other Committee
- Managing, maintaining and maximising the benefit of the Council's parks, pitches, playgrounds and other public spaces as well as community centres and other indoor facilities
- Developing and implementing activities to ensure the delivery of corporate strategies and initiatives in respect of the promotion of health and physical activity, environmental protection, community safety and other such areas under the domain of this Committee
- Overseeing the delivery of the Council's frontline services and associated community assets including: Environmental Services; Cleansing; Waste Management; Parks and Cemeteries service, Neighbourhood and Development Services; Community Services, Community Safety and Emergency Planning

Summary of Committee Plan Priorities

3.6

The draft Committee Plan priorities have been summarised into a 'plan on page' (see Appendix 1) to identify key areas of focus for the Committee in 2023-24. The plan locates priorities within the framework of the relevant Belfast Agenda themes (Our Services; Economic Recovery; Community Recovery; Environmental Recovery; Strategic Planning Frameworks; and Organisational Foundations) and the CNS Departmental key priority areas (Open Spaces & Streetscene; Community Provision; City Protection and Bereavement; and Resources & Fleet). The plan identifies the following key areas of focus:

- Neighbourhood working & regeneration
- Improve our open spaces
- Implementation of Biodiversity duty
- Improve our community provision
- Work in partnership to address health priorities
- Enhance the delivery of council's sport & leisure provision
- Supporting Children & Young People
- Good relations & Community Safety
- Enhance the management & utilisation of CNS assets

	• Improve our City Protection services • Improve urban air quality • Port Health improvements • Improve and extend recycling opportunities • Improve our Resources & Fleet service
3.7	It is likely many of these areas of focus will take several years to deliver. The draft plan includes and outlines the key deliverables for 2023-24 that we are working towards achieving.
3.8	It is proposed that Committee receive a 6 monthly progress update regarding the priorities. This will be in addition to usual reports that will be brought to Committee regarding individual priorities & deliverables.
3.9	The departmental Business Plan on which the committee plan is based reflects that the department is continuing to focus on the delivery of business-as-usual services while progressing the transformation and improvement agenda.
3.10	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> The Committee Plan and annual programme of work aligns with the budget agreed by Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 20 January 2023, for 2023-24 for the People and Communities Committee, of £98.901m.
3.11	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> There are no implications directly relating to this report however individual strategies, programmes and actions will be subject to the council's equality, good relations and rural needs requirements.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - 2023-24 Draft People and Communities Committee Plan: 'Plan on a page'

Resources and Fleet Directorate Actions	
Strategic Theme: Performance	
Action	SRO
Agree a digital/technological solution for waste collections, to integrate the customer experience, improve speed and quality of service and optimise routing and efficiency	J McConnell
Strategic Theme: Place	
Agree council approach to funding for a fleet replacement strategy in order to transition to an alternative fuel	J McConnell
Agree the way forward for the expansion separate Glass Collection services	J McConnell
Agree the way forward for the expansion of the Kerbside Sortation model for recycling	J McConnell
Develop proposal for single use plastics policy for the council	J Stephens
Review and make recommendations on the pilot activity to support the circular economy projects	B Murray

City Services Directorate Actions	
Strategic theme: Performance	
Action	SRO
Review BCC Port Health IT systems requirements in context of emerging EU/UK system solutions and IT automations under development regionally and nationally to support NI Protocol implementation and service functionality	D Cuthbert
Recruit and retain sufficient staff to deliver the Port Health service	D Cuthbert
Work with DAERA and FSA to develop a sustainable funding model to secure necessary funding for the Port Health service, and obtain assurance for the 2024/25 financial year as a priority	D Cuthbert
Review and update the resourcing/staffing model to reflect any new arrangements for the NI Protocol following UK/EU discussions	D Cuthbert
Consider options to identify a resource to review the Pest Control appointment system	H Morrissey
Continue to work towards responsible dog ownership, engaging with all Council internal stakeholders	H Morrissey
Continue to develop the Bereavement Transition and Improvement plan	S McBride
Continue to work with the Department for Infrastructure on taking forward the Belfast off-street Parking Order for the city	S McBride
To explore community arrangement with external providers to assist ambitions for heritage tourism within the context of the tourism strategy for historical cemeteries and city cemetery visitor centre to increase visibility and footfall.	S McBride
To work with Physical Programs to support the identification, acquisition and development of new burial land provision	S Toland
Procure the new software system for regulatory services with a single modern and intuitive case management system that embraces mobile technology	D Bone
To implement an Operational Crematorium Board to plan and prepare for the effective service delivery of the new crematorium	D Bone

Complete the review of the HMO service function and implement required changes	V Donnelly
Strategic theme: Place	
Continue to delivery Air Quality Action Plan 2021 – 2026	V Donnelly

Neighbourhood Services Directorate	
Strategic theme: Customer	
Action	SRO
Establish service standards across all of Neighbourhood Services, communicate to service users and embed within each management unit's business plan	NSMs
Strategic theme: Performance	
Develop an assurance framework with AGRS, Departments and SCM and continue to deliver the corporate safeguarding policy and related procedures and provide assurance for CP service delivery	C Taggart / DMT
Produce the Belfast Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy	C Taggart, C McCann
Deliver Boxing Strategy Action Plan	C Taggart, C McCann
Develop a new Pitches Strategy	C Taggart, C McCann
Review capacity to ensure compliance with Statutory Biodiversity duty	S Leonard
Ensure effective facilitation of relevant partnerships to deliver on agreed action plans and respond to relevant identified community issues for example (D)PCSPs, Shared City Partnership, Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership, Belfast Area Outcomes Group, etc.	M Higgins, N Lane, C McCann, J Girvan
Implement a 2-year health/condition tree survey cycle of inspections on mature street trees, on behalf of the Department for Infrastructure (DfI), as part of the Council's Project Management Agreement with DfI	S Leonard
Strategic theme: Place	
Support the development of Belfast One Million Trees Programme	S Leonard, E Mullan
Development and delivery of a Belfast Tree Strategy, with a 10m year lifespan, and a commitment to deliver key priorities and actions over the next 3 years	S Leonard
Continue to work on actions identified in the Good Relations Strategy, particularly those which relate to emerging priority issues	J Girvan
Complete development of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan	S Leonard
Continue to deliver the Council's Alleygate Programme	S Leonard
Develop a 5 year action plan for the delivery of the Belfast Open Spaces Strategy, and continue to work in partnership with Planning to secure/deliver Section 76 developer contributions for council maintained open space	S Leonard
Continue to develop and support the Playground Improvement Programme	S Leonard
Continue to support the delivery of the Climate Action Programme	S Leonard
Continue restoration of Templemore Baths and work with GLL for the opening of Templemore	N Lane

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Subject:	Belfast Physical Activity & Sports Development Strategy
Date:	Tuesday 10 October 2023
Reporting Officer:	David Sales Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Catherine Taggart Neighbourhood Services Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	☐
After Council Decision	☐
Some time in the future	☐
Never	☐

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To provide members with an update on the development of a Belfast City Council Sports Development and Physical Activity Strategy (The Strategy) and the current timeline for the completion of the Strategy .
1.2	To provide a copy of the draft strategy which will be used for the public consultation.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to note: (i) The updated timeline for development of the Belfast Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy

	(ii) The draft Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy summary document attached (iii) The publication of the draft Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy for public consultation over a period of 12 weeks from November 2023 - January 2024.
3.0	Main report
	Key Issues
3.1	It was agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 5th January 2018 that a Belfast City Council Sports Development Strategy and associated work plan would be developed. This Strategy was to provide a framework for future decision making on providing funding to National Governing Bodies of Sport delivering programmes in Belfast in support of existing funding streams and work programmes which enhance sporting opportunities for Belfast's sporting organisations and individuals.
3.2	The People and Communities Committee of 5th June 2018 agreed a proposed Terms of Reference and proposed timeline. Since that date the Departmental Change Programme has prompted consideration of wider opportunities to clarify and align the links between sports development and Council's strategic funding and programming decisions in the areas of asset development, health improvement and community development.
3.3	At the People and Communities meeting of 10 November 2020 it was agreed that the Terms of Reference be extended to include the following; • In line with the Belfast Agenda the outcomes are extended to 2035 • Physical activity programming is considered as part of the pathway into organised sport • Considered and aligned with our Leisure Transformation Programme. • Identification of alternative sources of financing/partner opportunities. • Facility/asset utilisation and management is maximised through collaborative partnership approaches • Facility/asset planning and development is considered taking account of local, citywide and regional need. • Sport's contribution to improvement of whole health is considered in the context of partnership working through the work of the Belfast Community Planning Partnership and associated Boards – particularly the Living Here Board • Sport's contribution to community development is considered in the context of City & Neighbourhood's Departmental approach to area working and neighbourhood regeneration

	The strategy 'working title' to be "Belfast Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy" Due to Covid the development of this strategy was delayed.																
3.4	In July 2022 following a quotation process Strategic Leisure were appointed to support council in the production of the Strategy.																
3.5	Since the appointment of Strategic Leisure Council officers have been working directly with them. On the 27 th of September 2022 initial introduction meetings involving both Council Officers and a number of Key Delivery Partners took place. More than 50 individuals and groups have been listened to.																
3.6	A total of 370 responses were also received via "Your Say Belfast".																
3.7	Two workshops for elected members have also taken place.																
3.8	Proposed Draft Timeline Subject to Committee approval <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Background review of documentation policies and strategies</td><td>September 2022-Completed</td></tr> <tr> <td>Establish Board and structures for developing strategy</td><td>September 2022-October 2022 Completed</td></tr> <tr> <td>Initial face to face consultation with key stakeholders and schools</td><td>September 2022-October 2022 Completed</td></tr> <tr> <td>Review and Mapping</td><td>September 2022-October 2022 Completed</td></tr> <tr> <td>Focus groups established and face to face meetings to take place</td><td>October 2022 - December 2022 Completed</td></tr> <tr> <td>Wider public consultation to take place online using "Your Say Belfast"</td><td>October 2022-December 2022 Completed</td></tr> <tr> <td>Analysis of key issues identified with a focus on internal consultation and external feedback</td><td>November 2022-January 2023 Completed</td></tr> <tr> <td>Interim Draft Report produced and presented to elected members for discussion</td><td>March 2023 Completed</td></tr> </table>	Background review of documentation policies and strategies	September 2022-Completed	Establish Board and structures for developing strategy	September 2022-October 2022 Completed	Initial face to face consultation with key stakeholders and schools	September 2022-October 2022 Completed	Review and Mapping	September 2022-October 2022 Completed	Focus groups established and face to face meetings to take place	October 2022 - December 2022 Completed	Wider public consultation to take place online using "Your Say Belfast"	October 2022-December 2022 Completed	Analysis of key issues identified with a focus on internal consultation and external feedback	November 2022-January 2023 Completed	Interim Draft Report produced and presented to elected members for discussion	March 2023 Completed
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	Review Draft Strategy and produce draft report	September 2023 Completed
	Draft Strategy to be released for public consultation	November 2023- January 2024
	Analyse feedback from consultation and amend/update strategy	February 2024- April 2024
	Final Strategy to be presented to elected members	April 2024- June 2024
	Strategy Launched	June 2024- July 2024
3.8	Financial Implications Cost associated with the development of the new strategy and engagement of external partners will be met within existing departmental resources. Members are advised that no capital funding is currently in place and limited revenue funding is available to support a strategy action plan. This will need to be costed and resourced as the strategy is developed and needs become clearly identified.	
3.9	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment The draft strategy will be equality screened in line with the Council's agreed process.	
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached	
	Appendix 1 - Draft strategy summary	

Belfast's Physical Activity
and Sport Development
Strategy

Our More Active City

A Draft Report By Strategic Leisure Limited

September 2023



Our More Active City
Belfast’s Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy

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Our More Active City
Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy

Foreword

TBC

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Our More Active City

Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy

Introduction and Context

Belfast, capital of Northern Ireland, has a thriving cultural and social scene, high quality sporting facilities and many excellent examples of natural and built heritage. Belfast has been ranked in the top five cities in the UK for having the best quality of life.

The City boasts:

- A significant number of **modern community leisure facilities**
- Many **open spaces, parks, gardens, pitches, courts and greens**
- **The Great Outdoors** – hills, rivers and lough
- **Major sporting assets** – including the The National Football Stadium, Casement Park GAA Stadium (awaiting construction), Ulster Rugby Kingspan Stadium, the Mary Peters Track
- A wide range of **sports events**

In recent years there has been significant investment into Belfast City Council's indoor community leisure facilities; there is planned investment in new and existing University sports facilities (Queens University and Ulster University) and across the city new active travel routes and cycling hubs are being developed.

Well designed, managed and accessible open spaces provide a range of health, economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits. In Belfast the city parks and gardens, and the wider outdoors has huge potential for more informal activity and active travel opportunities. From the beautiful Victorian setting of the Botanic Gardens to the natural grandeur of Cave Hill Country Park, the lawns of the City Hall Gardens, to the smallest of local play areas, they all add to the overall quality of our environment and contribute to our city's own unique identity. Covering around a quarter of the city's total area around 2,390 hectares (ha), our open spaces are a significant resource. Our Vision is that by 2035... Belfast will have a well-connected network of high-quality open spaces recognised for the value and benefits they provide to everyone who lives in, works in and visits our city. ¹

This includes the blue and green infrastructure in the City.

Despite this impressive physical activity infrastructure, the City has some of the poorest health outcomes in NI e.g., high levels of inactivity and obesity across the population.

There are some areas of high deprivation in the city. Young people in particular are exhibiting high levels of mental-ill health e.g., depression (particularly relating to post-Troubles trauma), suicidal tendencies etc.

¹ Source: Belfast Open Space Strategy (BOSS)

Our More Active City

Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy

More specifically, and mirroring NI as a whole:

- Men participate more than women, but overall, a quarter of our adult population is inactive
- People without a disability participate more than people with a disability;
- Younger people participate more than older people, but in the city around 30% of our children and young people are inactive (Source: Public Health England Everybody Active, Every Day 2014)
- People living in more deprived areas participate less than those living in less deprived areas

Clearly there is a need to do more to encourage, enable and support all our residents to be more active every day to contribute to improved community health and well-being and reduced health inequalities. Given the limited resources available for physical activity provision it is crucial to target resources where they will have most impact.

There is also both need and opportunity for physical activity provision, and particularly built assets, to contribute to the City's priorities for decarbonisation and reduced impact on climate change.

We need to do this together in partnership and a different landscape where a range of places and spaces e.g., parks, gardens, open space, rivers, and hills are more accessible and available for physical activity for more people alongside the formal built assets; a different approach of system-wide co-ordination and collaboration, aligned to identified priorities and outcomes.

Our ambition reflects that set out in the DfC Active Living: The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for NI 2022:

'Lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity will deliver an active, healthy, resilient and inclusive society which recognises and values both participation and excellence.'

The DfC Active Living: The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for NI 2022 highlights the importance of promoting an active lifestyle and continued involvement in sport and physical activity from a young age through to adulthood and later years.



Foundation Blocks for the Strategy

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Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy

The DfC Vision is underpinned by 6 key principles, and visualised below:

- Key Theme 1: Recovery from the impact of the pandemic on sport and physical activity.
- Key Theme 2: Promoting participation, inclusion and community engagement.
- Key Theme 3: Promoting excellence in sport.
- Key Theme 4: Promoting partnership and integration.
- Key Theme 5: Providing inclusive and shared spaces and places.
- Key Theme 6: Promoting the benefits of sport and physical activity.

This pragmatic ambition is in line with local authorities in England, who are moving to delivery of 'active well-being services' as set out in Sport England's 'The Future of Public Sector Leisure' (December 2022), and similar to the approach being developed by Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council.

The key drivers and context for our re-focused approach in Belfast already exist in NI:

NI Draft Programme for Government 2016 – 2021

This strategy sets out the outcomes framework to be achieved across NI. Key principles include:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Giving children the best start in life | 2. Protecting the environment |
| 3. Being fair to everyone | 4. Having long, healthy, active lives |
| 5. Giving people the chance to do well in life | 6. Having a good economy |
| 7. Being safe in our communities | 8. Supporting people |
| 9. Living, working and visiting here | |

Principles 1, 2, 4 and 5 set a context for the future where physical activity and moving more everyday provide the foundation for active, healthier lives.

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Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy

NI Government Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2026: 'If we are to support everyone to lead long, healthy, and active lives, we need to change the focus of our services, and how and where those services are delivered.'

Belfast Agenda 2035

Our vision for Belfast in 2035: Belfast will be a city re-imagined and resurgent. A great place to live and work for everyone. Beautiful well connected and culturally vibrant, it will be a sustainable city shared and loved by all its citizens, free from the legacy of conflict. A compassionate city offering opportunities for everyone.

A confident and successful city energising a dynamic and prosperous city region. A magnet for talent and business and admired around the world. A city people dream to visit.

Vision for 2035 - Our outcomes

The five things people want by 2035:

- where everyone benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy
- that is a welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive for all
- where everyone fulfils their potential
- where everyone experiences good health and wellbeing
- that is vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable

Everyone in Belfast experiences good health and wellbeing

By 2035, everyone will live a healthy lifestyle and will experience the best possible physical health and emotional wellbeing. Health inequalities will be reduced and those who suffer from poor health will receive the care and support they need in a compassionate city.

Our More Active City

Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy

Health NI - Making Life Better Strategic Framework 2013 – 2023

Vision and Aims: Through strengthened co-ordination and partnership working in a whole system approach, this framework will seek to create the conditions for individuals and communities to take control of their own lives and move towards a vision for Northern Ireland where – **“All people are enabled and supported in achieving their full health and wellbeing potential.”**

The aims of the framework are to: **“Achieve better health and wellbeing for everyone and reduce inequalities in health”**

The consultation document Fit and Well – Changing Lives proposed a life course approach to reflect the Marmot Review findings, and structured action around five life course stages, with underpinning themes of “sustainable communities” and “building healthy public policy”. The document also proposed two strategic priorities – Early Years and Vulnerable People and Communities..

In light of this feedback the Framework has been re-structured around the following themes:

- Giving Every Child the Best Start
- Equipped Throughout Life
- Empowering Healthy Living
- Creating the Conditions
- Empowering Communities and Developing Collaboration.

Get Active – Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

- Physical activity is essential for good health and wellbeing.
- In Northern Ireland at least 7 out of 10 people are not physically active enough to benefit their health. This inactivity is associated with numerous causes of disease and disability in Northern Ireland such as stroke, obesity, colo-rectal cancer, stress and lower back pain.

Department for Infrastructure - Making Belfast an Active City – Belfast Cycling Network 2021

Active travel provides people with a healthy, cost-effective and enjoyable means of incorporating physical activity into their daily routine. The number of people who can benefit from this is considerably greater than the number who currently do so.

Our More Active City

Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy

Belfast Open Space Strategy

To make sure our open spaces are fit for the future, BOSS established seven strategic principles (SP), providing the roadmap for achieving the vision. Belfast's open spaces will:

1. Provide welcoming shared spaces
2. Improve connectivity
3. Improve health and well-being
4. Support place-making and enhance the built environment
5. Increase resilience to climate change
6. Protect and enhance the natural environment
7. Be celebrated and support learning

SP 2 and SP 3 provide the strongest link to the focus of this strategy. ²

Belfast City Council's Green Blue Infrastructure Plan (GBIP)

Belfast City Council's Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan sets out a strategic framework for the future delivery of green and blue spaces.

GBIP Strategic Principle 2 - Planned Interconnected Networks states: To maximise the benefits of green and blue infrastructure it needs to form an interconnected network. Doing so requires strategic planning to target delivery against the needs of the local communities.

² Source: Belfast Open Spaces Strategy

Our More Active City

Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy

Why do we need a Physical Activity Strategy for Belfast?

There is a national focus on physical activity and health and wellbeing, as supported by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) and Sport NI. The intrinsic link between health and wellbeing and physical activity is now well recognised and it is now seen as an important function of local government provision and support for the third sector. Developing a strategic framework to support and promote collaboration in terms of physical activity provision will strengthen the Belfast offer and support the targeting of opportunities to communities that will benefit most from being more active.

Nationally a more active population is not only healthier, but also impacts positively on the current cost of social care for a range of conditions, including mental health, and dementia. The 2019 study by Sheffield Hallam University for Sport England showed that for every £1 invested in sport, £4 of value is returned. Community sport and physical activity is worth £85.5 billion annually; £71.7 billion of this figure is social value, including physical and mental health, mental wellbeing, individual development, and social and community development, including reduced crime, stronger communities, educational attainment, and of course healthier people. £13.8 billion of this overall figure of £85.5 billion is economic value. The report also estimates that increased activity levels could reduce GP visits nationally by 30 million a year.

This report recognises the value and importance of physical activity; the investment in the Council's public health, leisure, open spaces and active travel services underpin this recognition. Belfast Council also has outsourced leisure providers (only for some of its built sports facilities), high quality outdoor environments, and a network of sports and physical activity clubs. There is a real understanding of the need to focus on increasing activity in those least likely to participate and embedding active living (i.e., embedding activity into everyday lives), into communities in an inclusive way.

Physical inactivity is the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality accounting for 6% of deaths globally. People who have a physically active lifestyle have a 20% to 35% lower risk of cardiovascular disease, coronary heart disease and stroke compared to those who have a sedentary lifestyle. Regular physical activity is also associated with a reduced risk of diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis and colon and breast cancer and with improved mental health. In older adults, physical activity is associated with increased functional capacities. The estimated direct cost of physical inactivity to the NHS across the UK is over £0.9 billion per year.³

The importance of physical activity for individual and community health has been highlighted through the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic which has also exacerbated health inequalities across the UK. It has become more important than ever to focus on preventative health measures, including physical activity and to invest in those people who need it most. In Belfast, circa 25% of the adult population and approximately 30% of children and young people are inactive.

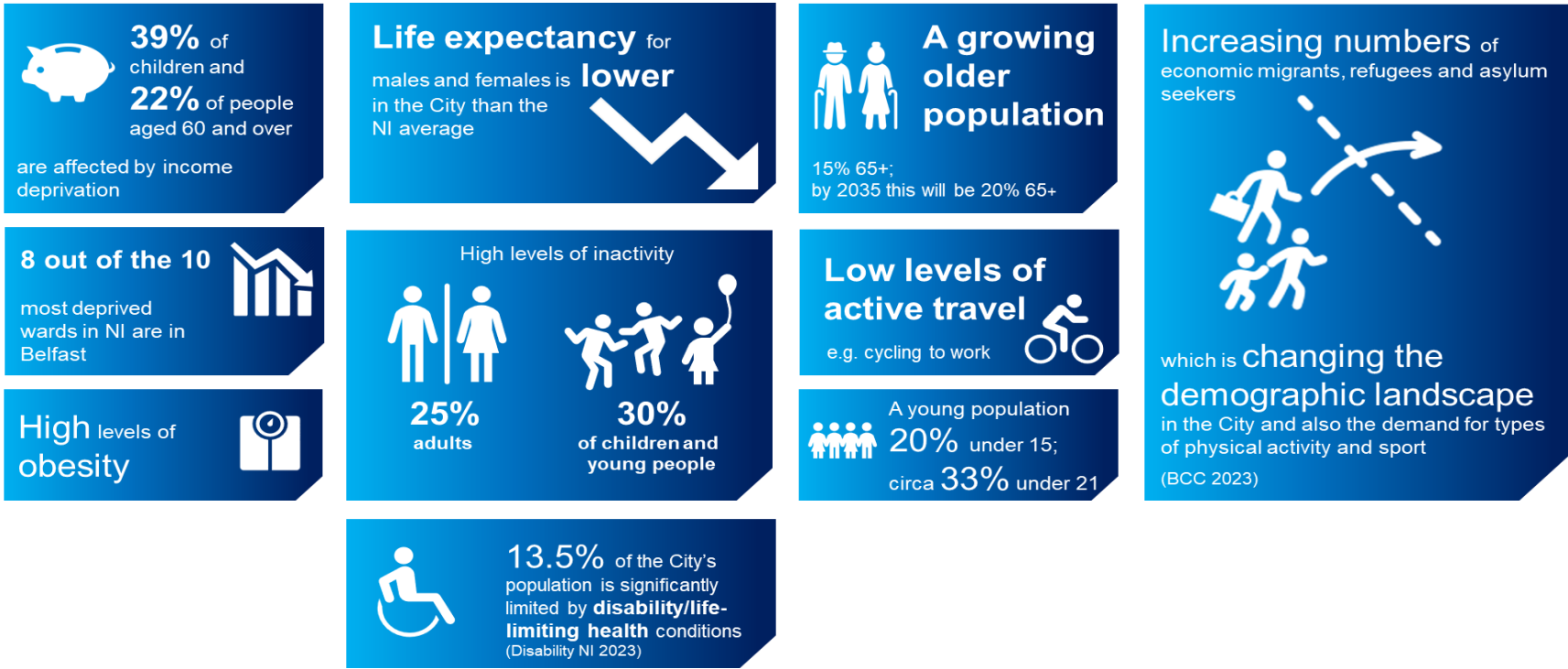
³ 'Social and economic value of sport and physical activity' August 2020

Our More Active City
Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy

Our City Demographics ⁴

Belfast has both a young population, and a growing older population:

Figure 1: Demographic Summary



In Belfast there is clearly an opportunity for change to contribute to improving the above, and in so doing, reduce health inequalities and improve life chances for our residents.

Our vision reflects national, regional, and local policy as well as local insight identified through the development of our strategy.

⁴ Source NISRA 2020 unless otherwise stated

Our More Active City

Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy

Our Vision

‘Our inclusively active City: where, throughout the life course, everyone is able to take part in sport and physical activity, to benefit their health and well-being’

Moving more as part of everyday life is recognised as an essential component of our physical and mental wellbeing and supports us to learn, work and enjoy life to the full. Our population is ageing, people live more sedentary lives and health inequalities have increased. In order to challenge and address inactivity in Belfast our **Shared Outcomes** are:

- **Active Communities** – supported and developed community assets and activities, to increase physical activity levels, and build community resilience
- **Active Environments** – built and natural environments, that support and facilitate every-day physical activity, for everyone. Built facilities (existing ones that are enhanced, or new buildings) should be fit for purpose, appropriately resourced and inclusive. The Belfast Open Spaces Strategy, Blue/Green Infrastructure Plan and Active travel investments all contribute to a more active environment.
- **Healthy Individuals** – increased awareness and capability among people who are less active to increase physical activity levels long-term, with a focus on decreasing inequalities
- **Partnerships and Collaborative Working** - enhance partnership working to increase physical activity opportunities and participation, in a range of activities across our City

Our new approach will contribute to our Belfast Agenda 2035 targets of:

- An increased proportion of adults who undertake at least 150 minutes of physical exercise per week
- An increased proportion of people who rank themselves as having high levels of well-being
- A reduced proportion of the population of adults or children who are obese

The starting line in Belfast is:

- aligning the Council's limited resources to the City's clear priorities for community health and wellbeing and investing in physical activity where it will have most impact on reducing health inequalities
- moving from a 'traditional club and sport-led model of provision' to an emphasis on being more active, everywhere, for everyone
- working through strategic collaboration with multiple partners in the City

Our More Active City
Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy

Our Strategic Priorities

To cross our starting line, and achieve our strategic outcomes, our six key priorities are:

Figure 2: Our 6 key priorities



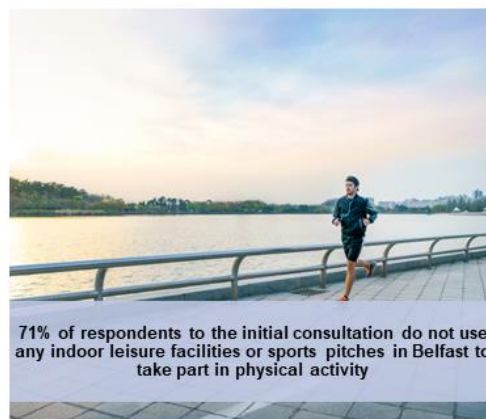
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Strategic Priority 1 - Physical Activity and the Participation Journey

Why this is a Strategic Priority

Our City has:



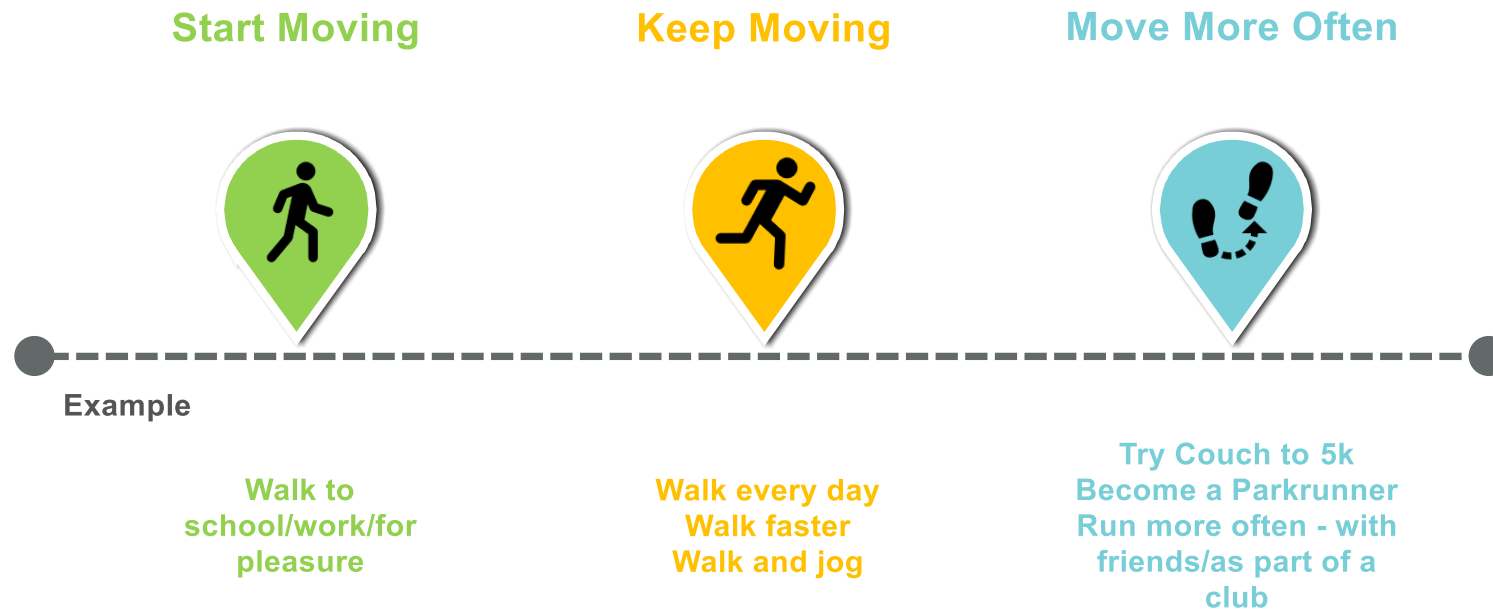
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Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy

Objective

To increase levels of regular physical activity across our City communities and enable everyone to move more, every day (Start Moving, Keep Moving)

Figure 3: Our City Participation Pathway



Actions

1. To facilitate opportunities to be more active every day.
2. To promote our participation pathway within communities to demonstrate how individuals can become active.
 - e.g., start walking regularly; increase walking pace to jogging; complete Couch to 5k; try Park Run; take part in a 10k run
 - learn to ride; start cycling as a regular means of travel; join an informal cycling group; join a cycling club; take part in water confidence sessions; learn to swim; swim a length; take part in recreational swimming; join a club
3. To create more opportunities for active travel in our City.

Our More Active City

Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy

4. To improve access to our parks and open spaces:
- Longer opening hours (would need to be supported by revenue budgets, and a prioritised investment plan e.g., to provide appropriate lighting)
 - Make it easier to use these resources for events (the Green Blue Infrastructure Plan states: *the need for green infrastructure to be supported with appropriate ongoing maintenance and investment to ensure that they are able to continue to function effectively and provide benefits for all* - Blue Infrastructure networks and Greenways referenced in GBIP are also relevant they *provide dedicated movement corridors free of motor vehicles to provide a safe environment for walkers, runners and cyclists to move around the city*).
5. Raise awareness of all available places and spaces for physical activity in the City (this strategy could support improved open space connectivity and improved standard of facilities for formal / informal recreation:
6. Alignment to BOSS SP 2 Improve Connectivity - Well-connected and accessible, our open spaces will form a green network to support safe and sustainable movement across the city.
- Alignment to BOSS SP 3 Improve health and wellbeing Offering a wide range of facilities for formal sports and informal recreation, our open spaces will be the preferred option for exercise, relaxation and enjoyment).
- Develop a City-wide incentive scheme (in partnership) rewarding regular participation in physical activity (in facilities or using other spaces)

Our More Active City

Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy

Strategic Priority 2 - Sport Development

Why this is a Strategic Priority

Our rationale is to work with specific sports in the City, linked to strategic priorities, so that available resources can be better allocated, and long-term partnerships can be developed with Governing Bodies and clubs. Key principles for working with specific sports are:

- Taking part can contribute at every level of our City pathway (See Figure 6)
- Specific sports can engage with those who are less active to support them into activity
- Sports programmes, and participation opportunities help us to make best use of our sporting assets
- Sports events in our City are used to inspire and encourage more people to take part
- A strategic fit between the City's physical activity priorities and those of the Governing Body

Working with Governing Bodies and sports clubs we want to develop programmes, leading to long-term and sustainable participation pathways, which support individuals and teams to reach their potential based on our pathway.

We also want to support and develop our City clubs. Sports clubs have told us they face challenges in affording facility hire costs, that often facilities do not meet their needs and that they cannot always book times they need for training or competition. There is a need to improve the quality of existing council recreational facilities within our parks and open spaces, e.g. grass pitches, synthetic pitches, tennis / basketball courts / MUGAs, BMX Tracks, community greenways etc. Investment is needed in both existing and new facilities and Infrastructure. A costed plan will be needed. BOSS/Blue/Green Infrastructure/active travel are clearly relevant to this e.g.,.

BOSS SP 1 - Provide Welcoming Shared Spaces Our high-quality open spaces are inviting and safe for everyone to use. There will be enough space to meet the needs of our growing city and our open spaces will be used to encourage community cohesion and social interaction.

BOSS SP 3 - Improve health & Wellbeing - Offering a wide range of facilities for formal sports and informal recreation, our open spaces will be the preferred option for exercise, relaxation and enjoyment.

Objective

Working with Governing Bodies and sports clubs our priority will be to work with a range of sports to deliver an increased range of participation and development opportunities from beginner to winner.

Our More Active City

Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy

Priority Sports

Sports will be selected based on criteria which respond to inclusivity and increasing participation, particularly amongst women, girls, older people and those with a disability. We anticipate working with partnership sports who can contribute to our Vision and pathway because they are sustainable (growing participation base) and well-governed (financially, strategically accountable, with inclusive, up-to-date policies reflecting relevant guidance), and have strategic goals aligned to those in the City, as well as those sports supported by the BCC facility base.

Table 1: Priority Sports

Partnership Sports	Sports supported by BCC Facility Base
Badminton	Aquatic sports, including water polo
Basketball	Athletics
Boxing	Cycling
Cricket	Disability Sports
Gymnastics (inc. trampolining)	Football
Hockey	Gaelic
Netball	Rugby
	Tennis
	Lawn Bowls

Actions

1. To build partnerships between schools, clubs, GBs and BCC, focussed on increasing regular participation in identified sports, particularly at beginner level.
2. To create participation pathways which enable participants to develop from beginner to winner.
3. To increase availability of participation opportunities for those with a disability.
4. To provide appropriate support for clubs in attracting and developing coaches, leaders and volunteers.
5. To work alongside specific sports to develop improved governance within the sport.
6. Continue to support talented individuals to develop in their chosen sport.
7. To continue to develop and deliver a range of sports events in the City.

Our More Active City

Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy

Strategic Priority 3 - Partnerships

Why this is a Strategic Priority

Working with City partners will enable a strategic and collaborative approach to delivery of physical activity opportunities. Available resources will be better co-ordinated and invested, and we will work together towards our shared Vision and outcomes.

Objective

To develop citywide strategic and collaborative partnerships to deliver our identified physical activity priorities.

Partner(s)

Our key partners in the City are:

- Department for Communities (DfC)
- Health NI
- Sport NI
- Disability Sport NI
- GLL
- Governing Bodies of Sport
- Education (Ulster University and Queens University are key partners; working with schools to increase levels of participation and address the loss of the extended schools programme will be vital moving forward)
- Community Organisations
- Sports Clubs

Actions

1. Establish a citywide Physical Activity Forum to implement the Strategy.
2. Identify all available resources and who is best placed to deliver identified priorities.

Our More Active City

Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy

Strategic Priority 4 - Accessibility

Why this is a Strategic Priority

Accessibility to the opportunity to be active relates to two issues:

1. Can I get to a place to be active and can I do what I want to do when it is convenient for me? (BOSS SP 1, 2 and 3 are relevant here i.e., Under SP1 - target areas of inaccessibility; create temporary or meanwhile uses (could be for formal / informal recreation); improve safety and security

Under SP2 - Better Connected Open Spaces; Enhanced Greenway networks; improved connections to the Countryside; reduced barriers and the creation of shared space facilities

Under SP3 - Target areas of health deprivation; **Provide and invest in our outdoor sports facilities**; promote our open spaces and programmes (e.g. Parkrun) or play facilities).

4. Can I get into the place or space to be active i.e. is there the right physical access? Can I afford it?

Initial consultation feedback identifies three key issues:

- Affordability is a barrier to taking part in physical activity; this is more pronounced for those with less money and those with a life-limiting illness or disability
- There is a lack of awareness of all City places and spaces where physical activity opportunities exist
- Those with a disability are less physically active

Objective

To ensure that all city places and spaces delivering physical activities/where there are opportunities to be physically active are inclusive and accessible (linked to the BOSS Strategic principles and the GBIP Principle 2 - Planned, interconnected network - *In order to enhance and extend the green and blue infrastructure network to maximise benefits it needs to be strategically planned. These networks need to transcend political boundaries and extend out from our city centre to the Belfast Hills, Lagan Corridor, Belfast Lough and Castlereagh Hills. It provides an overarching structure for future creation and enhancement of the green and blue infrastructure network. There is further potential through the reopening of the Lagan Navigation as an existing inland waterway and onward linkages to the Sustrans National Cycle Network*).

Our More Active City

Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy

Actions

1. To target subsidised access to leisure facilities citywide, not just BCC facilities, on those where this will have most impact in reducing inactivity.
2. To work towards all city leisure facilities providing inclusive access.
3. To publish online and make available through various media/in different languages, up to date information on citywide leisure facilities, programme, partnerships and activities.
4. Work with partners e.g., Sustrans/DFI & Physical programmes/ City Centre Regeneration to develop a network of active travel routes around the City (BOSS, Blue/Green Infrastructure plans key along with LDP. Capital expenditure will be required on Council assets to facilitate development of this network).

Our More Active City

Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy

Strategic Priority 5 – Physical Activity Facilities

Why this is a Strategic Priority

Future investment in physical activity facilities is a priority to ensure those who are already active can continue to participate using good quality places and spaces, and those who will become active have access to inclusive, fit for purpose provision aligned to the BOSS strategic principles, prioritised and planned investment and appropriate resourcing. i.e., BOSS SP 3 - **Provide and invest in outdoor sports facilities** – *We are the biggest provider of sports pitches in Belfast with around 130 pitches across 35 locations. These facilities offer opportunities for a variety of sports for example football, Gaelic games, cricket, tennis and bowling. Our parks and open spaces also provide opportunities for informal recreation. We need to continually invest in these facilities to keep them fit for purpose. Our Physical Investment Programme is the primary source of funding for improving these facilities. With the challenge of decreasing levels of capital investment going forward, we will continue to maximise both the use of the existing open space network and funding from other sources.*

Key issues in the City include:

- Future provision and operation of physical activity facilities need to contribute to the City's priorities for de-carbonisation and reduced climate change impact
- There is a lack of some facility types in the City
- Some existing facilities are not inclusive
- There are currently insufficient pitches available (rugby, GAA, football) at peak times of demand for both competitive use and training to accommodate existing demand from men's, women's and girls' teams and clubs across the city. Demand for pitches is increasing not reducing across the city as a result of growth in women's and girls' participation, that of culturally diverse communities and continued growth in junior and adult male participation). Use of education pitches could help address lack of demand if community access is secured through partnerships with schools. Ensuring capacity is increased is critical to avoid inequity of opportunity to take part in specific sports.
- There is also growing demand for different pitch sports as a result of the changing demographic landscape in the City e.g. cricket
- There is an under-supply of all pitch types, including all-weather
- Many pitches lack floodlights which means their use is limited in winter months
- There is a lack of indoor venues where women can train safely
- Many school facilities are not available for community use; these are assets that should be optimised for community benefit
- Parks and outdoor spaces have capacity to be better used for informal physical activity; to achieve this they need to be open for longer, be safe, well-lit, welcoming, and easy to access (inclusive, easy to use and book spaces for everyone)
- There are opportunities to create more active travel links and routes around the city which could also be used for informal running, jogging, cycling (alignment with GBIP and Active Travel Strategy. BOSS SP2 - enhanced greenway networks and improved access to the countryside for informal recreation e.g. Belfast / Castlereagh Hills, North Foreshore and LVRP).
- Community buildings could offer more physical activity opportunities but to achieve this there needs to be better co-ordination over management and access

Our More Active City

Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy

- Planned and proposed facility investments, indoor and outdoor, will need to reflect the City's priorities for physical activity to contribute to the shared outcomes for reduced inactivity and health inequalities e.g., Proposed pitch developments at Stormont, facility re-development for Queen's University, proposals to broaden the offer at Ulster University's new campus, any future investment in BCC facilities that remain to be modernised

Objective

Actions

1. To work towards all spaces and places for physical activity being inclusive, carbon neutral, bio-diverse and more energy efficient
2. To target capital investment where it will have most impact on increasing levels of physical activity; this is a specific priority for BCC facilities which have not yet been modernised (alignment with BOSS SP3 - Improve Health & Well-being **Target areas of health deprivation** – *There is a correlation between the level of recreational open space (parks and play areas) and health deprivation. Figure 9 BOSS highlights where the areas of highest health deprivation (orange) correlate with areas of the least accessibility to parks and play areas to identify hotspots (red). These red hotspots highlight areas that would benefit from improved access to open space and prioritised health programming in existing spaces. At a city level these zones are indicative and need to be interpreted in detail at a neighbourhood level).*
Consider importance of 'Play' as part of early years physical activity - traditional playgrounds or perhaps support for more natural play facilities - links to BOSS SP3 delivery plan. Outdoor gyms and trim trails are becoming more popular and valued by local users.
Identify and create opportunities for natural and informal play.
 - Continue to encourage passive recreation by providing appropriate facilities (such as seating areas and shelters) across the open spaces network.
 - Continue to maintain, invest and source funding to keep our sports facilities well maintained and affordable
 - Continue to encourage active recreation in our open spaces e.g., walking, running, cycling, outdoor gyms, growing food and outdoor play.
 - Encourage schools to use parks for active recreation and provide greater access to their sports facilities by local communities.
5. Work with the Department for Education and city schools to open up facilities, and particularly pitches, for community access (aligned to BOSS SP3 - Encourage Partnerships re: schools pitches etc). It is recognised that enabling discussions will be needed to ensure the appropriate conditions are in place to support this approach e.g., people, funding, booking systems
6. Introduce an inclusive online booking system for all BCC outdoor physical activity facilities
7. Work with partners to develop a network of active travel routes around the city

Our More Active City

Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy

Strategic Priority 6 - Resources

Why this is a Strategic Priority

To deliver identified physical activity priorities, there is a need for resources:

- People
- Capital
- Revenue

Resources required, irrespective of who provides them, need to be strategically aligned to delivery of our identified shared Vision and outcomes. There are a number of existing grant support programmes in the City which are not aligned to specific strategic outcomes. The Mary Peter's Trust is an external grant scheme as is the national GLL Foundation. Through Support for Sport BCC funds 4 different programmes - small and large grants to clubs/groups, individual grants for talented athletes and hospitality grants. Moving forwards such awards should reflect the strategic priorities for physical activity in the City and focus on supporting the resources working towards these.

Objective

To align resources with our Vision and strategic priorities for physical activity.

Actions

1. To review the existing BCC resources (people, capital and revenue) for physical activity and sport development and where appropriate restructure internally (BOSS delivery plan seeks to *Facilitate stronger community involvement in the management and enhancement of open spaces e.g., by working in partnership with Friends' groups, volunteers, community groups and user groups*). This approach may also be relevant to some formal / information recreational facilities.
2. Re-allocate available revenue funding so it better reflects identified strategic priorities for physical activity i.e. is focussed on reducing inactivity to realise community health benefits. (**Developer Contributions Framework** - S76 Developer Contributions are referenced under BOSS delivery plan - relevant to the development of new / improved recreational facilities. Generally under the planning process new sports / recreational facilities could be included as part of some regeneration proposals).
3. To review and re-align existing City grant aid to this Strategy; this should re-frame support to focus where it will have most impact on, and contribution to, our shared outcomes



Subject:	Belfast City Youth Council (BCYC) Terms of Membership and Recruitment
Date:	10 th October 2023
Reporting Officer:	David Sales, Director Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Nicola Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager, CNS Margaret Higgins, Lead Officer, CNS

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number ☐	
1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
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 ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
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1.1	The purpose of this report is to; • Seek members approval to amend the membership numbers of the Belfast City Youth Council (BCYC) from 40 to 30. • Provide an update on the upcoming recruitment exercise for new members to the BCYC.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	Members are asked to; • Approve the proposal to amend the membership numbers of the Belfast City Youth Council (BCYC) from 40 to 30. • Note the proposed recruitment exercise process for new members to the BCYC
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Overview</u> Background 3.1 Members will recall at a previous committee they received an update on the work of the Belfast City Youth Council (BCYC) and the recruitment exercise which will begin in November to select the next cohort of young people to the Council. Members asked for further information to be provided in relation to the operation of the BCYC and recruitment exercise. 3.2 The Young People's Co-ordinator, Stevie Mulholland, was appointed in November 2022 and part of the role involved revisiting the Terms of Reference of BCYC. The current terms of reference are attached at Appendix 1. 3.3 The Young People's Co-ordinator is the only dedicated officer to the BCYC. To deliver the programme, work with up to thirty young people at a time and maintain safeguarding standards required, additional support is sought from several sessional contracted Youth Workers. 3.4 Recommended Amendment to Membership of BCYC Discussions with the young people, officers and the sessional contracted youth workers who support the operation of BCYC, has identified challenges in operating the Youth Council with its current membership numbers. It is proposed that reducing the membership from the current quota of 40 to 30 members would improve the functioning of the BCYC. 3.5 Members are asked to consider this proposal which would be reflected in a Revised Terms of Reference if accepted. Membership would continue to be drawn proportionately from each DEA (3 members from each DEA, rather than 4) and the membership of the Forum would

seek to have a balance in terms of the background of the members that is reflective of the make up of the city. The rationale for this proposed change is outlined below.

- Managing and delivering a programme with 40 young people - facilitating discussions, maintaining effective groupwork practice, organising activities, ensuring everyone has an opportunity to effectively participate is difficult with such a large group. Reducing the number of participants will increase opportunities for members to engage more effectively and receive a higher quality experience.
- Staff Resources - There is one dedicated officer allocated to the BCYC. In order to be safeguarding compliant, additional support needs be brought in. The service also requires consistency of leaders/facilitators. Thus, we need to ensure that the delivery team is consistent and maintains effective relationships with the young people. Reducing the number of participants should enable a more consistent support team to be engaged which leads to positive relationship building.
- Resources for Programme Delivery - The BCYC meet twice per month and costs are incurred for transport, food, refreshments, venue hire. Reducing the numbers will contribute to more effective allocation of the budget towards programming and campaigns.

Recruitment and Selection

3.6

The Young People's Co-ordinator is currently working with Council's Marketing and Corporate Communications team to finalise the marketing and communications plan that will underpin our recruitment and selection process. He has also been engaging with a wide range of youth organisations in advance of the recruitment phase.

The timeline for recruitment is as follows:

Month	Actions
October	• Initial engagement and contact with a wide range of organisations to raise awareness of the BCYC and promote the recruitment and selection process. This will be primarily face to face meetings within neighbourhoods and with city-wide organisations. The list for this direct engagement includes the following organisations; – Youth Work Alliance – Voluntary Sector Youth Providers – Street Beat – Community Restorative Justice – Shankill Alternatives – EA Youth Service – R City – NIYF – NICCY – Extern – Volunteer NOW – Cara Friend

3.7		– Common Youth – Transgender NI – ACT Initiative – Rainbow project – Belfast Met – VOYPIC – Disability Action – Fóram nan Óg
		• Prepare content for all media and promotional materials. • Design website and social media • Set-up online application • Meet with Council's Youth Champions
	November	• Publicity campaign and promotional events ○ Launch the Recruitment process - 2nd November. ○ Dedicated Webpage designed and promoted. ○ Social Media ○ Press releases. ○ Eshots ○ Advertising • Deliver 6 Area-based Roadshows between 6th to 24th November. • Deliver 3 Online information sessions between 6th to 24th November. • Ongoing face to face contacts with organisations. • Application process opens 2nd November . This will be through an online system. Provision for hardcopy applications will also be made available at the engagement meetings and Roadshows if requested. • Application process closes 30th November
	December	• Assessment of applications - 1st to 5th December. • Interview Process - 6th to 20th December. • Belfast City Youth Council members selected and notified by 29th December.
	January	• Committee Report – Update on outcome of Recruitment • Welcome event organised with the new BCYC members, parents, Lord Mayor/Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillors, and Officers - 10th January 2024
	Please note that Members can contact the Young People's Co-ordinator at mulhollandstevie@belfastcity.gov.uk to suggest specific youth organisations or clubs that should be contacted or if they have other queries about the youth council.	

3.8	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> All costs associated with the Youth Council have been agreed in the budget setting process. A dedicated Young People's Co-ordinator has been assigned to facilitate the Youth Council, however, as outlined further costs are incurred to ensure safeguarding requirements are met by having sufficient staff on site.
3.9	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u> Recruitment for the Youth Council seeks to ensure representation for young people from all sections of society, particularly relevant Section 75 groups and promotion and engagement is designed to support this.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Current Terms of Reference for Belfast Youth Council

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Appendix 1

Belfast City Youth Council Terms of Reference 2020-23

Background

The Belfast Youth Forum was established in 2006 to act as the voice of young people in Belfast City Council. Belfast has one of the most significant young populations in Europe. The recent census figures show that Belfast is home to a young population with under a fifth of the population aged 14 years or younger and approx. 12% aged 0 – 9 years of age and 42 % of the population aged 30 years or younger (NISRA, 2021).

In recognition of this fact, the Youth Forum was set up to engage young people in the democratic processes of our city and to promote active citizenship from a young age.

In 2020 the Belfast Youth Forum was renamed the Belfast City Youth Council (BCYC). The Terms of Reference were produced in order to clearly articulate the function of the BCYC and ensure a shared understanding of its role.

Aim of Belfast City Youth Council

To lead on priority issues affecting Children & Young People in Belfast and influence city/local and regional planning in terms of issues affecting Children & Young people

Objectives:

- To provide its members with the opportunity to share their views and directly influence decisions taken by the Belfast City Council and partnerships that it facilitates when/where appropriate.
- To inform, influence and support the thematic and cross cutting work of Belfast's Community Planning Partnership with a focus on those areas of work that impact on children & young people in Belfast.
- To provide a source of intelligence and networking on children & young people issues in Belfast including commissioning and reviewing research on matters affecting children & young people in the city
- To support children & young people to be actively involved in the activities of the Belfast City Youth Council

Principles:

- Promote partnership working and collaboration among all those with an interest in, and contribution to make on issues affecting children & young people, especially other Children & Young People's Forums
- Create an environment that supports innovation and a problem - solving approach to issues affecting children & young people in Belfast
- Support the voice of children & young people, including hard to reach groups, to influence matters that affect all children & young people

Organisation:

- The group will meet at least once a month in City Hall and in other venues as required to deliver on their action plan/programme of activity.
- Where possible meetings should be arranged for one year ahead.
- Subgroups or task and finish groups will be established and meet as needed.

Commitments from Youth Council members:

- Attend at least 50% of meetings to ensure active participation and consistent membership
- Agree to code of behaviour that will ensure best practise in operation of the youth council

Commitments From Belfast City Council:

- Provide access to monthly meetings in City Hall
- Provide opportunity for youth council to meet with elected members at least 4 times per year
- Provide opportunities for social engagements and best practice learning
- Provide Refreshments and Transport to meetings and activities

Accountability:

Decisions will be made by consensus at full Forum meetings in the Council Chamber and other venues. If consensus cannot be reached a vote will be taken. Meetings are informal and all Youth Council members are entitled to vote.

The youth council will attend special meetings of the Council's People & Communities committee on a quarterly basis. At these meetings the youth council will give an update on its work and the priority issues that it has identified. If there are issues for Council to consider these can be addressed at these meetings.

Membership:

Officers will actively engage with all areas to encourage applications from across the city. If applications of a sufficient standard are not received for all DEAs, officers will engage with organisations and elected members in that area to encourage more applications and fill vacancies.

When a membership term finishes, existing members will have the opportunity to reapply providing that they are within the age range and have attended at least 50% of activities in the previous term. Members will be able to remain on the Forum for a maximum of 3 x 2 year terms.

The Youth Council shall seek in its membership a diverse representation and Members will be selected with sensitivity toward gender, race, and geographic area represented.

- **The forum is made up of 40 young people.**
- Young people must live within the Belfast City boundary area.

- **4 young people are recruited from each of the 10 District Electoral Areas**
- Young people are aged 13-18 (21 if they are disabled or have just left care/are referred through social services).
- Young people serve a two year term on the Youth Council.
- **Qualifications** Young People (13-18 years of age, increase to 21 for those members with a disability or referred through social services) with or without disability who have desire in leading and directly influencing decisions to make a difference in their community.

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Subject:	Reference Group on Older people
Date:	10 th October 2023
Reporting Officer:	David Sales, Director Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Nicola Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager, CNS Margaret Higgins, Lead Officer, CNS

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

☐

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

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

☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update committee on the key issues discussed at the

	Reference Group on Older People Meeting held on 19 th September 2023.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to: note the report and approve the minutes from the Reference Group on Older People meeting held on 19th September 2023.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The Reference Group on Older People is a working group of the People and Communities Committee which meets on a quarterly basis and consists of an elected member from each of the political parties. The minutes from the Reference Group on Older People are brought before the Committee for approval.
3.2	The meeting on the 19 th September was a joint meeting with the Greater Belfast Seniors Forum (G6), which was held in City Hall, the main items were as follows;
3.3	Update on Smartpass 60+ consultation Those in attendance highlighted the significant role played by the G6 in galvanising a response to the consultation document on the 60 plus smart pass scheme to extend its qualifying period from sixty to sixty-five years of age. The G6 undertook to submit individual responses to the consultation document and to coordinate action with the other national forums located throughout the city, including use made of social media and marketing campaigns. The meeting noted the significant impacts that any change to the current scheme would have not only on older people but to a range of other individuals and issues.
3.4	Update from G6 on their action plan The group provided an update on their plan and highlighted the need for continued work to address cost of living pressures and to support older people's groups to access funding. Council officers will progress the issues raised. The absence of Age Discrimination legislation in Northern Ireland was noted as a priority for the Greater Belfast Seniors Forum. It was agreed that an update would be provided on regional activity to progress this issue and that the Chair would seek to support from a Belfast City Council perspective through a possible future Notice of Motion.

3.5	Update on Age Friendly Belfast Plan The Age Friendly Coordinator provided the Members with the following updates on key actions that have been delivered in relation to the Age Friendly Belfast Plan 2023-2027. • Infrastructure, helping people to get out and about: Working with Age Friendly Ireland to develop Age Friendly design principles. • Social inclusion, promoting connections: research to identify barriers that adversely impact on older people and which impact negatively on their ability to engage socially with their community has been completed and this will inform the identification and development of approaches which recognise the different needs of older people. Training on the signs and impact of loneliness and isolation has been delivered and evaluated very positively. Further training will be delivered through Positive Ageing Month.
3.6	Update on Positive Ageing Month Sunday 1st October 2023 is the International Day of Older Persons, which acknowledges the contribution that older people make to society. Now in its eight-year, Positive Ageing Month is back with a full programme of activities and events delivered by partners across the city of Belfast. Details on events can be found in the Positive Ageing Month Booklet. (Copies of this booklet will be made available at the committee meeting). The programme can also be accessed at https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Events/Positive-Ageing-Month
3.7	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> All events and activities outlined in this report are met within existing resources.
3.8	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessments</u> There are currently no equality or good relation implications in relation to this report.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Minutes of the Reference Group on Older People meeting 19th September 2023

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Reference Group on Older People

Tuesday, 19th September, 2023

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE REFERENCE GROUP ON OLDER PEOPLE

Members present: Alderman Copeland; and
Councillors T. Brooks and Ferguson.

In attendance: Ms. J. Holland, Age Friendly Coordinator (temporary);
Ms. M. Higgins, Lead Officer - Community Provision; and
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

Election of Chairperson

Nominations were sought to fill the vacant position of Chairperson and it was:

Moved by Councillor Ferguson
Seconded by Councillor T. Brooks and

Resolved – that Alderman Copeland be appointed to the position of
Chairperson for the period ended June 2027.

Alderman Copeland accepted the appointment and thanked the Members for their
nomination.

(Alderman Copeland in the Chair.)

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors McCabe and Smyth.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 21st March 2023 were taken as read and signed as
correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of Interest were reported.

Update from G6 on Belfast Action Plan

Members of the G6 and Mr. Eamon Quinn, Director of Engage with Age, were invited
to attend the meeting in connection with this item and remained for the duration of the agenda
items under discussion.

Mr. Quinn highlighted the significant role played by the G6 in galvanising a response to the consultation document on the 60 plus smart pass scheme to extend its qualifying period from sixty to sixty-five years of age. To that end, the G6 undertook to submit individual responses to the consultation document and to coordinate action with the other national forums located throughout the city, including use made of social media and marketing campaigns.

The Members were informed that members of the G6 had visited the Department for Infrastructure offices (DfI), in person, to deliver their responses to the consultation document. Mr. Quinn stated that a meeting had been held also with the Director of Public Transport and his staff. The G6 highlighted the importance of public transport in the maintenance of social contact for older people and how withdrawal of the service could exacerbate social isolation for that group. The G6 highlighted also the potential for a reduction in spending, by older people, in city centre shops should the free public transport service be withdrawn. In terms of the negative environmental consequences, the G6 highlighted the fact that, whilst withdrawal of the service would have no impact on the number of public transport journeys, it was likely to add to both pollution and congestion created by an increase in private car journeys. In addition, the Members were informed that a reduction in passenger numbers could have negative employment consequences for public transport staff and could result in a rationalisation and reduction in financially viable routes.

The Reference Group was informed that other actions, organised by both the G6 and individual forums, had included a protest outside the City Hall, which had been supported by the trade union movement and protests organised, outside the DfI offices, to highlight the impact of the proposed changes. Mr Quinn stated that more than seven thousand four hundred individuals had responded to the consultation document. It was reported that, whilst there was no guarantee that the comprehensive objections might not change proposals to amend the policy, it delivered a strong message in regard to the overwhelming objections by older people. It was noted also that the G6 would seek representation to the relevant Permanent Secretary or government minister, should the local assembly be re-established, on the design of the survey which was complicated to the point that a large number of older people were unable to complete it. Mr. Quinn agreed to report back to the Reference Group, at a later date, once he had received feedback from the department in regard to the concerns raised by older people on the design and complexity of the survey.

A G6 member raised an issue in regard to the lack of age-discrimination legislation, in Northern Ireland, to protect the interests of older people. She highlighted the fact that such legislation existed in the United Kingdom. The Chairperson suggested that it might be appropriate to lobby existing M.L.As to have legislation enacted once the local assembly was re-established. In the interim, she suggested that a Notice of Motion be presented, to a future meeting of the Council, requesting that the Executive take action to draft and enact formal legislation in that regard.

After discussion it was

Proposed by Alderman Copeland

Seconded by Councillor T. Brooks and

Resolved – that the Chair of the Reference Group, subject to the approval of the People and Communities Committee, submit a Notice of Motion, to be presented to a future meeting of the Council, requesting that such legislation be drafted, approved and enacted by the Executive once the Assembly became re-established.

The Reference Group agreed also that, subject to the approval of the People and Communities Committee, it would not present such a motion, to the Council, until Mr. Quinn had provided an update on a proposal to change the role and remit of the Age-Sector Platform, to enable it to become a regional forum for older people.

A G6 member raised the issue of the cost-of-living crisis, including loneliness and social isolation as being of particular relevance to the group. In response, the Lead Officer highlighted the work which fell within the scope of the Cost of Living Working Group in that regard in addition to the work being undertaken by the Council to develop community programmes.

In response to funding grants available and budgetary pressures, the Lead Officer agreed to request that relevant officers liaise with local forum chairs to identify funding opportunities and assist with the application process for those groups which had been unsuccessful in securing Council funding. She reported that, owing to the extensive number of applications received and budgetary pressures, the Council had been unable to fund all of the applications which had been submitted.

In response to a question from a G6 member in regard to feedback on failed grant applications, the Lead Officer confirmed that feedback on application forms was available and that the relevant community teams would engage, with the forum representatives, to furnish them with that information.

The Lead Officer, at the request of the Chairperson, agreed that members of the teams responsible for the allocation of community small grants funding liaise with the relevant forums, through the Age Friendly Co-ordinator, in order to offer advice and guidance on the completion of applications forms for 2024/25 grants.

Noted.

Update on Age Friendly Belfast

The Age Friendly Coordinator provided the Members with an update on the key issues contained within the Age Friendly Belfast Plan 2023-2027. She stated that the Age Friendly Plan had been aligned to the Belfast Agenda, with some minor adjustments, as a result of consultation with the Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership (HASP). She referred to infrastructure as being one of the main themes within the Age Friendly Plan, incorporating Age Friendly design principles. She highlighted the collaborative work undertaken between Belfast City Council and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon District Council, including a meeting with Emer Coveney, National Programme Manager from Age Friendly Ireland, who had shared their experience of developing a checklist of Age Friendly design principles with the input of architects and planners in the design and implementation of public realm projects.

The Members were informed of the importance attached to Social Connections as a further key theme within the Age Friendly Plan. She highlighted work which had been undertaken by Ruth Blood Associates to identify barriers that adversely impacted on older people and which impacted negatively on their ability to engage socially with their community.

The Age Friendly Coordinator highlighted a further key theme within the Age Friendly plan, that of connection, hubs across the city, and an identification where those connection hubs might be located to maximise their community benefit. She emphasised the importance of staff training in the identification of loneliness and isolation, including the remedies to reduce

the impact of both. To that end, she stated that further training would be provided in October 2023. The significant impact of the tea dances and their continued popularity was highlighted with the next schedule of tea dances organised to take place in 2 Royal Avenue on 17th October and 5th December 2023.

In response to a question from a Member in regard to the publication of events taking place as part of Age-Friendly Belfast including training on loneliness and isolation for Members, the Age Friendly Coordinator reported that a booklet was available outlining the range of events on offer and agreed that it would be distributed to Members and throughout the city. She stated that it was proposed that training for Members, on loneliness and Isolation, would be provided also.

Noted.

Update on Positive Ageing Month

The Age-Friendly Coordinator provided the undernoted report in regard to the extensive range of events organised as part of Age-Friendly Belfast.

1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

To update members on the Age Friendly Belfast Positive Ageing Month activities and events.

2.0 Recommendations

To ask members to note the planned Age Friendly Belfast activities and events that will be delivered as part of Positive Ageing Month.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Key Issues

Age Friendly Belfast Positive Ageing Month

Sunday 1st October 2023 is the International Day of Older Persons, which acknowledges the contribution that older people make to society. Now in its eight-year, Positive Ageing Month is back with a full programme of activities and events delivered by a number of partners across the city of Belfast. Details on events being organised by our partners can be found in the Positive Ageing Month Booklet. (Copies of this booklet will be made available at the meeting).

Below is a list of the events organized by Age Friendly Belfast:

- Sunday 1st October 10.30am-12.30pm – Silver Sunday at the Ulster Museum- the opportunity to hear more about what's happening during Positive Ageing Month.
- Monday 2nd October- 10.30am-12pm-walking tour of the City Hall and surrounding area by Mark Doherty

- **Tuesday 3rd October 10.30am 12.30pm ‘Be Prepared’ drop in event at 2 Royal Avenue - which includes information stands to give older people the opportunity to meet face to face with organisations who can offer advice and support in terms of keeping warm, benefits advice and fuel poverty.**
- **Thursday 5th October 10am-11am online presentation to Carer’s support group from the Age Friendly Coordinator on the Age Friendly Belfast Plan and Positive Ageing Month activities.**
- **Monday 9th October 10.30am-12pm – walking tour of Queen’s University and surrounding area by Mark Doherty.**
- **Wednesday 11th October 2-4.30pm Movie Afternoon ‘The Quiet Man’ is being shown in the Banqueting Suite, City Hall.**
- **Thursday 12th October- 2 minibus city cemetery tours 10.30am and 12.30pm**
- **Friday 13th October- 3-4pm virtual tea dance with Victor Mawhinney**
- **Tuesday 17th October 2-4pm-Tea dance in 2 Royal Avenue with the band Soda Popz**
- **Wednesday 18th October- 3-4pm online quiz via Zoom**
- **Tuesday 24th October 10am-12pm Dementia Awareness Training delivered by BCC staff in Inverary Community Centre**
- **Wednesday 25th October- 10.30am- 1pm- Age Friendly Belfast Convention event with speakers from Libraries NI, 2 Royal Avenue, BCC Community Centres, GLL Leisure Centres and Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. Following on from last’s year’s event, work began on exploring community hubs and a city centre based hub, these speakers will provide an overview of the types of activities and support that are available to allow older people to feel connected.**

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

All work is carried out within existing budgets and staff resources of Age Friendly Belfast and the partners involved.

4.1 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

This work is part of The Age Friendly Belfast Plan which has been equality and rural needs screened in line with the Council’s agreed processes.

The Reference Group noted the information which had been provided and the opportunity for them to participate in dementia awareness training as part of the programme of events.

Date of next meeting

The Reference Group agreed that its next meeting would be held on Tuesday, 12th December at 12.30 p.m.

Chairperson



Subject:	Consultation response on the draft Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations [2024]
Date:	10 th October 2023
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Matthews Director Resources and Fleet
Contact Officer:	John McConnell City Services Manager Resources and Fleet

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒								
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted. Insert number 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime									
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted? <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td style="text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td style="text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td style="text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	☐	After Council Decision	☐	Sometime in the future	☐	Never	☐
After Committee Decision	☐								
After Council Decision	☐								
Sometime in the future	☐								
Never	☐								

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

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To report to Committee on the draft Belfast City Council response to the Consultation on the draft Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations [2024].

2.0	Recommendation
2.1	To agree the final Belfast City Council response to the Consultation on the draft Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations [2024] as attached in Appendix 1 Note that the consultation closed on 9th October 2023, and that officers have submitted a draft response to DEFRA, noting that a final decision by members is required and DEFRA will be advised of the final decision.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Members may recall from the Committee meeting on 12th September 2023, that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) recently launched a public consultation on draft regulations for Producer Responsibility Obligations. The link to the consultation is as follows: https://consult.defra.gov.uk/extended-producerresponsibiity-team/consultation-on-the-draft-producer-responsibility/
3.2	This consultation seeks views on how well the proposed 2024 Regulations reflect the Government Response to the proposals on the introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging across the UK (generated by 2019 consultation on reforming the UK Packaging Producer Responsibility System and the 2021 Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging).
3.3	The Government Response was published in March 2022 can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1063588/epr-final-impact-assessment.pdf
3.4	Since the publication of the Government Response, the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations have been working closely to develop the draft Regulations which implement these reforms. The main objective has been to ensure that these reforms deliver sustained change.
3.5	Having reflected on industry feedback, the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations decided to defer EPR for packaging payments from October 2024 to October 2025. It is envisaged that a 12-month deferral to packaging payments will give: • Industry additional time to prepare for the new requirements, which may include reviewing and improving current packaging use. • Industry and local authorities more opportunity to be involved in the design of the scheme. • Local authorities and waste management companies more time to adjust current services and to introduce new efficient and effective services for EPR.

3.6	This consultation on the 2024 regulations will apply UK wide. They will revoke and replace the 2023 Regulations as well as Producer Responsibility Obligations Regulations 2007.
3.7	The draft Regulations include provisions to: - Enable the appointment of a Scheme Administrator. - Allow a Scheme Administrator to raise fees from obligated producers to cover local authority costs for the management of household and binned packaging waste, the costs of public information campaigns, and its operational costs. - Set recycling targets on producers covering all types of packaging waste (i.e., primary, shipment, secondary, tertiary; household and non-household). • Require certain types of packaging to be labelled to indicate recyclability. - Introduce a mandatory takeback and recycling requirement for fibre-based composite cups. - Require all reprocessors and exporters of packaging waste to register with a regulator and to report data, and, for those that choose to, to become accredited and issue recycling evidence. - Enable regulators to effectively monitor compliance and enforce the draft Regulations.
3.8	Belfast City Council’s draft response is attached as Appendix 1. The consultation is technical in its nature and officers have taken on board views from other expert bodies, in particular the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (UK) (LARAC) and arc21. Officers are largely in agreement with arc21’s response to the Consultation document. Where we have additional commentary or queries, this is incorporated into each individual response. Some questions (e.g. 19 and 21) are mainly focused on Producers and in these instances, industry is in a better position to respond.
3.9	As a local authority collector of household waste, the main issues expressed in our responses are: - clarity on the definition of “efficient and effective services” and how local authorities will be assessed on this in relation to allocation of funding. - How circumstances such as geography will be considered (in the above assessments) and what criteria will be applied. Belfast is a city with a demographic with few comparators in its geographic location. - The timing of the process and in particular, its interface with other Producer Responsibility Obligations such as the Deposit Return Scheme.

	- The continued focus on weight-based targets and application of the Waste Hierarchy, rather than considering a new modelling approach, incorporating carbon measurements. - The changing nature of packaging waste and how this could be affected by industry's response to the Obligations, as well as the future impact this might have on local authorities.
3.10	Following the Consultation period, DEFRA will review the responses received and make changes to the draft Regulations as appropriate. The draft Regulations will be made publicly available when they are notified to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the European Union (EU) in respect of Northern Ireland to comply with international obligations. During the notification period, Government intends to publish a high-level summary of the responses. <u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
3.11	None – in relation to responding to the consultation. <u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.12	None – in relation to responding to the consultation.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Belfast City Council draft response to the Consultation on the draft Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations [2024].



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



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Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs

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Consultation on the draft Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations [2024]

Consultation Document

28 July 2023

We are the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We're responsible for improving and protecting the environment, growing the green economy and supporting our world-class food, farming and fishing industries.

We work closely with our 33 agencies and arm's length bodies on our ambition to make our air purer, our water cleaner, our land greener and our food more sustainable. Our mission is to restore and enhance the environment for the next generation, and to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.



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packaging@defra.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/defra

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1. Executive summary

The UK Government and the Devolved Administrations of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (hereafter referred to as the Devolved Administrations) are committed to protecting the environment and have all signalled their strong intent to introduce Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging. EPR will require that businesses pay the full costs of dealing with the packaging they supply and use when it becomes waste. The basis of this policy is to improve efficiency by placing responsibility on businesses for the environmental impact of their packaging. This to incentivise recyclability and reuse of packaging, and in turn encourage more domestic reprocessing and overall system improvements and savings.

We have published two consultation documents in 2019 and 2021 which, together, outlined our proposals on the introduction of EPR for packaging across the UK. The Government Response published in March 2022 confirmed how we intend to implement EPR for packaging. This can be found here [EPR Consultation Government response template \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/consultations/epr-consultation-government-response).

Since the publication of the Government Response, the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations have been working closely to develop the draft Regulations which implement these reforms. Our objective is to ensure that these reforms deliver sustained change. Having reflected on industry feedback, the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations decided to defer EPR for packaging payments from October 2024 to October 2025. A 12-month deferral to packaging payments will give:

- Industry additional time to prepare for the new requirements, which may include reviewing and improving current packaging use.
- Industry and local authorities more opportunity to be involved in the design of the scheme.
- Local authorities and waste management companies more time to adjust current services and to introduce new efficient and effective services for EPR.

The UK Government and the Devolved Administrations remain committed to packaging reforms that work for business, the environment, and the economy as a whole. This consultation now shares the draft Regulations which implement EPR for packaging, as set out in the March 2022 Government Response. These draft Regulations will apply UK-wide.

We are seeking views on the draft text to ensure that the draft Regulations achieve the policy intentions set out in the Government Response, creating clear and operationally feasible obligations. Changes to those policy intentions are minimal and are set out in Section 3. The draft Regulations have been developed following engagement with industry. Alongside this consultation we are planning co-design workshops with stakeholders across the value chain that will address the more detailed, technical areas of the draft Regulations. More information will be shared on these workshops in due course.

2. Introduction

Purpose of the consultation

The UK Government and Devolved Administrations have ambitious goals to protect our climate, drive green growth, and drive down unnecessary waste. Our plans for EPR for packaging play a key part in delivering those goals. The current producer responsibility system for packaging has operated across the UK since 1997, but it has never placed the full net costs of disposing of packaging waste on businesses who supply and use packaging.

The UK Government, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland published joint consultations in 2019 ([Consultation on reforming the UK packaging producer responsibility system \(defra.gov.uk\)](https://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/consultations/consultation-on-reforming-the-uk-packaging-producer-responsibility-system/)) and 2021 ([Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging - Defra - Citizen Space](https://www.gov.uk/consult/consultations/extended-producer-responsibility-for-packaging)) setting out proposals to reform the producer responsibility system for packaging. The majority of respondents to both consultations were supportive of the proposals put forward. The Government Response published in March 2022 ([EPR Consultation Government response template \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/consultations/epr-consultation-government-response-template)) confirmed how the reforms to producer responsibility system for packaging are intended to be implemented.

We are now consulting on the draft Regulations at Annex 1, which will implement EPR for packaging across the UK consistent with the March 2022 Government Response. The Regulations include provisions that implement the 'polluter pays' principle by requiring obligated producers to pay the full net cost of collecting and recycling their packaging when it becomes waste. The UK Government and the Devolved Administrations have worked together to develop these draft Regulations. The Regulations are in draft and will require further changes and review prior to finalisation.

As the overall policy intention and objectives have already been the subject of consultation, the purpose of this exercise is not to consult on these matters. Rather, the purpose of this consultation is to gather views on how the approach set out in the Government's consultation response of March 2022 has been reflected in these draft Regulations, and to receive feedback on the operability of their implementation arrangements. We would particularly appreciate views on the clarity with which these draft Regulations define the responsibilities of obligated producers, exporters, reproprocessors, compliance schemes, local authorities and councils, the Scheme Administrator, and the regulators, identifying any ambiguities in the text that could be improved. Responses which go beyond the questions asked in this consultation document will be noted and considered as part of future work on the reforms but not included within the consultation response.

There are however several areas that we intend to develop further with businesses and wider stakeholders, particularly from the collection and packaging sectors with a view to potential future reform. These include issues such as ownership of packaging materials as they pass through collection, sorting and reprocessing and as indicated in the March 2022 Government Response, packaging re-use policy and payments for the management of business waste. These are outside the scope of the current draft Regulations as they are not deliverable prior to the introduction of the initial reforms, but we welcome input on these matters to inform future regulatory, policy and delivery decisions.

We also intend to lay separate regulations to amend the 2007 Packaging Producer Responsibility (Packaging Waste) Regulations to introduce packaging waste recycling targets for 2024. Recycling targets for 2025-2030 will be included in the final version of the draft Regulations we are consulting on.

A new Impact Assessment has not been prepared for this consultation. The March 2022 Final Impact Assessment (FIA), which can be found here [Impact Assessment \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk), presented the costs and benefits at that time, building on the analysis in the Impact Assessments that accompanied the 2019 and 2021 consultations, and feedback from the Regulatory Policy Committee. We will publish an updated version of the FIA when the draft Regulations are laid in Parliament.

As with the previous consultations, this consultation is being undertaken jointly by the UK Government, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland. Unless otherwise stated, references to 'Government' are references to the UK Government, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland.

References to Ministers are references to Ministers of each administration. References to 'the regulator' or 'regulators' are references to the Environment Agency (EA), the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), Natural Resources Wales (NRW), the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and the Labelling Authority, unless stated otherwise.

References to "local authorities" (referred to in the draft Regulations (regulation 2(1) as 'relevant authority') include a waste collection authority, a waste disposal authority, a district council in Northern Ireland and the Council of the Isles of Scilly.

Audience

Responses to this consultation are welcomed from:

- Businesses involved in the design, production and specification of packaging.

- Businesses who manufacture products and put these products into packaging, or who have products put into packaging on their behalf, and who place these products on the UK market.
- Retailers, online marketplaces and importers of both packaged products and unfilled packaging.
- Local authorities
- Packaging compliance schemes.
- Organisations involved in the management and recycling of packaging waste including waste management companies, brokers, exporters, and reprocessors.
- Other organisations such as professional and membership organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations, consultants and charitable organisations who have an interest in packaging and how packaging waste is managed in the UK.
- Members of the public.

Responding to the consultation

Please respond to this consultation in one of the following ways:

Online using the Citizen Space consultation hub at Defra <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/>

For ease of analysis, responses via the Citizen Space platform would be preferred, but alternative options are provided below if required:

By email to: packaging@defra.gov.uk

In writing to:

Collection and Packaging Reform
Extended Producer Responsibility Team, Defra
Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Please note, any responses sent by post must have **arrived** at the above address by the closing date of the consultation (9 October) to be counted. Any responses received after this date will not be analysed. To ensure your response is included in the analysis, please consider responding online via Citizen Space.

Defra is managing the consultation process on behalf of Government.

The Scottish and Welsh Governments will have access to the consultation responses provided via the Citizen Space consultation hub. If you would like to send a copy of your consultation response to the Scottish and/or Welsh Governments, then please send by email to:

Scotland: producerresponsibility@gov.scot

Wales: wastestrategy@gov.wales

If you are responding from Northern Ireland, please ensure a copy of your response is also sent to EPRTeam@daera-ni.gov.uk. Consultation responses will be shared with the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland.

Consultation period

This consultation will run from 28 July and close on 9 October 2023

After the consultation

We will review the responses received and make changes to the draft Regulations as appropriate. The draft Regulations will be made publicly available when they are notified to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the European Union (EU) in respect of Northern Ireland to comply with international obligations. During the notification period, we will publish a high-level summary of the responses.

Information provided in response to this consultation document, including personal information may be subject to publication or release to other parties or to disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes e.g., Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

If you want information, including personal data, that you provide to be treated as confidential, please say so clearly in writing when you submit your response to the consultation and explain why you need these details to be kept confidential.

If we receive a request for disclosure under the FOIA or EIR, we will take full account of your explanation, but due to the law we cannot provide an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as a confidentiality request.

Defra is the data controller in respect of any personal data that you provide, and Defra's Personal Information Charter, which gives details of your rights in respect of the handling of your personal data, can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs/about/personal-information-charter>

Compliance with the consultation principles

This consultation is being conducted in line with the Consultation Principles set out in the Better Regulation Executive guidance which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>.

If you have any comments or complaints about the consultation process, please address them to:

By e-mail: consultation.coordinator@defra.gov.uk

Or in writing to:

Consultation Co-ordinator
Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility Team
Resources & Waste, Defra
Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

About you

A wide range of businesses, organisations and individuals are involved with or take an interest in packaging. The questions below are intended to grasp this diversity and put your responses in perspective with those of other respondents.

Q1. Would you like your response to be confidential?

No

If you answered 'Yes', please provide your reason.

Q2. Your name?

Jennifer Stephens, Belfast City Council

Q3. Your email address?

stephensj@belfastcity.gov.uk

Q4. Which best describes you? Please provide the name of the organisation/ business you represent and an approximate size/number of staff (where applicable).

(Please tick one option. If multiple categories apply, please choose the one which best describes the organisation you are representing in your response.)

- *Local authority*

Q5. Government will need to understand the needs of users to build digital services for EPR for packaging. Would you like your contact details to be added to a user panel for EPR for packaging? ☐ Yes ☐ No

participate in user research (e.g., surveys, workshops and interviews) or to test digital services as they are designed and built?

You can read a [Privacy Notice](#) that explains how your information is safeguarded in relation to user research, what we will and won't do with it, how long it will be kept and how to opt out of user research if you change your mind.

No - arc21 will be providing their contact details, acting on behalf of it's member local authorities, including Belfast City Council.

3. The draft Regulations explained

Overview of the legislation implementing the EPR for packaging reforms

The first building blocks of an EPR scheme for packaging were introduced by the Packaging Waste (Data Reporting) (England) Regulations 2023 which can be found here [The Packaging Waste \(Data Reporting\) \(England\) Regulations 2023 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#). These were amended by the Packaging Waste (Data Reporting) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2023 which can be found here [The Packaging Waste \(Data Reporting\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2023 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#). There are equivalent regulations in:

- Northern Ireland - [The Packaging Waste \(Data Reporting\) \(No.2\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2023 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#) and [The Packaging Waste \(Data Reporting\) \(No. 2\) \(Amendment\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2023 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#).
- Scotland - [The Packaging Waste \(Data Reporting\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2023 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#) and [The Packaging Waste \(Data Reporting\) \(Scotland\) Amendment Regulations 2023 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#).
- Wales – [The Packaging Waste \(Data Collection and Reporting\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2023](#)

All these Statutory Instruments are referred to together as the 'Data Regulations 2023' in this consultation document.

The Data Regulations 2023 require obligated producers to collect and/or report data from March 2023 for England, 28th February 2023 for Scotland and Northern Ireland and 17th July 2023 for Wales (or from January 2023 if the data is available in all nations) on the amount and type of packaging that they supply. This data is needed to calculate the disposal fees for the collection and sorting of packaging for recycling and the collection and disposal of packaging in residual waste) that these producers will be required to pay. This data will also be used to calculate producers recycling obligations.

The draft Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations [2024] ("the draft Regulations") set out obligations on producers to continue to collect and report data. These requirements mirror the requirements in the Data Regulations 2023 but with some further amendments to address small gaps in the data collection and reporting obligations. The draft Regulations also include provisions to:

- Enable the appointment of a Scheme Administrator.
- Allow a Scheme Administrator to raise fees from obligated producers to cover local authority costs for the management of household and binned packaging waste, the costs of public information campaigns, and its operational costs.

- Set recycling targets on producers covering all types of packaging waste (i.e., primary, shipment, secondary, tertiary; household and non-household).
- Require certain types of packaging to be labelled to indicate recyclability.
- Introduce a mandatory takeback and recycling requirement for fibre-based composite cups.
- Require all reprocessors and exporters of packaging waste to register with a regulator and to report data, and, for those that choose to, to become accredited and issue recycling evidence.
- Enable regulators to effectively monitor compliance and enforce the draft Regulations.

Subject to Parliamentary approval, the Data Regulations 2023 will be replaced by these draft Regulations, which will also revoke the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) Regulations 2007 (the 2007 Regulations) and the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 (the Northern Ireland 2007 Regulations).

Changes in the draft Regulations from the policy intentions set out in the Government Response

In developing the draft Regulations, we have made a small number of changes and added detail to clarify the policy intentions that were set out in the Government Response published in March 2022.

- Due to the change to the implementation date of the Scottish Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) to October 2025, scheme articles will be subject to the same obligations under EPR for packaging as drinks containers in scope of the England, Northern Ireland and Wales DRS, until such time as the DRS is operational. This change will also require a further amendment to the Data Regulations 2023.
- Reuse targets for wooden pallets were proposed to be introduced from 2024. We are continuing to work with the wood sector to develop options and are taking this forward as part of our wider work on packaging reuse policy, so obligations are not included in these draft Regulations. The draft Regulations will include recycling targets for wood packaging, and we will aim to introduce reuse targets from 2026.
- We have adopted a broad definition of household packaging as it has not proved possible to develop the guidance and protocols necessary to underpin more accurate apportionment. However, following concerns raised by producers, we are exploring whether the definition can be refined. Further details are set out in the following section.
- The proposal for an ‘operator competence test’ has become a ‘Fit and Proper Person (FPP) test’ to better align with existing permitting regimes (see draft regulation 106). This will allow the regulator to determine if an applicant is a fit and proper person for the purposes of these draft Regulations, taking into account the conditions specified.

- In relation to the proposal that exporters will only be able to issue Packaging Waste Export Notes (PERNs) once confirmation of receipt of the packaging waste has been obtained from final destination sites, we have clarified that, while proof of receipt will be required, this will not need to be submitted in real time in order to issue PERNs. Proof of receipt must be obtained and available for audit/inspection by the regulator.
- Mandatory requirements for the inspections of overseas sites by third party operators have not been included in the draft Regulations but will be considered as part of future reforms. There were legal and practical issues which need further development for this proposal to be implemented.
- Producers who self-manage packaging waste will have to report in which UK nation the waste was collected and sent for recycling. If they collect it in one nation and send it to another UK nation for recycling, they will also report to which nation it was sent. This now includes 'post-back' packaging.
- In accordance with the Government Response, we will provide the Scheme Administrator with the ability to adjust the disposal cost payment to a local authority where they consider an authority is not delivering against reasonable cost and performance benchmarks of efficient and effective services. We will be introducing a limit on the extent to which the Scheme Administrator can deduct money from local authority payments in relation to effectiveness assessments. The Scheme Administrator cannot reduce the disposal costs which the relevant authority is entitled to recover to an amount which is less than 80% of the efficient disposal costs assessed. This limit may be reviewed in future.
- Producers that can demonstrate they have collected and recycled packaging waste that is not commonly collected by local authorities for recycling or have collected and recycled packaging waste from an operational re-use system, will be able to offset these tonnages against their disposal cost obligations, thereby reducing their disposal fees.

What is not included in the draft Regulations and future reforms

The draft Regulations do not include every area in which we would like to consider reform, including matters raised by stakeholders. In some cases, this is because a regulatory approach may not be necessary. In others, it is because our regulatory approach merits further consideration with external stakeholders, and therefore are matters best considered for future regulations and iterations of EPR.

In parallel to this consultation, we will continue to work with stakeholders across the collection and packaging sectors to review these matters in more detail. These include but are not limited to assurances for producers that local authorities will spend producer payments on packaging waste services, the Scheme Administrator governance arrangements to provide for greater sector involvement, material ownership by producers, packaging re-use obligations, and payments for the management of packaging waste from businesses.

Further consideration will be given to the place of closed-loop collection and recycling models. Producers operating such models may already bear the costs of managing their packaging when it becomes waste, so we will explore whether any further exemptions of such models from disposal fees should apply and if so what performance and reporting standards would need to be met to merit an exemption, and any impacts such exemptions may have on other EPR outcomes such as increasing the re-use of packaging and efficient and effective local authority packaging waste management services.

We will also continue to look at improvements to the definition of household packaging, establishing a working group with producers to develop this further. In the Government response to the 2022 consultation Government said that it would work towards an approach that would allow producers to report how much of their primary and shipment packaging was likely to end up in households. It also set out that if it was not feasible to establish the necessary guidance and protocols for the start of EPR, the assumption would be that all primary and shipment packaging would be considered household packaging except where producers could clearly and convincingly evidence this was not the case.

Following further work in 2022 Government concluded that developing comprehensive guidance and protocols for the start of EPR was not feasible. The Data Regulations 2023 and the draft Regulations therefore define household packaging as primary or shipment packaging which is not supplied to a business which is a final user of that packaging. This has been criticised for classing some packaging, such as large beer kegs or drums of industrial chemicals, as household packaging. We want to address this concern, but also need to ensure the Regulations remain clear and enforceable until such time as more detailed guidance and protocols can be developed.

We are therefore considering amending the draft Regulations as drafted to exclude packaging on a product which is designed only for business use. This would continue to be a binary assessment, with all packaging that may end up in household bins being classed as household packaging, unless a producer could provide evidence it had been supplied direct to a final business consumer, but it would allow for primary packaging, that is designed only for business use to be excluded, even if supplied through a third party such as a distributor. If feasible Government will work towards such a reporting approach applying for the 2024 reporting year.

Q6. Do you agree that we should work towards excluding packaging that is designed only for use by a business from the payment of household disposal cost fees?

Yes, however, we would have concerns that some of this packaging stream might still be making its way into the household waste stream and that local authorities could potentially be bearing the treatment fees. Also, there needs to be an assurance mechanism in place to ensure that this “excluded packaging” category will still be covered somewhere under the Producer Pays Obligations – for example through PRNs or elsewhere within the legislative requirements. We would ask if the proposed Deposit Return Scheme fits into this category of exclusion?

We also support arc21's response that "arc21 would however like to draw the Department's attention that this is not likely to be achievable for some time as many households buy items in bulk online or in discount stores (e.g. washing powder, toothpaste, pet food, &c). These items are frequently sold in their tertiary packaging and are consequently disposed of by the householder in their domestic bins/boxes. From a local government perspective, it is important that the Regulations recognize this prospect and ensure full net cost recovery is provided to local authorities for the collection and recovery of such packaging.

Furthermore, as novel [composite?] packaging continues to be developed and rolled-out to become part of the household waste stream, arc21 recommend that those within the value stream should contribute to the development of relevant infrastructure if these materials are not easily recoverable using the existing facilities. Otherwise, EPR will not successfully apportion the relevant costs to those which commission, produce and distribute these materials. For example, this was particularly apparent when Vegware and other biodegradable plastics were launched without any investment in new infrastructure and caused confusion amongst householders and others"

Defra also intends to produce a circular economy action plan for England building on the outputs from the recent series of visioning sprints. This will provide a roadmap for the implementation of EPR for packaging, including its interactions with related policies such as Deposit Return Schemes across the UK, the introduction of Digital Waste Tracking, and Consistent Collections implementation in England.

Overview of the draft Regulations

As set out above, via this consultation we are seeking views on the following:

- The clarity of the definitions of the responsibilities placed on producers, exporters, reprocessors, compliance schemes, the Scheme Administrator and the regulators, the key considerations for local authorities and the identification of any points of ambiguity. We ask if the draft Regulations are clear, by this we want to understand whether the Regulations create obvious and understandable obligations on your organisation,
- The feasibility of the operational processes required to meet the obligations as set out in the draft Regulations as they apply to your organisation,
- The completeness of the draft Regulations as the basis for the implementation of EPR for packaging as per the confirmed policy intent, and
- Any unintended consequences of the draft Regulations as a whole.

The draft Regulations do not at this point include any commencement years but do include dates and months, so that the data reporting cycle is clear.

The following sections outline the high-level obligations on producers, the Scheme Administrator and the regulators. Each section is followed by questions to request feedback. Please answer those questions that are relevant to your organisation. We do not expect all respondents to answer all the questions. Responses which go beyond these questions will feed into wider work on the implementation and continuous improvement of the collection and packaging reforms. References to relevant sections of the draft

Regulations (which in turn refer to relevant Schedules in the draft Regulations) are provided with the questions.

Obligations on producers

(Refer: draft Regulations, Part 2, Chapter 1. Definition of producers is provided in Part 1, regulation 8)

Large producers are those which have an annual turnover of more than £2 million, and which handle more than 50 tonnes of packaging annually. They will be obliged to continue to report their packaging supplied data. Based on this data they will be required to meet recycling targets, pay regulator fees and, if supplying household packaging, pay a disposal fee and a Scheme Administrator fee.

Small producers are those which have an annual turnover of more than £1 million, and which handle more than 25 tonnes of packaging annually, but do not surpass the large producer threshold. Small producers will be required to report their total tonnes of packaging supplied annually by packaging material (glass, plastic, etc) and packaging type (primary, secondary, shipment or tertiary). This data will inform future review of the Regulations.

Certain small and large producers are also required to collate and report data on packaging supplied or discarded in each nation of the UK.

Q7. Do the draft Regulations ensure all types of packaging, which is not exempt packaging, are subject to recycling obligations?

No

If 'no', please detail which types of packaging are missed.

We would raise the question - what is the definition of "exempt packaging"? Also, what assurances will be in place, for example to local authorities, that none of this packaging will end up in the household waste stream? The draft guidance document notes that Government will work to provide assurances for producers that local authorities will spend producer payments on packaging waste services. However, we would like to see reference made to supporting local authorities and to provide assurances to them. The regulations must ensure that full recovery costs are determined and provided to local authorities for the collection and recovery of all applicable packaging.

The draft regulations would appear inherent to sway producers to avoid costs. This could lead to producers using more soft plastics, for example, to reduce weight. Cumulatively this could lead to more packaging not being recycled and a poorer quality, less valuable recyclate.

It is also worth noting that wood is not being included - this would have its own unique issue in Northern Ireland due to bonfire season when considered for inclusion in any future scheme amendment.

Consideration must also be paid to packaging being exported to outside of the UK and the carbon impact of this operation.

We also support arc21's response that "arc21 applaud the intention to ensure that EPR is contextualized within the Circular Economy and would ask that similar consideration is given to framing how it could also assist with meeting other Government objectives, such as waste prevention and Net Zero.

arc21 recognises that packaging is frequently integral to the use of the item (e.g. coffee pods) but in this instance, we do not believe that the recycling obligations are sufficiently clear. The spirit of EPR is that Producers pay for the waste management costs of managing such single-use items and, in this case, it would appear to have missed the mark.

arc21 is also concerned that there are Deposit/Return Scheme (DRS) material which may sit outside of the EPR and we would ask what happens to such items should the DRS be further delayed [or gets shelved entirely]? Can materials which will be included within the DRS at a later stage be included as part of the EPR in the first instance as a default with a revision made to the Regulations at once the DRS has been successfully introduced?

These views and others have been raised within the National Audit Officer (NAO) report which included questioning the value for money on the implementation of the DRS¹.

In this regard, arc21 would recommend that Government should include all packaging materials within the EPR by default, unless they are explicitly excluded".

Q8. Are producers recycling obligations clear?

No

If 'no', please provide details of anything that is unclear.

We support arc21's comment that "As above [Q7], the interaction between the EPR and DRS regarding drinks containers would benefit from greater consideration. The potential for a gap between the implementation of EPR and the DRS should be considered.

Non-kerbside collected packaging needs greater clarity. For example, where Household Recycling Centres are required for collection for recycling how would these qualify to be counted as recyclable and how would the producer fulfil their obligation?

Greater definition and determination of recyclability is required in particular for those that do not fit within a standard definition and do not rely on kerbside collection, fulfilling their obligation through takeback or other mechanisms".

Q9. Are the obligations on each type of producer clear?

No

If 'no', please state the type of producer and how the obligation is unclear.

¹ See <https://www.nao.org.uk/press-releases/the-governments-resources-and-waste-reforms-for-england/>

We support arc21's comments that "It is ambiguous how non-DRS drinks containers will be managed under these Regulations. arc21 would also like to see that a DRS obligated item is still labelled as recyclable as although return for deposit is the preferred option, recycling at kerbside is better than residual disposal.

In addition, this labelling would futureproof against any lack of alignment between different aspects of legislation.

It is ambiguous as to what can go in food waste (8b)"

Q10. Are the obligations on all types of packaging clear?

No

If 'no', please give examples of any packaging types where the obligations are unclear.

We would query where compostable/biodegradable type packaging and also composite packaging material fit in to the obligations. There is a degree of uncertainty around the recyclability and treatment options of some of these materials as well as their carbon impact and where they would sit within a waste/carbon hierarchy.

The draft introduces the obligation to label "do not recycle" (page 27), then instructs progressive recycling targets to adhere to (pg 98, 99). It would be evident that the scheme would nudge producers to follow the waste hierarchy, reducing waste. Then reusing (e.g., exempt Q6.), especially with the planned Deposit Return Scheme. Also, producers will likely greatly increase the percentage of compostable packaging that will be labelled "do not recycle". Furthermore, the large producers are likely to be nudged into collecting more packaging themselves for recycling. It would appear counterintuitive and unfair to impose progressive recycling targets on Councils as part of the proposed scheme.

We agree with arc21's comments that "As per Government guidance on applying the waste hierarchy², arc21 consider that the Regulations should seek to drive material up the hierarchy, as far as possible. arc21 note that reusable packaging has been rightly exempted, and the Regulations have adopted a clear focus on recycling but has the opportunity to promote the repair of packaging for reuse been overlooked?

See comments to Q9 above: it is also unclear how producers are expected to report upon:
- Non-fibre composite packaging – the difference between functional paper and fibre composite is a fine one arising from which there is considerable scope for confusion particularly as under current best practice, paper with <15% coatings and board with <10% coatings is classed as paper, is collected as such and can be processed in a standard paper mill.

Throughout the discussions on the cup takeback scheme, there has been an assumption that this refers to cups that are used for drinks however there is also reference to those that hold food –(28(8)) this would therefore include a number of retail sales such as soup, noodles, porridge &c where a takeback scheme would not be practical as the items are generally not consumed on the go.

As per Q7 above, arc21 would re-emphasise that the recent NAO report which expressed

² See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/Picture-on-applying-the-waste-hierarchy>

concerns regarding the lack of long-term Government plans to reduce wastes which contributes to climate change. As above, arc21 would reiterate that Government should include all packaging materials within the EPR by default, unless they are explicitly excluded.”

Q11. Are there any areas in which two producers may be obligated for the same item of packaging?

Do not know

Compliance schemes

(Refer: draft Regulations, Parts 3, 4 and 5)

Producers can meet their recycling obligations directly or join a packaging compliance scheme, which will assume responsibility for meeting these obligations on behalf of its members. (Note: a compliance scheme cannot take on the disposal fee or Scheme Administrator fee obligation of its members).

Q12. Is the relationship between a Packaging Compliance Scheme and its members clear?

Do not know

Q13. Are the obligations that a Packaging Compliance Scheme assumes on behalf of its members clear?

No

If ‘no’, please provide details of obligations that are unclear.

We agree with arc21’s comment that “The definitions and terminology needs to be tightened. For example, both compliance schemes and registered compliance schemes are referred to and the differences between these two schemes is not made clear in the Regulations.”

Provision of recycling information and labelling

(Refer: draft Regulations Part 2, Chapter 2)

The draft Regulations introduce a single, UK-wide approach to packaging labelling. Producers that are brand owners, packer/fillers and importers must label primary and shipment packaging using the appropriate ‘Recycle Now’ mark and wording (Recycle or Do Not Recycle). This will provide consumers with clear and consistent information on what packaging they can and cannot recycle.

There is no de-minimis threshold for these requirements and the draft Regulations will require distributors to provide recycling information to those to whom they supply packaging.

The draft Regulations provide flexibility for the provision of recycling information for certain packaging items which include filled, unbranded packaging and for medicinal products.

Government will publish guidance ahead of the draft Regulations coming into force to help those obligated to understand and adopt these new mandatory requirements. We plan to undertake targeted engagement with relevant stakeholders to help develop the guidance.

Q14. Are the requirements for the provision of recycling information and packaging labelling clear?

No

If 'no' or 'unsure', please explain the reason for your response and provide examples.

Chapter 2 (Section 20 (C)) states that "recycling instructions" means instructions as to how packaging may be collected for recycling, other than collection by a relevant authority. We seek clarity on this statement and an example of under what circumstances a relevant authority wouldn't be collecting this packaging material for recycling. Again, in section 23 (3), it states, "Where there are methods to collect packaging for recycling other than collection by a relevant authority, the producer must include recycling instructions in English on the label". We reiterate our point above and seek clarity on the circumstances where such packaging material would not be collected by a relevant authority.

We seek clarity and further guidance around flexible plastics, which currently cannot be easily collected or recycled by local authorities, although some supermarket chains offer an in-store consumer takeback scheme for this material stream. Under the proposed labelling guidance, would such materials be labelled with the "Recycle" or "Do not Recycle" label? We also note that in Section 22(3), it refers to plastic packaging that is not rigid. We seek a definition of what this means.

It is worth noting the current inconsistent approach to household recycling across the UK as a whole. (e.g., in terms of material streams, receptacles and mixed vs segregated material collections) We would highlight the fact that that we are still awaiting government guidance on a consistency approach to household waste collection schemes across Northern Ireland.

"The Not-Sure Box" trialled by Dorset Council in conjunction with the WRAP Behaviour Change team would suggest that consumers are still unsure what can be recycled and such a trial would inform the operator what packaging has insufficient labelling, increase recycling rates, reduce contamination and increase value of recyclate.

We support arc21's comments that "The obligations within the Regulations are largely clear, but 22(3) – the definition of "rigid" in relation to plastic packaging is not.

Concerns within local government have previously been expressed regarding the ongoing lack of release of the results and recommendations arising from the Consistency of Collection consultation exercise.³ This report had been pending for some considerable time now and its delay is having a detrimental impact upon the ability of many councils to

³ See <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/consistency-in-household-and-business-recycling/>

progress their planning and contracting arrangements to meet the statutory recycling targets. The Prime Minister's press release and proposals to introduce "Simpler Recycling" risk exacerbating what is already becoming an untenable position for local government. Clarity is needed to allow new contracts to be let.

In relation to collection, questions are increasingly being asked within local government regarding whether certain materials are "recyclable" in the absence of a consistent approach to collection systems across the country which will have to address many of the local circumstances which may impact upon this agenda. We ask that guidance arising from "Simpler Recycling" be provided as a priority.

Views have also been expressed that there is a loophole in the current Regulations in that they appear to omit online suppliers. arc21 would enquire of the Department, how could this be addressed?

Outwith the EPR, arc21 is mindful that the DRS is all about driving consumer and attitude changes but, in thinking about packaging from their perspective, does the current interaction between the two schemes stack up? For example, is there likely to be competing messaging regarding the labelling of these schemes? 23:4 (coffee cups) – should not carry the recycling symbol, as the recycling logo should only be for waste materials included within the household collection arrangements. For DRS materials which are part of a take-back scheme, this would need to be separately badged".

Recyclability assessments

(Refer: draft Regulations Part 1, regulation 10; Part 2, Chapter 1, regulation 15(6); Part 2, Chapter 2, regulation 21 and Chapter 5 for record keeping and reporting obligations)

The draft Regulations will require producers that are obligated to provide recycling information and label packaging and/or those obligated to pay disposal fees to assess packaging to determine its recyclability. The output of the assessment will be used to both inform fee modulation and to underpin how packaging is labelled. To ensure a common approach is followed, a prescribed methodology must be used.

It is anticipated that, for a large proportion of packaging items, the assessment will be a straightforward process. However, Government recognises some businesses may wish to outsource the undertaking of assessments and is exploring the role of third-party organisations to help with this. Services offered by these organisations could include certifying a producer's self-assessment or conducting the assessment on their behalf.

Government is considering whether there is a need for third-party organisations to be accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) or approved by the Scheme Administrator to ensure that standards are upheld, and that effective quality assurance and auditing practices are in place.

Q15. Are you likely to use a third-party organisation to conduct packaging recyclability assessments?

Unsure

Please provide the reason for your response.

It would appear that this is a question posed for small to medium sized enterprises (producers), where they would hire a consultant rather than in house staff. However, inevitably it would appear to be Local Authorities, who would notice and assess when unsatisfactory / non complaint packaging waste enters the market –Is this the case? As many local authorities are receiving a lot of black food trays with no labelling.

We agree with arc21's comment that "...to ensure objectivity of the material in the packaging chain, we believe that independent verification of an item's recyclability is essential to ensure that it truly is recyclable in practice".

Q16. If you answered yes to Q14, should there be a mandatory accreditation scheme for third-party organisation(s) who undertake recyclability assessments?

Yes, (b) accredited by UKAS

Please explain the reason for your response.

We agree with arc21's comment that "As per Q15 above, arc21 considers that accreditation by an independent panel consisting of trusted representatives from all stages in waste collection, transport and treatment right through to the end destination would be beneficial to ensure that recyclability is proven. Such an approach would give the greatest assurance that the packaging item could/would realistically be recycled through kerbside waste services"

Mandatory takeback and recycling of fibre-based composite cups

(Refer: draft Regulations Part 2, Chapter 3. There are also provisions relating to takeback schemes in Part 3.)

Sellers of fibre-based composite cups that are filled at the point of supply (e.g. coffee shops) which employ 10 or more staff on a full time equivalent basis will be required to register with their regulator, provide a bin in their stores for the collection of used cups, and arrange for these cups to be sent to be recycled. These sellers will also need to report to their regulator the weight of cups that they have sold and the weight of cups they have sent for recycling. Sellers can register with a regulator directly or choose to register with a take back scheme. A take back scheme is a third-party organisation that will take on the obligations of a business to register with a regulator and submit required data. They can help provide a bin and to arrange for the used cups to be collected and recycled.

Government plans to introduce the mandatory cup takeback and recycling obligations in 2025. The draft Regulations set out these obligations, but we are currently considering the best legal vehicle to introduce these requirements in light of the changes to the timeline for the introduction of EPR for packaging. However, we do not intend the substance of the legal obligations to change significantly. We will be engaging directly with stakeholders affected by these obligations over the coming weeks. Please sign up to the [CPR newsletter](#) for the latest on reforms, or contact CPRenquiries@defra.gov.uk if your

business has a particular interest in these requirements and would like to be part of these engagement opportunities.

Scheme Administrator establishment

(Refer: draft regulations Part 6 and Schedule 5)

The draft Regulations require the Defra Secretary of State, the Welsh Ministers, the Scottish Ministers and Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland (DAERA) to act jointly to appoint a Scheme administrator. A decision to revoke an appointment must also be made jointly.

The draft Regulations set out the functions of the body and other key requirements on the Scheme Administrator (such as annual reporting). They also give relevant Ministers and DAERA the ability to direct the Scheme Administrator if it is acting or failing to act in a way that is likely to have an adverse impact on the environmental effects which the EPR for packaging policy is intended to achieve.

As indicated in the March 2022 Government Response we have taken the decision to host the Scheme Administrator, at least initially, in the public sector. This is based on advice from HM Treasury which considered the type of functions to be undertaken by the Scheme Administrator and that the Regulations will require producers to pay disposal costs. For example, setting disposal fee rates, collecting fees from producers, and then making payments to local authorities are considered sovereign-type functions, in other words functions typically undertaken by government. We are continuing to work on the Scheme Administrator design including through co-design sessions and are reflecting on feedback from stakeholders and international best practice. We are considering which functions should be performed by the Scheme Administrator and which could better be performed by a sector-led organisation or outsourced. The draft Regulations provide for the Scheme Administrator to enter into an agreement(s) with an organisation(s) to perform functions on its behalf. Whether the Scheme Administrator chooses to do so or not, and the nature of any agreement is not set out in the draft Regulations, however the Scheme Administrator must obtain the consent of relevant Ministers and DAERA before doing so.

We will keep the role of the Scheme Administrator under review as we consider further policy approaches such as material ownership by producers. Please sign up to the [CPR newsletter](#) for the latest on reforms, or contact CPRenquiries@defra.gov.uk for more information if your business has a particular interest in this and would like to be part of these engagement opportunities.

Q17. Are the functions of the Scheme Administrator as outlined in the draft Regulations clear?

No

If 'no', please provide examples of where the draft Regulations are not clear.

We agree with arc21 comments “arc21 considers that the functions of the Scheme Administrator are largely defined except that there is a lack of clarity over how it [the Scheme Administrator] will determine what is an “efficient” and “effective” service. CI 72 (5) states an efficient service is where the costs “are as low as reasonably possible” taking account of some factors – but there is no clarity how these costs will actually be assessed.

Schedule 5 2(d) states the “need to support an increase in the effectiveness and efficiency of waste management services” – but again there is no clarity on what this means in practice and how it will be measured.

Similarly, Schedule 5 6 (b) (i) refers to delivering “efficient & effective services” but there is no clarity on what this means.”

In addition to arc21’s comments, we note the following:

Schedule 5, 9 (1) also refers to this: 9.— (1) The scheme administrator must before the end of the period of 6 months beginning with the date on which it is appointed under regulation 58(1) publish a strategy setting out—

(i) (e) how, by performing its functions, it will contribute to—
(ii) supporting the delivery of efficient and effective waste management services by relevant authorities, and the collection of a common set of packaging materials for recycling from households.

Schedule 5, 9 (2) states that “Before publishing the strategy, the scheme administrator must send the draft of it’s proposed strategy to each appropriate authority and allow the authority at least one month to make representations to the scheme administrator on the strategy” We would advise that a longer period than one month would probably be required by local authorities in which to respond and make representations to the scheme administrator, particularly if decision making is required and internal governance protocols to be followed.

The regulations state that circumstances including those down to geography will be taken into consideration but again there is a lack of clarity around the criteria that will be used and who is to judge its fairness. Belfast is a city with a demographic with few comparators in it’s geographic location, NI as a whole is also an Island (or part of) off an Island and as such it will have its own complications which will need to be accounted for.

The producer offset option could lead to major waste stream and market changes. If a laissez faire nudge creates a waste economy where major producers attain the valuable waste streams and leave local authorities with mainly low value recyclate. (For example, some retailers could profit from cardboard/other material intake, this could make Council revenues greatly depleted even with increased revenues from the Scheme Administrator).

Scheme Administrator calculation of producer disposal and administration fees

(Refer: draft Regulations, Part 6, Chapter 2)

The Scheme Administrator will be required to calculate producer fees based on the amount and type of household packaging the producer has supplied and the disposal and scheme administrator costs assessed.

The Scheme Administrator is responsible for calculating producer disposal fees which will cover local authority household packaging waste and binned packaging waste disposal costs, and Scheme Administrator public information costs.

If a producer can demonstrate they have collected and recycled packaging waste that is either not commonly collected by local authorities for recycling or is reusable packaging waste from an operational re-use system, the Scheme Administrator can offset these tonnages from a producer's disposal fee obligations, thereby reducing their disposal fees. As noted earlier in the consultation document, we are considering whether any further exemptions of such models from disposal fees should apply.

The draft Regulations also introduce a requirement for the Scheme Administrator to adjust (modulate) disposal fees based on the environmental sustainability of the packaging producers supply and require the Scheme Administrator to publish a statement of policy setting out how the adjustments will be applied.

The draft Regulations also provide the Scheme Administrator with the ability, when calculating total tonnes of packaging to estimate the amount of packaging supplied by producers which have not fully met their reporting and registration obligations. This is a discretionary provision that allows the Scheme Administrator to consider producer non-compliance when calculating producer disposal fees where this may have a material impact on compliant producers. The recalculation of cost and fees, as set out below, provides further provision to the Scheme Administrator to consider and recalculate fees based on producer non-compliance.

In addition, the Scheme Administrator will need to separately calculate a producer's annual administration fee that covers the costs the organisation incurs in delivering its functions.

The Scheme Administrator will be required to provide notices of liability to producers obligated for disposal fees and administration fees, setting out how these fees have been calculated.

Q18. Do the draft Regulations allow for the Scheme Administrator to accurately apportion fees to producers?

No

If no, please detail why.

Is this system going to affect the weight and nature of waste streams? Will local authorities be left with surplus of certain waste streams and a shortfall in others? Large producers will likely opt to reduce packaging weight, quickly. There is also the option to offset, again large producers will likely move to avail of this as essentially a tax saving. The market will therefore likely be much different post scheme implementation than what it is at present. This would mean the Scheme Administrator would have no historic accurate data to apportion fees, it would need to be a live dataset, that would be a significant piece of work in the early years of the scheme. Further planned changes to the waste market such as a

deposit return scheme would further skew waste data and waste streams.

As per our response to Q17, the regulations state that circumstances including those down to geography will be taken into consideration but again there is a lack of clarity around the criteria that will be used and who is to judge its fairness. Belfast is a city with a demographic with few comparators in its geographic location, NI as a whole is also an Island (or part of) off an Island and as such it will have its own complications which will need to be accounted for. It is likely that NI and Belfast in particular will have additional cost pressures based on infrastructure and geography in comparison to GB.

As per 70 (1) (b) “The scheme administrator must update that list at least once every two years after the list is first published, and if the scheme administrator considers it necessary, more often”. It is unclear how the Scheme Administrator will do this. Also, the initial list of items will be informed by extensive waste composition analysis. What are the analyses required on a regular basis, in order to maintain this list and what role with local authorities play in this sampling process?

How will campaign costs be apportioned for different packaging categories?

We also agree with arc21 comments that “arc21 considers that there is a lack of clarity around those materials which may later be included in a DRS scheme. We have already proposed that these should be included within pEPR until the DRS is introduced.

Further, the Regulations state that deductions will be made under 74(7) where a local authority is not providing an efficient and effective service but arc21 consider that these monies should be used by the Scheme Administrator to help local authorities improve their services through improvement plans. arc21 believe to return this money to producers creates a perverse incentive [as proposed under Cl63 (1 D)]. Under Cl 80(4), it appears that the Scheme Administrator will only make payments in line with what has been received from the producers regardless of the disposal costs which have been incurred by local authorities – arc21 believes that there needs to be a mechanism to meet the costs local authorities bear regardless of any errors made by the Scheme Administrator and hence arc21 consider that any “surplus” monies should be used to establish a contingency fund.

In this regard, arc21 believe that “surplus” monies could be reinvested into local authorities’ improvement plans which could contribute to increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the services provided.

Other questions arise regarding “surplus” monies and the interface with the DRS, when introduced as well as around contingency and that there may be an inadvertent geographical discrimination introduced concerning consistency of collection, size of local authorities, access to markets, &c. The Scheme Administrator will have to consider these matters carefully to avoid this outcome.

On the matter of calculating the total tonnage of packaging, building upon the issue of geographical differences, arc21 would request that the department provide further information regarding how this will be re-allocated/apportioned according to the producer and/or material type (i.e. Amazon deliveries may be commensurately greater in the islands than they are in the inner cities – how will this be assessed and re-distributed)”

Q19. If your organisation collects and recycles packaging waste, do you understand

if you would qualify for off-setting under the draft Regulations?

Not applicable

Q20. Do you think the offsetting provisions should be extended as part of future reforms to EPR?

Do not know

What are the expected timescales involves for reviewing these considerations?

This will probably need to be considered at some stage. However, not to the detriment of council waste services, through for example, the quality or supply of material collected by local authorities. These services warrant as little disruption as possible and extending the provisions could potentially reduce the quality and supply to established markets relied on under local authority contracts.

Q21. Do the draft Regulations provide appropriate safeguards for compliant producers, including with regards to the impact producer non-compliance may have on producer disposal fees?

Do not know.

Producers would be best placed to respond to this question.

Scheme Administrator's calculation of disposal costs and scheme administrator costs to be recovered from producers

(Refer: draft Regulations, Part 6, Chapter 3 (disposal costs), Chapter 4 (Scheme Administrator costs) and Chapter 5 (payments to relevant authorities))

The draft regulations do not place any direct obligations on local authorities as primary powers do not allow for this. However, the draft Regulations limit payments to local authorities to the costs of efficient and effective packaging waste management services, protecting producers from excessive and unfair costs.

The Scheme Administrator must assess local authority costs in managing household packaging waste from Year 1. This includes assessing the necessary, efficient costs of local authority packaging waste management services. The Scheme Administrator must assess income earned by a local authority through the sale of packaging waste and subtract this from their efficient disposal costs in calculating net costs. If a local authority is assessed as being ineffective, and not delivering against an improvement plan, the Scheme Administrator can make deductions to that local authority's assessed efficient costs to incentivise service effectiveness (up to 20% of efficient costs). When assessing the effectiveness of local authority packaging waste management services, the Scheme Administrator will provide authorities with the opportunity to discuss their effectiveness assessments and how their services could be improved. The Scheme Administrator will provide authorities with a reasonable period of time to deliver against their improvement

plans, where produced, before taking the decision to make reductions to efficient cost payments.

The Scheme Administrator must provide notices to local authorities on their disposal cost assessments and payments.

In addition, the Scheme Administrator must assess the costs it incurs in delivering public information services and separately calculate its scheme administrator costs and recover both from producers.

Q22. Do the draft Regulations make it clear what the Scheme Administrator is required to do and consider in assessing local authority efficient net disposal costs and service effectiveness?

No

If no, how could these be made clear and what do you consider is missing?

It is not clear what the Scheme Administrator is required to do and consider in assessing local authority efficient net disposal costs and service effectiveness. There is no definition of 'efficient net disposal costs and service effectiveness.'

We also agree with arc21's comments that "The Regulations are clear in several areas, however there are omissions which arc21 considers need to be included, such as (i) what constitutes a clear definition of an "efficient" and "effective" service, especially in the context of the urban/rural divide (ii) the Regulations need to be clear of the level of income that is applicable to in-scope packaging (iii) the Scheme Administrator should understand that local authorities only receive a proportion on the packaging material as income subject to their individual contracts. In many arrangements, material income will be difficult to assess as it will be integral to the contract price, the income itself may not be transparent and indeed it may be commercially confidential.

In General, arc21 considers that the costs outlined in the Regulations are described in overly broad terms which the development of an appropriate framework which incorporates these items above could help identify what constitutes minimum service requirements and, by default, this could assist in determining what "efficient and effective service" are [note, due to the local variables, these may not be consistent across the UK nations and regions].

Under CI75(6), the Regulations state that any debt owed to a local authority may be offset by any amount the local authority owes to the Scheme Administrator, but arc21 considers that this is hard to envisage given it [the Scheme Administrator] should be paying local authorities. A scenario when the reverse occurs would be useful to improve understanding for all involved.

The Regulations also refer to the annual redistribution of monies from the EPR. arc21 would highlight that this is likely to prove problematic for local authorities as they do not provide "floats" within their budgets to ensure that contractors are paid or other expenses are sorted on the basis that there will be an end-of-year adjustment provided from the Scheme

Administrator's payments. Indeed, after many years of financial constraint, councils are increasingly struggling to balance their budgets and the "promise" of a late payment in one service area [waste] may not stack up against other council priorities meaning that there is not enough money to continue to provide the necessary "efficient" and "effective" service operations [see comments earlier re developing a framework]. The Scheme Administrator needs to identify all the costs against which payment will be received along with any conditions which may influence or restrict the release of these payments. As it stands, the Regulations appear too vague and the "promise" of payment for local authorities appears to be based on the opinion of what is currently a weakly defined body [the Scheme Administrator]. arc21 also has grave concerns arising from C75(3) which indicates that the Scheme Administrator will simply inform local authorities as to the scale of payment they will receive in the first assessment year and there does not appear to be any mechanisms to engage on the matter. Adopting this approach would set a concerning precedent for local government"

Q23. Do the draft Regulations make appropriate provision for how the Scheme Administrator will incentivise the delivery of efficient and effective packaging waste management services by local authorities?

No

If no, please detail why and explain what is missing.

It is not clear how the Scheme Administrator will incentivise the delivery of efficient and effective packaging waste management services by local authorities. Nor is there a comprehensive definition of what an 'efficient and effective packaging waste management' service is. Will each packaging category be assessed individually? For local authorities, will they be assessed by group and for each individual packaging category? What are the packaging categories? Can a local authority be "efficient" in one packaging area but not another?

As per our response to Q17, the regulations state that circumstances including those down to geography will be taken into consideration but again there is a lack of clarity around the criteria that will be used and who is to judge its fairness. Belfast is a city with a demographic with few comparators in its geographic location, NI as a whole is also an Island (or part of) off an Island and as such it will have its own complications which will need to be accounted for. It is likely that NI and Belfast in particular will have additional cost pressures based on infrastructure and geography in comparison to GB.

We also agree with arc21's comments that "arc21 has already commented on the lack of clarity regarding (i) "efficient" and "effective" service [Q17 and Q22] which we believe is needed in order to measure local authority performance, (ii) the way the Regulations present this requirement appears to indicate that there is only a penalty for not achieving this state, rather than an incentive for having achieved it (iii) there does not appear to be a recognition that local authorities may perform differently for the recovery of some packaging versus others (i.e. can a local authority be effective and efficient for some types of packaging but not others, what happens in practical circumstances, such as when there is low citizen participation which then requires increased communication campaigns/additional support –

surely the local authority should not simply be penalized?) – greater clarity on how the Scheme Administrator will assess this would be appreciated.

It is also unclear how/if EPR payments will increase collection rates for recycling and how the better and enhanced reprocessing infrastructure will be funded under this scheme.

arc21 would also highlight that within the Regulations, there is no reference to how the TEEP (technically environmentally and economically practicable) assessment will be undertaken – is this something which the Scheme Administrator will assess as part of their “efficient” and “effective” service review⁴? Similarly, arc21 would ask where the quality of the recyclable materials recovered under EPR is assessed – is this too part of the [efficient and effective] review?

arc21 also highlighted at the outset of this response the need to frame EPR within the broader context of Governments objectives around the Circular Economy and Net Zero – this remains the case”

Q24. Do the draft Regulations make it clear what the Scheme Administrator is required to do and consider in assessing Scheme Administrator public information costs and administration costs?

No

If no, how could these be made clear and what do you consider is missing?

As stressed in previous answers, we do not know what “efficient and effective is” How can we be efficient if we don’t know what this looks like? Potential external factors, such as the nature of material streams and infrastructure could affect our “efficiency and effectiveness.” For a joined-up NI-wide approach, we will need to ensure that all councils can deliver, otherwise this could lead to “inefficiencies” Not just geographical differences across the province but socio-demographical factors to consider too. As per our response to Q17, the regulations state that circumstances including those down to geography will be taken into consideration but again there is a lack of clarity around the criteria that will be used and who is to judge its fairness. Belfast is a city with a demographic with few comparators in its geographic location, NI as a whole is also an Island (or part of) off an Island and as such it will have its own complications which will need to be accounted for. It is likely that NI and Belfast in particular will have additional cost pressures based on infrastructure and geography in comparison to GB.

Latest press from (GB) government indicates that the common collection guidance across the UK has to be simple. Will this be reflected in the forthcoming guidance from DAERA?

We also agree with arc21’s comments that “The scope is clear but arc21 would ask for clarity regarding how the allocation of packaging charges/costs against specific producers work in practice, particularly eligibility and proportionality? We have already highlighted the potential benefits from developing a framework [Q22] which could prove critical for the successful implementation of the EPR.

arc21 has also highlighted reasons why some local authorities may struggle to achieve

⁴ arc21 recognises that this may change following the Prime Minister’s comments on 20 September – but we also consider that further details on how TEEP will be framed in the context of EPR and the Scheme Administrator is essential.

higher recycling rates due to local circumstances [Q23] and due to geographical differences mentioned [Q18] and, as such, we would welcome hearing about how the Scheme Administrator will work with local authorities to develop communications plans not just to target the universal packaging materials which are widespread, but the items which may have a greater weighting in certain areas over others. In reviewing the Regulations, it does not appear that the costs of monitoring and evaluating these campaigns are included within the scope of payments from the Scheme Administrator.

arc21 would be wary that these issues will need to be clearly communicated to others within the packaging chain which otherwise may only feel that they should only be funding the highest performing local authorities”.

Q25. Do the draft Regulations make appropriate provision for how the Scheme Administrator will distribute disposal cost payments to local authorities?

No

If no, how could the provisions be made clear or and what do you consider is missing?

In early summer 2023, Belfast City Council submitted performance information to DEFRA which was to go on to inform how councils might rank in terms of an effective and efficient local authority. To date, we have received no feedback or indication as to how this data has been used or where BCC might be ranked in terms of the sample data. Government should feedback to the Council's involved to inform us where potential improvement areas might be found. As it stands, we have no idea as to how this is going to be determined. In Northern Ireland there is little clarity on the subject and DAERA appears to be taking its steer from DEFRA.

We suggest that consideration needs to be given to a redirection towards a carbon-focused hierarchy rather than a statutory weight-based approach driven by the Waste Hierarchy (e.g. 65% by 2035). We will continue to be driven by and focus on waste tonnages until DEFRA tell us to do differently.

We would ask for further information and guidance on packaging that needs to be composted.

It is worth noting the delays in introducing legislation such as EPR and DRS whilst increasing recycling targets for local authorities as the years go on. It is now confirmed that producers will not be charged until 2025. There will be a general election between then and this may lead to further drift in the legislative timescale or indeed a reversal of current plans, creating further uncertainty for the industry.

Q26. Do the draft Regulations make it clear how the Scheme Administrator will adjust (modulate) fees to account for the environmental sustainability of household packaging?

No

If no, how could these be made clear and what do you consider is missing?

This will require regular reviews given that the nature of household packaging is likely to change over time.

We also agree with arc21's comments that "arc21 would highlight that the Regulations do not provide clarity regarding the fossil fuel content of some of the packaging materials and that, with the introduction of the UK Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), where additional costs arising from managing this type of material will be reflected. Is this something which the Scheme Administrator will be assessing as part of their ongoing review? Can other elements of full net costs recovery also be flagged with the Scheme Administrator as they emerge?"

Also, given the pace of change in packaging, we consider that a three-year review by the Scheme Administrator will be insufficient to keep up with this level of innovation likely to be experienced in this industry"

Q27. Do you have views on any materials that should be exempted from the scope of modulating fees?

Yes

If yes, please specify which materials.

We agree with arc21's comments that "arc21 considers that no packaging materials should be exempted from the scope of the EPR as all materials require collection and processing and hence local authorities incur a cost to provide these services.

We believe that the Regulations should provide greater clarity on compostable packaging which by its very nature may be capable of being disposed of alongside food waste and therefore it would not be required to be collected as part of recycling.

Similarly, we consider that packaging which is sent by on-line sellers [Q18] should not be exempt from the being included within packaging modulation"

Recalculation of costs and fees

(Refer: draft Regulations, Part 6, Chapter 6)

The draft Regulations provide for the Scheme Administrator to undertake in-year or post-year recalculations of producer fees and local authority costs and sets out the grounds on which these recalculations could occur and relevant timings. The draft Regulations allow the Scheme Administrator to consider whether new or revised information suggests a material difference to the costs and fees they had assessed and notified for a given assessment year. It sets out the process for how the Scheme Administrator should reconcile the costs of local authorities and the fees of producers where it decides to make recalculations, including the reissuing of notices.

Q28. Do the draft Regulations provide the necessary grounds to allow the Scheme Administrator to recalculate the costs and fees?

No

If no, which grounds are missing?

We agree with arc21's comments that "Local authorities should not have their payments reduced due to miscalculation of the charges for producers by the Scheme Administrator or for the subsequent payments due to local authorities, as they [local authorities] will continue to be statutorily obligated to collect and process the in-scope packaging materials.

arc21 considers the issue of stating what is an "efficient and effective service" need to be defined to allow any measurement against these standards [Qs 17, 22, 23].

Also, the income arising from the sale of packaging material needs better calculation. It should also be noted this can be extremely volatile and therefore any adjustments should only be calculated at the point of calculating the following year's payment. This intersects with the comments above regarding how a "float" would be managed [Q22]"

Q29. Do the draft Regulations set out clearly the process the Scheme Administrator must follow in making fee and cost recalculations

No

If no, how can the process be made clearer?

The system does not seem to come into force for local authorities until the next year. It will take twelve to 24 months –for the scheme to effectively bed in. We need clarity and an indication on banding and classifications etc., taking into account geographical locations, demographics and social make up of council areas rather than just a tonnage-based approach.

We also agree with arc21's comments that "arc21 believes that the notice period needs to be clearly defined within the Regulations and should be a minimum of 12 months to allow local authorities time to set and adjust their budgets accordingly. Government is aware that local authorities operate according to annual budget cycles which have to be prepared well in advance, so 12 months is realistically the minimum period that local authorities can operate to without the risk of severe disruption to service delivery. arc21 has highlighted above [Q22] the pressures facing local authorities' current prioritization processes and posed a question regarding the prospect of "floats".

In terms of the appeal process, this should be less protracted and needs to be better defined, including timescales for responses etc.. It must also refer to a dispute process to cover occasions whereby the outcome of appeal is not agreed. arc21 is concerned that the appeals process appears to only serve the producers and a process for local authorities appears to have been omitted. arc21 considers that there needs to be parity accorded to both producers and local authorities regarding an appeals process.

Reprocessors and Exporters

(Refer: draft Regulations, Part 7, Chapter 1 for Registration and Chapter 2 for Accreditation)

Reprocessors and exporters who handle packaging waste as part of their operations are required by these draft Regulations to register with the relevant regulator (EA, NIEA, NRW or SEPA) and submit data on an annual basis in relation to that packaging waste.

They can also be accredited by the relevant regulator to issue evidence of packaging waste recycling (Packaging Waste Recycling Notes (PRNs) or Packaging Waste Export Recycling Notes (PERNs).

Q30. Are the new registration requirements for reprocessors and exporters handling packaging waste clear?

Not applicable

Q31. Are the new conditions and reporting requirements for accredited reprocessors and exporters clear?

Not applicable

Appeals

(Refer: draft Regulations, Part 8)

Producers, operators of schemes, reprocessors and exporters can appeal against certain decisions of the regulators, in relation to approvals, registration and accreditation. These appeals will be heard by the First Tier Tribunal in England and Wales, the Planning Appeals Commission of Northern Ireland in Northern Ireland and Scottish Ministers in Scotland.

Producers can appeal against the Scheme Administrator decisions related to the notice of liability to pay disposal fees and local authorities can appeal against the Scheme Administrators assessment and/or distribution of disposal costs. Appeals against the Scheme Administrator will be determined by the First Tier Tribunal in England and Wales, the Planning Appeals Commission of Northern Ireland in Northern Ireland and the sheriff in Scotland. An appeal cannot be brought against a decision unless the appellant has first brought a complaint against the Scheme Administrator. The Scheme Administrator will be required to establish a complaints procedure.

Q32. Do the draft Regulations adequately capture the decisions that can be appealed?

Do not know

If no, what decisions are not adequately captured or missing?

We would anticipate that the scheme ends up with less exporting. In terms of carbon, make a better product and keep it local and thus retain value.

We also agree with arc21's comments that "It seems unusual in the case of NI, that the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) would be used. As far as arc21 is concerned, the PAC

has little or no prior knowledge of the packaging value chain, although we understand that their remit is being expanded on an ongoing basis.

arc21 would also highlight that the Regulations provide greater clarity regarding the appeals process for producers, but less attention appears to have been paid to the mechanism for councils in the event that the Scheme Administrator makes a determination [a review] which is detrimental to a local authority. arc21 would request that the Department consider the detail of how this would work in practice [including some consideration of the likely costs which may be borne in undertaking such an appeal – will these be recoverable?]

Q33. Do the draft Regulations set out an adequate appeals process?

Do not know

If no, how could this process be made clear?

We agree with arc21's comments that "Given the caseload around the appeals agencies, arc21 would be concerned that a producer could continue to undertake activities which the regulator had deemed unsatisfactory but which had subsequently been appealed, thereby granting a stay of execution for the producer until such times as the appeal is granted, dismissed or withdrawn. arc21 would request that consideration be weighted in favour of the regulator with a compensation mechanism in the place in cases where the appeals were upheld.

arc21 would reiterate the points made above [Qs 29, 32] regarding the lack of an appeals process for local authorities".

Regulators

(Refer: draft Regulations, Part 10)

The draft Regulations place a duty on the regulators to monitor compliance with the obligations and requirements of producers, schemes, reproprocessors and exporters as laid out in the draft Regulations. The regulators may publish guidance as they consider appropriate in relation to the operation of any provision in these draft Regulations.

There is a new 'fit and proper person test' that the EA, NIEA, NRW and SEPA will need to apply. The draft Regulations require those regulators to publish joint guidance on the criteria that will be applied in determining whether a person is fit and proper.

Future development of EPR for packaging

In the Government Response to the 2021 consultation, we committed to reviewing EPR for packaging after 2 years of operation; the commitment to undertake this review remains. This review will include the following (but may include additional factors that become apparent during the initial operation of the scheme):

- The sufficiency of EPR measures, in the context of wider collection and packaging reforms and in the delivery of the stated environmental objectives
- The outcomes of further work on material ownership and disposal costs for business packaging waste and related implications for the 'PRN system'

- The form and operational arrangements of the Scheme Administrator
- The sufficiency of arrangements to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of local authority packaging waste collection and recycling services
- The scope to continuously improve the scheme design and regulatory framework based on international best practice.

We recognise that EPR for packaging will evolve over time. We are therefore interested in views on areas to focus on in that review and where the scheme could be developed further.

Q34. Please raise up to three areas of EPR packaging policy that you would like us to consider in the first review and rank in order of priority.

We agree with arc21's suggested three areas as follows:

1. *The sufficiency of EPR measures, in the context of wider collection and packaging reforms and in the delivery of the stated environmental objectives*

As stated at the outset, arc21 would draw attention to the importance of nesting these proposals within the context of both the Circular Economy as well as the need to deliver Net Zero/Waste Prevention. The Regulations do not appear to frame these Government objectives, nor outline how implementation of these Regs will contribute to these [Government policies].

2. *The form and operational arrangements of the Scheme Administrator*

This is a critical function upon which EPR will stand or fall. It is also fundamental to the delivery of not just EPR for packaging and packaging waste. arc21 strongly advocate for a considerable increase in the number of materials which should be covered under EPR-type economic instruments and therefore it is critical that the form and operational arrangements for the Scheme Administrator are successfully developed and delivered.

3. *The sufficiency of arrangements to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of local authority packaging waste collection and recycling services*

While much of the focus of the consultation has been upon how to ensure the delivery and implementation of the EPR, arc21 is wary that undue focus is being placed upon local authorities which have faced considerable financial pressures since 2007. Further emphasis upon local authorities without adequate mechanisms to re-distribute the monies arising from this scheme will condemn its introduction to, at best, a faltering start. Local authorities have distinct local flavours and characteristics which, in the absence of the results of the consistency of collection consultation, arc21 is unclear how EPR and the Scheme Administrator will gauge performance and which could lead to arbitrary and unhelpful determinations regarding efficiency and effectiveness.

Given the work completed previously around technically, economically and environmentally practicable (TEEP) collection arrangements [Q23], arc21 would recommend that this mechanism is clearly referenced within the Regulations [albeit this may need to be updated to reflect the Prime Minister's statement on 20 September, 2023]. There are similar issues

regarding the inclusion of packaging materials which have a high fossil fuel load and how they may be captured within the UK's ETS [Q26] and how the Scheme Administrator will account for both this, and other developments to ensure that local authorities continue to receive full net cost recovery into the future.

Next steps

Next steps on the implementation of the draft Regulations

This consultation will close on 9 October 2023. The Governments will consider the responses to the consultation and make amendments to the draft Regulations as appropriate.

Alongside the consultation we will hold co-design workshops with stakeholders to address the more detailed, technical areas of the draft Regulations.

Following consideration of responses, appropriate amendments and refinements to the draft Regulations will be made, and that updated draft will be notified to the WTO and EU in Spring 2024 and will be available via the notification process for stakeholders to view.

All the Governments will continue to work together to monitor the impact of these draft Regulations on the operation of the UK internal market.

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Subject:	Response from Department for Communities on Rent Controls
Date:	10 th October 2023
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number.

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained.
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction.
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

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

☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	Members will recall that in at the People and Communities meeting held in January 2023, it was agreed that Council would write to the Permanent Secretary in the Department for Communities in relation to the Department for Communities Private Tenancies Act (NI) 2022 – update on Powers for Council commencing April 2023. A response has since been received from DfC and is attached at Appendix 1.
1.2	Members are asked to note the update report on the DfC response which was presented to City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Appendix 2).
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is requested to note the response from DfC and the update report presented to City Growth and Regeneration Committee.
3.0	Financial and Resource Implications
3.1	There are no financial or resource implications associated with this report.
4.0	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
4.1	There are no equality, good relations or rural needs assessment implications associated with this report.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Letter of response from DfC Appendix 2 – Update report on DfC Rent Controls to City Growth & Regeneration Committee, September 2023



From: David Polley
Housing Supply Policy

Level 3
Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
BELFAST
BT2 7EG

Telephone: 028 90 515286
E-mail: David.Polley@communities-ni.gov.uk
Our Ref: STOF-0201-2023
Date: 28 March 2023

Eilish McGoldrick
Democratic Services Officer
Belfast City Council
Legal and Civic Services Department
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

Via email: McGoldrickE@belfastcity.gov.uk

Dear Eilish

RENT CONTROLS

Thank you for your correspondence of 24 March 2023, addressed to the Permanent Secretary and Head of the Civil Service. As director for Housing Supply Policy, I have been asked to respond on your behalf.

You detail that the Belfast City Council's City Growth and Regeneration Committee have noted the rising cost of private renting in Belfast. You advise that the Committee wants to see the cost for renters reduced and considers that the introduction of rent controls is one way to help renters. You add that the Committee recognises that any decisions to progress this action would depend on the Executive being up and running and a Minister being in place.

As stated in a previous response your colleague (Sara Steele) on 16 February, Section 7 of the Private Tenancies Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 placed a duty on the Department to research and consult on the implications of a rent freeze or rent decrease and to lay a report before the Assembly. The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) was subsequently commissioned by the Department to research and consult on these implications and the ensuing Report was laid in the Assembly and published on the Department's website. However, as already noted by your Committee, any further action on these issues is subject to a decision by an incoming Minister. Moreover, bringing any rent controls into effect would require further secondary legislation and therefore a functioning Assembly.

I trust you find my response helpful.



Yours sincerely,

David Polley
Director of Housing Supply Policy



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Subject:	Response from Department for Communities on Rent Controls
Date:	13 September 2023
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director, City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development 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 ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the response received from the Department for Communities in relation to correspondence issued from the CG&R Committee regarding Rent Controls.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to note; - the correspondence received from the Department for Communities in response to a letter from the Committee regarding rent controls; - that the Department for Communities commissioned a report, undertaken by the Chartered Institute for Housing, to research and consult on the implications of a rent freeze or rent decrease and that this report was laid to the Assembly and published on the Departments website; - that the Department for Communities state that <i>'any further action on these issues is subject to a decision by an incoming Minister'</i>, and <i>'that bringing any rent controls into effect would require further secondary legislation and therefore a functioning Assembly'</i>
3.0	Background
3.1	At the special meeting of the CG&R Committee in February 2023, it was agreed that a letter was sent to the Permanent Secretary for the Department for Communities, and the Head of the Civil Service to engage with the Council and other key stakeholders concerning rent controls in Belfast; and to support local community organisations and advocacy groups in their efforts to campaign for the introduction of rent controls and to ensure that the voices of renters and those affected by the housing affordability crisis were heard.
4.0	Main Report
	Key Issues
4.1	A letter was sent to the Permanent Secretary of the Department Communities and the Head of the Civil Service on 24th March 2023 outlining the concerns raised by the members of the Committee at its special meeting in February 2023 (attached as appendix 1).
4.2	The letter outlined that the cost of privately renting a home in Belfast has risen significantly in recent years, making it increasingly unaffordable for many people, particularly those on low incomes and young families. The letter further commented that the Committee would like to see costs for renters reduced; Members recognise that legislation is required to protect renters from unfair rents, improve housing standards and end unfair letting fees; Members further recognise the introduction of rent controls is one way to help renters. Furthermore, the Executive needs to be back up and running and a Minister in place to progress this.

4.3	A response has been received from Mr. David Polley, Director of Housing Supply Policy (attached as appendix 2). In his correspondence the Director advises that Section 7 of the Private Tenancies Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 placed a duty on the Department to research and consult on the implications of a rent freeze or rent decrease and to lay a report before the Assembly.
4.4	The Director further commented that the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) was subsequently commissioned by the Department to research and consult on these implications and the ensuing Report was laid in the Assembly and published on the Department's website. While a summary of the key findings of the CIH report is included within this Committee report, Members should note that the report is multi-faceted covering a number of complex issues and findings. A copy of the full report for Members review can be found at the link below: https://www.cih.org/media/n50no3ps/dfc-rent-regulation-in-the-private-sector-in-northern-ireland.pdf
4.5	Finally, the Director stated that, as already noted by the Committee, any further action on these issues is subject to a decision by an incoming Minister. Moreover, bringing any rent controls into effect would require further secondary legislation and therefore a functioning Assembly.
4.6	The final research report from the Chartered Institute of Housing for the Department for Communities as referenced in the response from DfC highlights: • what existing evidence tells us about rent regulation • a baseline of current rent affordability and trends; plus the potential impact of rent control/regulation in Northern Ireland, and • the consultation feedback from landlords and tenants, their representative groups and district councils. • The report refers to research on the topology of rent control and that there are currently three 'generations' of rent control: • first generation rent regulation measures seek to impose a control on existing rent levels; they are typically called 'hard rent controls' or 'rent freezes' • second generation regulation governs rent increases within and between tenancies; an example is setting the very first rent at market levels with subsequent increases and rents for new tenancies being controlled, and

	third generation measures refer to restricting the increase of rent within the tenancy e.g. restricting the amount or frequency of increases for a current tenant.
4.7	The report concludes that the rent control approach contained under Section 7 of the Private Tenancies Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 gives the Department the power to freeze or cut rents by up to ten per cent for a period of up to four years. These rent controls are argued to; - improve initial affordability of rents - reduce real rents if rents cannot be adjusted to account for increased landlord costs - develop incentives for landlords to sell properties and leave the sector, especially at times of high house prices and strong property markets - reduce incentives for landlords to repair and renovate properties, and - incentivise ‘shadow’ or illegal rental markets or incentivise renters to stay in the property even if their needs change.
4.8	The report found that the rent control powers contained within Section 7 if enacted could have the following implications:
4.9	Improve affordability for some tenants The report highlights that affordability issues for low-income households have been driven less by rent inflation, and more through punitive aspects of the social security system, such as freezes in local housing allowance rates and the use of the shared-accommodation rate for younger single people in one-bedroom homes.
4.10	The report comments that freezing and reducing rents to protect those in the lowest incomes is a very unpredictable and inefficient policy tool.
4.11	The report goes on to say that overall a rent freeze or reduction would largely benefit existing tenants who remain in their homes and whose landlords do not sell or repurpose their properties. However, because such a freeze or reduction would also reduce the size of the sector, other tenants would be evicted. Prospective tenants and people looking for new private rented accommodation would be faced with a further shortage of suitable housing options in an already tight housing market.
4.12	Between 41% and 60% of landlords would seek to exit the private rental market Over half of landlord respondents reported that they would seek to decrease the number of properties they let out across the sector and the report research indicates that between 41%

	and 60% of landlords would seek to exit the private rental market.. Some of these properties may be sold to landlords, keeping the property within the sector, However, some landlords may seek to withdraw and provide the property on the short-term holiday let / Airbnb market, where they are able to attract substantially higher rents.
4.13	Concern was raised about the impact of rent cuts on buy-to-let mortgages and the resulting supply of private rented accommodation. A decrease in rent levels would make more of these mortgages unaffordable for prospective landlords. Higher interest rates are already placing pressure on mortgage affordability and high inflation is increasing the cost of property maintenance and upkeep.
4.14	Other issues for consideration within the report For tenants who have their rent covered in full by local housing allowance, a rent cut would not improve the tenant's affordability but would instead result in a reduction in annually managed expenditure on welfare. However, there could be increased public expenditure elsewhere on rising homelessness levels resulting from the change. There is also risk of further adverse impact on homelessness through diminished ability to discharge the homelessness duty into the Private Rented Sector, in the context of rising levels of unmet need for social housing. There would also need to be a step-change in resourcing councils for effective enforcement of the policy. Alternative approaches to improve affordability were included in the conclusion of the report as outlined below.
4.15	Welfare control The report noted that a simpler and accurately targeted way to improve housing affordability is topping up Local Housing Allowance (LHA) claimants with a shortfall to the real 30th percentile rent through discretionary housing payments (DHPs) or welfare supplementary payments. Cuts to the LHA rates for tenants and adverse changes to the tax system for landlords have adversely affected the Private Rental Sector. The report notes that fiscal measures are an important tool to incentivise property improvements, which is crucial for progressing housing quality and for de-carbonising housing stock.
4.16	Enhancing rent control The report highlights that Northern Ireland now has a new system of third generation rent control that limits the frequency of rent increases to once a year and which has the broad support of

4.17	stakeholders tested through consultation; it would make sense to monitor and evaluate this new law as part of the normal policy making process If greater rent control is desirable, an additional option within the third generation is limiting increases during a tenancy to CPI or a similar indexing measure and allowing rents to reset to market levels at the end of a tenancy. Limiting increases during a tenancy in this way would seek to address the substantially large increases that occur in a minority of the NI market. Allowing rents to reset to market levels at the end of a tenancy would provide landlords with some assurance that increases in costs would be accommodated in rental prices. Supply The report highlights that the best way of relieving pressure on prices is by having enough housing supply. A variety of housing tenures and products are needed to meet people's diverse requirements. Social housing, co-ownership, intermediate rent, private rent including from institutional investors, and owner-occupation all have a role to play in providing a home that is appropriate for people's needs. There is a shortage of private rented accommodation at present; data from PropertyPal shows that the average stock of properties for rent on the website during June 2022 was 1,647 – a 57 per cent decrease from June 2019. At the same time there is increased demand for it, as the economic consequences of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis has made saving for a deposit more difficult, placing home ownership out of reach for more people. Another long-standing factor driving the demand of private rented accommodation is the shortage of social housing. The report acknowledges existing work through the Housing Supply Strategy that aims to boost social housebuilding and address the deeprooted barriers to increasing supply, including infrastructure, funding, skills and capacity constraints. Committee should note that as yet a response has not been received from the Head of the Civil Service.
4.18	
4.19	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> None associated with this report.
4.20	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None associated with this report.
5.0	Appendices – Documents attached
	Appendix 1 – Letter from Belfast City Council dated 24th March 2023 Appendix 2 – Response from Department for Communities dated 29th March 2023



Subject:	Invite to 2023 WHO European Healthy Cities Network Annual Business Meeting 23
Date:	10 th October 2023
Reporting Officer:	David Sales, Director of Neighbourhood Services, CNS
Contact Officer:	Nicola Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager, CNS Margaret Higgins, Lead Officer – Community Provision, CNS

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

☐

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

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

☐

1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1	The purpose of this report is to advise members of an invite from Belfast Healthy Cities for either the Chair or Vice Chair of People and Communities committee to attend the 2023 WHO European Healthy Cities Network Annual Business Meeting and Technical Conference November 2023 in Utrecht, Netherlands.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Committee is asked to consider the invitation and advise whether Council will be represented at the conference and if so, by whom.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Background Belfast's membership to the WHO European Healthy Cities Network is facilitated by Belfast Healthy Cities (BHC), an independent partnership organisation. In May 2021 the City of Belfast was successful in its application to re-designate as a WHO Healthy City and participate in Phase VII of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network until April 2026.
3.2	WHO European Healthy Cities Network Annual Conference Belfast Healthy Cities contacted Council on 4th October to extend an invitation for the Chair or Vice Chair of People and Communities committee (or their nominee) to attend the 2023 WHO Healthy Cities Annual Business Meeting and Technical Conference. This year marks the 35th anniversary of this movement, and the Conference will take place from 21 to 23 November 2023 in the historic city of Utrecht, with the theme "Health and well-being for all: celebrating 35 years of the Healthy Cities movement".
3.3	Healthy Cities conferences are the main forum for both political and technical participants from member cities from across the WHO European Network to share experiences, debate and discuss health challenges from the perspective of cities throughout the WHO European Region. Further detail on the meeting and a link to the full programme is provided in Appendix 1.
3.4	Public sector organisations cover the costs of a member attending. Only one political representative from Belfast is asked to attend, three BHC staff and a BHC board member will also attend. Costs for attending the meeting in person are £900/£1,100 – this includes return flight to Utrecht; 4 nights' accommodation and any allowance for each day.
3.5	Financial & Resource Implications As public sector organisations cover the cost of political members attendance at WHO European Healthy Cities Network Annual Meetings, this cost will have to be taken from council budgets, there is no potential to cover this expenditure from existing budgets.
3.6	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment None identified.
4.0	Appendices
4.1	Invite to WHO European Healthy Cities Annual Business Meeting 21-23 November 23



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE LA SANTÉ
WELTGESUNDHEITSORGANISATION
ВСЕМИРНАЯ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ ЗДРАВООХРАНЕНИЯ

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EUROPE
BUREAU RÉGIONAL DE L'EUROPE
REGIONALBÜRO FÜR EUROPA
ЕВРОПЕЙСКОЕ РЕГИОНАЛЬНОЕ БЮРО

Date: 8 September 2023

Head office:
UN City, Marmorvej 51,
DK-2100 Copenhagen Ø, Denmark
Tel.: +45 45 33 70 00; Fax: +45 45 33 70 01
Email: eurohealthycities@who.int
Website: <https://www.who.int/europe>

Dear Healthy Cities political representative

**WHO European Healthy Cities Annual Business Meeting
Utrecht, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, 21-23 November 2023**

We are delighted to invite you to the 2023 Annual Business Meeting and Technical Conference of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network. The meeting will be held at Jaarbeursplein in Utrecht, Kingdom of the Netherlands from 21 to 23 November with the theme of **“Health and Well-being for All: Celebrating 35 Years of the Healthy Cities Movement”**. For this on-site meeting, we would like to also take this opportunity to **invite you to the politicians’ dinner, which will take place on the evening of Tuesday, 21 November 2023.**

To access background documents related to the establishment and functioning of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network including its Conference Code of Conduct, please click on the following link: [Euro Healthy Cities Documents](#)

The latest versions of the working documents for the conference can be accessed and downloaded using the following link: [ABM 2023 meeting working documents](#).

Healthy Cities conferences are the main forum for both political and technical participants from member cities from across the WHO European Network to share experiences, debate and discuss health challenges from the perspective of cities throughout the WHO European Region. City politicians and decision-makers have the power and the means to make a tremendous difference in the health and well-being of their population. Health goes hand in hand with the social, economic and sustainable development of a city or province. We value your ongoing commitment as a Healthy Cities political representative to the Copenhagen Consensus of Mayors – Healthier and Happier Cities for All.

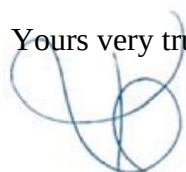
As outlined in the terms of reference for the WHO European Network, being represented at the Conference is considered obligatory for all flagship cities in the WHO European Network. At least two representatives (coordinator and lead politician) should attend the Annual Business Meeting and Technical Conference. The delegation’s size is based on designation and accreditation status in Phase VII; **please consult with your coordinator for more information.**

You may register for the Annual Business Meeting and Technical Conference online using the following form: [Register | 2023 WHO European Healthy Cities \(eev-gu.nl\)](#)
Please note that registration for in-person attendance should be completed by **Saturday, 30**

September 2023. The scope and purpose and provisional programme of the Conference are attached for your further information.

We look forward to seeing you at the Annual Business Meeting and Technical Conference.

Yours very truly,



Best regards,

Kira Fortune

Regional Adviser, Healthy Cities, Health Promotion and Well-being

WHO Regional Office for Europe

Conference website: [HOME | 2023 WHO EUROPEAN HEALTHY CITIES \(EEV-GU.NL\)](https://eev-gu.nl)



Subject:	Páirc an Lonnáin
Date:	Tuesday 10 October 2023
Reporting Officer:	David Sales, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Cormac McCann, Lead Officer Community Provision

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒								
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted. Insert number 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime									
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted? <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td style="text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td style="text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td style="text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	☐	After Council Decision	☐	Sometime in the future	☐	Never	☐
After Committee Decision	☐								
After Council Decision	☐								
Sometime in the future	☐								
Never	☐								

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To provide a report as requested by Councillor Black at Council on 4 September 2023 in relation to the operation of the Páirc an Lonnáin and the reinstatement of the temporary facility management agreement that had previously been in place.

1.2	To agree an approach to local management and programming of the facility.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	That Council enters into a five-year Agreement with Falls Residents Association to enable local operation of the site, to include keyholding, litter picking and community programming which will maximise the opportunities from the capital investment and minimise the negative impact which anti-social behaviour had on the area prior to the site development.
2.2	That an annual programming budget of £15,000 is allocated for all new parks.
2.3	Where Council approves management arrangements with a local organisation, this budget is made available to the Agreement holder, subject to officer approval of a planned programme and subsequent reporting.
2.4	If People & Communities Committee are in agreement with the suggested approach of providing £15k pa funding for all new parks, then this matter should be referred to Strategic Policy & Resources Committee for consideration as part of the estimates process.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	People and Communities Committee of 6 November 2018, within a report on asset acquisition, approved the establishment of a bespoke management arrangement at the Building Successful Communities regeneration project at Páirc an Lonnáin.
3.2	Officers worked with the local community organisation and developed a key holding agreement which supported access and activity at the site outside normal park opening hours. The group have been providing key holding for the site and continue to deliver a diverse range of programmes.
3.3	Whilst the Agreement holder is undertaking duties previously undertaken by Open Spaces and Street Scene operatives, the key holding Agreement does not include an annual amount which Council would provide to the Agreement holder. Following opening of the regenerated park, Council provided financial support of £15,000 for the initial year of operation for evidenced activity programming costs. Council provided further financial support of approximately £2,000 through Parks Outreach budgets for Halloween and Christmas activity in 2022. No further payments have been made to the group.
3.4	The work of this group at the site is saving Council revenue budget in terms of litter collection and maintenance, whilst their work in promoting positive animation at the site

	also safeguards against ASB behaviour and damage/repair costs which are high at nearby sites such as Dunville and Falls Parks. The group is currently receiving no funding from council and a revised Agreement would remedy this situation and ensure local supervision and community operation of the site.
3.5	Officers have recognised the need for significant growth in budgets to support operational and maintenance activity at all new parks. It is also important that specific budgets are in place to animate new spaces to ensure achievement of planned outcomes from capital investment.
3.6	Existing budgets within the Parks Events and Outreach team are stretched to support planned programming and development activity at current sites. Animation of new assets requires intensive delivery of programmes to kick start local activity which in some locations will move towards long term self-sufficient programming. Currently there are seven new parks assets, recently operating or due to come into operation, which do not have specific animation budgets for early development of local community programming.
	<u>Financial & Human Resource Implications</u>
3.7	This report will commit an amount of £15,000 per annum to support a revised Agreement at this site, this amount is not currently included in any revenue budgets. Consideration should be given to adopting this programming budget at all new parks.
	<u>Asset and Other Implications</u>
3.8	This approach at Páirc an Lonnáin will ensure that the local community manage key holding of a Council asset and develop appropriate programming at the site for local community benefit. The availability of a programme budget at all new parks will help to ensure that positive animation is in place from the outset of the asset's life.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.9	There are no known implications.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None

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Subject:	Responsible Dog Ownership - Update
Date:	10 October 2023
Reporting Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services
Contact Officer:	Helen Morrissey, City Protection Manager Stephen Leonard, Neighbourhood Services (OSS Portfolio Lead)

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

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

☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To provide members of the People and Communities Committee with an update on the

	issues raised at the Council Meeting on Monday 4 September 2023 regarding the Responsible Dog Ownership – Update Report (dated 8 August 2023). The Council agreed that the minute be taken back to the Committee for further consideration, and to allow further information on the issue to be provided.
1.2	Members are reminded that at the Committee of 11th September 2023 the following decision was agreed: • agreed to defer consideration of the minute to the October meeting, to enable the Director to prepare a report on the available options regarding fines; • agreed to submit a report to a future meeting considering the Council undertaking a feasibility study on providing street bins in areas where fouling had been a persistent problem, including consideration of the erection of lamppost bins in certain hotspots areas; and • requested an update on FIDO machines.
1.3	In addition to the noted actions, this report provides more detail about signage and Dog Enclosures in Parks.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • Note the updates on the issues raised at Council on 4 September 2023 in relation to fines and signage; • Note the update on New FIDO machines and • note that a further report will be brought back on the other items in relation to a feasibility study on street bins; • Update on dog enclosures in Clement Wilson Park, Falls Park and Orangefield Park will be provided at the next round of Area Working Groups.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	At the Council meeting on 4 September 2023 officers were asked if it would be possible to have an incremental increase for the Fixed Penalty Notice fines for repeat offenders. Officers have consulted with Legal Services and there is no provision within the legislation to allow for incremental increases to fines.
3.2	There is provision within the legislation to pursue a case in court, rather than giving the alleged offender the opportunity to accept and pay a Fixed Penalty Notice fine. The maximum fine in court is £1000. Officers will always have regard to the option of prosecuting any repeat offender identified as part of the graduated approach to enforcement. <u>Signage</u>

3.3	There is a substantial number of signs for dog fouling throughout the City and they are concentrated in areas that have been identified as hotspots. Most signs also contain information about the Fixed Penalty Notice fine for other offences including littering.
3.4	For Members' information, if a change to the fine for the dog fouling Fixed Penalty Notice is introduced, Legal Services has confirmed there is no legislative requirement to amend all the signs immediately. A rolling programme would be sufficient and would not impact on our ability to take formal action should an individual fail to pay the fine.
3.5	The City Services team are considering best way to review signage and consider a budget and program of work for this.
3.6	Whilst some existing signs could be replaced within the existing Enforcement and Dog Warden Service budget on a rolling program, we recognize that there is a need to explore options to future proof any new signs and consider the best messaging. They may not refer to the level of the fine or as in other district council areas, they could refer to the maximum court fine of £1000. Appendix 1 contains details of our current references to an £80 fine.
	<u>Provision of Street Bins</u>
3.7	Officers are currently completing work on a new tender for the provision of street bins and this will be in place from the 1 st January 2024. In the interim officers in City Neighbourhood Services are pulling together information from our Quality monitoring team along with information from the customer hub. A future report will be brought to committee that identifies dog fouling hot spot areas. This report will also explore the feasibility/suitability of street bins in these areas and will provide options with regard to the type of bins and information on the costs of providing and emptying any new bins. Members are also asked to note that a quotation is in place that will allow the department to replace some street bins across this city between now and the date when the new tender becomes active.
	<u>Dog Enclosures</u>
3.8	At August committee members received an update on pilot Dog Enclosures in particular a previous decision by committee in 2019 to trial dog enclosures in Clement Wilson Park, Falls Park and Orangefield Park. Officers will update members on this further at the next round of Area Working groups.

3.9	<u>FIDO Machines</u> CNS have ordered 4 new replacement FIDO machines and expects to take delivery of them in New Year. Each area manager will use information on dog fouling hot spots to inform the work programme for each vehicle.
3.10	<u>Finance and Resource Implications</u> Costs to update / replace with newly designed signage will be factored into estimates process. The cost of purchasing the new FIDO machines is included within current budget estimates. There is currently no provision within existing estimates for the provision of dog enclosures in the three parks listed above. The feasibility report on the provision of street bins will include the costs associated with the purchase, installation and emptying of the bins. This information will be presented to Committee at a later date.
3.11	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – References for fines Appendix 2 – Report to August 23 People and Communities Committee

Appendix 1 - Details of our current references to an £80 fine

Metal signs on lampposts

The erection of signs across parks, open spaces and in public areas in the street is one that has had different approaches across BCC over many years. Different teams and units in historical differing Departments, even before LGR, means there is no central record of the locations, sizes or content of the existing signs.

Alley Gates

Nearly every alley gate has at least 1 metal sign on it – mostly A3 size. We do have a full list of all alley gate locations.

Council street bins

Some bins have yellow stickers with details of the dog fouling and littering fines. These would need to be over-stickered.

Council vehicles

Some vans have details of the fines on their side panels / rear doors. Again over-stickering would be required.

Online

We have an internal video clip on responsible dog ownership which refers to the £80 fine. All other online references to £80 would be straightforward to change.

Fixed Penalty Notice Documentation

This would be easy to amend with immediate effect.

Leaflets / banners etc.

We would stop using any leaflets / banners that refer to £80 and update them on a rolling programme within existing budget. This will be relatively straightforward with most work done internally via Reprographics.

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Subject:	Responsible Dog Ownership - Update
Date:	8 August 2023
Reporting Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services
Contact Officer:	Helen Morrissey, City Protection 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 ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To provide members of the People and Communities Committee with an update on addressing better responsible dog ownership, in particular: - The Committee noted the previous update at the meeting on 7 March 2023 and requested a Members' Workshop to discuss the issues and potential solutions to dog fouling in the city in more detail. - Actions taken following the Members' Workshop on 25 April 2023 on Tackling Dog Fouling in the City; and

	The deferred decision regarding proposed changes to Fixed Penalty Fines for dog fouling offences and littering offences.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to: - Note the actions and outcomes following the Members' Workshop on 25 April 2023. - Reconsider Options 1 – 3 in relation to the new fixed penalty limits for dog fouling and agree a preferred option. - Consider Option 4 - applying any changes made to the fixed penalty limits for dog fouling offences to littering offences.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<u>PART 1 – Members' Workshop</u>
3.2	A Members' Workshop on responsible dog ownership and the tackling of dog fouling in the city took place on 25 April 2023. An overview of the Dog Warden Service was followed with fouling statistics and trends; the challenges when tackling dog fouling and updates from the various teams in the Council with responsibility for tackling dog fouling.
3.3	Sixteen actions have been grouped under eight headings and since the workshop, officers in the Dog Warden Service, Environmental Education and Outreach Team, Corporate Marketing and Communications, Open Spaces and Streetscene and the Performance and Improvement Unit have held further workshops and been working through these actions. <u>DATA</u>
3.4	ACTION 1 – Consider how best to use data from street inspections / street index data or other data sources to identify hot spots and look at impact. Consider how best to provide data to Members.
3.5	A full analysis of the available data was carried out and the key findings were: - Customer complaints in relation to dog fouling increased by 14% from 21/22 (889) to 22/23 (1013). - The data from the Council's Quality Monitoring Survey evidences a seasonal trend to dog fouling, where there is increased dog fouling in the winter months

	(December – February) compared with the summer months (June – August). This same seasonal trend has been identified in customer complaints recorded by the Customer Hub. It shows from about November to March in both 2021/22 and 2022/23 there was a sharp rise in complaints. • The number of fixed penalties and revenue from the fines are currently low. Fouling detection patrols are resource intensive and are carried out in pairs. We are continuing to review the opportunity for fouling detection patrols against the other demands on the Dog Wardens time. • There was a greater number of people with dog licences pre-pandemic than post pandemic.
3.6	Outcome 1 - We will continue to use the data from complaints (via public and Members) and the Quality Monitoring Surveys to target hot spot areas and direct resources. Resources permitting, additional fouling patrols will operate between December and February. We are continuing to work towards pre-pandemic levels of enforcement activity. A licensing intervention has been introduced with an additional resource secured to tackle the backlog. Open Spaces and Streetscene will review the available data and determine how best to circulate future performance information.
3.7	ACTION 2 – Benchmark other locations with good practice. We restricted our benchmarking to Northern Ireland as we felt that other NI authorities would provide information that was most relevant to Belfast in managing these issues. 8 of the 10 councils responded. We asked a series of questions about fouling patrols; dog enclosures; dog control orders; signage; stencilling; provision of free poo bags and use of dispensers. We also reviewed the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Briefing 2019 which collated a list of good ideas from local authorities across the UK: • The Green Dog Walkers Scheme • Rewards for residents reporting fouling • Chalk stencils with messages being painted onto pavements • Highlighting fouling with bright coloured sprays • Glow-in-the-dark posters to target night-time fouling • Dog Watch Schemes – inspired by Neighbourhood Watch Schemes • A Council reporting app that allows individuals to identify the location of fouling

3.8	Outcome 2 – Where appropriate the benchmarking findings have been included in the relevant actions below.
3.9	ACTION 3 – Survey / updated research We reviewed available research including that commissioned by BCC and carried out by QUB (Canine Behaviour Centre, School of Psychology) in 2004 and 2009. We have re-engaged with QUB and are hoping to work with the university in the coming academic year to draw up a strategy for new research that will be tailored to our needs. However, the university has stressed that resources are limited and any research will need to be conducted within very tight parameters.
3.10	We also reviewed the most recent research from the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Briefing 2019 which included findings from local authorities across the UK. It notes dog fouling is one of the most prevalent issues for local authority environmental services. It is particularly difficult to tackle for a number of reasons: • People are aware they could be fined, but many do not think they will ever be caught; • Fouling can happen at any time of day or night, so patrolling often will not catch the offenders; • Residents are (rightfully) hesitant to confront residents who persistently allow their dog to foul; • Prosecution requires good evidence; • Attempts to introduce new dog controls to combat dog fouling can lead to a public backlash; • The public is still largely unaware that (in many areas) they can dispose of dog waste in any available local authority litter bin; • Many people do not consider leaving dog waste bags on the ground fouling.
3.11	Outcome 3 – We will continue to engage with QUB regarding opportunities for bespoke research. We will seek to increase awareness of successful prosecutions and will work to address the difficulties listed above through our education programme.

	<u>MESSAGING - EDUCATIONAL MESSAGING VIA LEAFLET DOOR DROPS</u>
3.12	ACTION 4 – Build on current leaflet drops with public awareness messaging in identified hot spot areas. This is a cost effective and visible action. However, it does have limitations. If we leaflet a street with significant dog fouling, it is not necessarily the residents of that street that are allowing dogs to foul in their own street. In an attempt to mitigate for this we will normally leaflet several surrounding streets. Fouling in gated alley ways can be attributed to specific houses with access to the alley way and only those houses would be targeted through leafleting. Outcome 4 – Dog Wardens will continue to leaflet houses in hot spot areas. Colleagues in our Enforcement Team, who tackle littering, will continue to assist with leaflet drops.
3.13	ACTION 5 – Humanise the message, make messaging local. Harder hitting – health impacts / implications, especially to children.
3.14	The ‘think again’ dog fouling campaign was launched during October/November 2022, with a second burst of activity in February 2023 and it has recently been shortlisted for a CIPR (Chartered Institute of Public Relations) Pride Award for best Integrated Campaign. Our objective was to create a campaign using real insights and research to help influence behaviour change by encouraging dog owners to pick up after their dog, take responsibility and Think Again! The campaign used integrated communications consisting of heavyweight advertising, social media and innovative PR.
3.15	Independent research was commissioned to evaluate the paid for advertising element of the campaign and it found that 93% recalled the message; 80% said the artwork was understandable and 72% said its greatest benefit was encouraging dog owners to take responsibility. As the ‘think again’ campaign is so new Marketing and Corporate Communications have recommended that we do not invest in a new campaign creative until 2025/26 in order to let the “Think Again” campaign embed and percolate. The current campaign shows the consequences of not cleaning up after your dog. Future campaigns could focus on the perpetrator (hopefully the QUB research will help us identify main perpetrators) and creative approach would also be reviewed at this time to

	incorporate feedback from the workshop such as the possibility of having Belfast identifiable images within advertising assets.
3.16	Outcome 5 – We plan to develop a new campaign creative in 2024/25 (for use in 2025/26) and will use up to date research to identify who to target and how best to deliver the message.
3.17	ACTION 6 – Use of social media in future campaigns, particular focus on targeting hot spots, males under 30 etc. and the evaluation of impacts. Our integrated marketing campaigns already use a wide range of media formats (including social media) to target people during all aspects of their life, when at home before they walk their dog, when they are out walking their dog, when they are online and travelling to and from work. Hotspot areas are currently targeted within current dog fouling campaigns for example during the ‘think again’ campaign Adshel posters were located at hot spot areas.
3.18	Outcome 6 – Marketing and Corporate Communications team will select the most appropriate media channels in future campaigns to target hot spot areas based on findings/feedback and select the most effective ways of reaching perpetrators based on any new research findings.
3.19	ACTION 7 – Further promotion of the Green Dog Walker scheme to reward positive behaviour. Our Environmental Education and Outreach Team promote this scheme in our parks during summer fun days with Scoop Dog and also support this scheme with social media activity. (See Appendix 1 & 2) Anyone signing up to the scheme must have a licence for their dog so the scheme is raising awareness of the licensing requirements too. By taking the Green Dog Walkers' pledge and using a Green Dog Walker's lead, owners commit to: • always clean up after their dog; • carry extra dog waste bags; • give free dog waste bags to other dog walkers.
3.20	Outcome 7 – We will continue to promote our successful Green Dog Walker scheme.

	<u>MARKETING – SIGNAGE</u>
3.21	ACTION 8 – Signage in parks / on street, consider positioning / visibility and work with communities on location. Our Open Spaces and Streetscene colleagues in parks will continue to use signage at appropriate locations throughout our parks. Whilst we appreciate the role of signage and agree with Members that location is important, we are reluctant to encourage excessive signage. We believe the current level of street signage throughout the city is sufficient. We will however still consider requests for additional signage but need to be cognisant of the requirement for permission from the Department for Infrastructure should we want to erect signage on its property. As an alternative to street signage we have designed a poster (see Appendix 2) which we can be distributed to local communities in hot spot areas for indoor use.
3.22	Outcome 8 – Open Spaces and Streetscene will continue to use signage in our parks. The Dog Warden Service and our Environmental Education and Outreach Team will continue to engage with communities and raise awareness of the new poster.
3.23	ACTION 9 – Signage: Consider materials, design bespoke signs for specific areas. Consider CCTV message as a deterrent, wardens patrolling this area etc. Through our benchmarking we have determined that all councils in NI use signs with a variety of construction materials including metal, Perspex, cortex and banners. There was a difference of opinion as to whether graphic signage or cute dogs were the best way to engage with dog owners. Some include the level of the fines on signage and others do not. Given the limitation to use DfI property for additional signage we have instead continued to develop our banners (See Appendix 4) that can be used on park and school railings. We will take account of all of the benchmarking information when developing our next campaign during 2024/25.
3.24	Members had suggested CCTV signage (similar to PSNI speed camera signage) to be used as a deterrent. We have taken advice and use of such signage, when we have no CCTV would mean we would intentionally be misleading the public and it would put us at odds with our own Code of Conduct. We already use social media as a deterrent by advising of current and future dog fouling patrols.

3.25	Outcome 9 – We will consider the benchmarking findings on signage when developing our next campaign. We will continue to use social media about dog fouling patrols as a deterrent.
3.26	ACTION 10 – Chase DfI for permission to stencil. Review stencilling and its impact on changing behaviour. Through our benchmarking we have determined that 7 of the 8 councils that responded use or have used stencilling. Anecdotally, it is considered to be better at raising awareness in the summertime. We have now received confirmation from DfI that it does not object in principle to stencilling. However, we are required to contact the appropriate area manager for each location, to obtain permission, in advance of any stencilling. This is because stencilling can cause damage to certain pavement surfaces. We have already carried out a small pilot of stencilling at schools in East Belfast and are now waiting on permission from DfI for hot spot schools in North, South and West Belfast. A Quality Monitoring Survey will be carried out before and after in N, S and W and we will then evaluate the effectiveness of stencilling.
3.27	Outcome 10 – Provided we obtain permission from DfI we will undertake a small pilot of stencilling when the new school term starts and evaluate its effectiveness. <u>MARKETING – COMMUNITY</u>
3.28	ACTION 11 – Actively encourage reporting, make reporting process for residents straightforward. Consider pros and cons of providing bag dispensers in certain locations for emergency use.
3.29	In the last year we have amended our online dog fouling reporting form. It has been broken down into several questions which prompt more detailed information and we have found the information provided is more useful for targeting hot spots / individuals. The ‘think again’ campaign also encouraged reporting and our colleagues who manage the social media channels always make a response when fouling is reported.
3.30	We recently ran a Billboard Challenge focused on dog fouling in Spring/ Summer School Term and had an excellent response with 19 schools participating. The Key Stage 2 pupils received an interactive, curriculum-based talk around dog fouling and the issues surrounding it. The pupils then designed their own billboards, and we had 4 winners

	(N/S/E/W) who had their artwork displayed on a local a billboard. (See Appendix 5 & 6). The entries were such high quality we added 4 runners-up, who will receive their entries as a banner for their school. We received positive media coverage of this project.
3.31	From our bench marking all the responding councils provide free poo bags in variety of ways e.g. at pop up events, when on fouling patrols, via Green Dog Walker Scheme, in community centres and when sending out licence renewal letters. There were reports of complaints when supplies at council buildings ran out as dog owners mistakenly thought it was the council's role to provide bags. In Belfast we will continue to supply all community centres with free dog bags and a poster encouraging centre users to pick up free bags there.
3.32	Based on the costings for the dispensers that were installed in Belfast during the COVID pandemic we estimate each dispenser would cost in the region of £800 - £1000 to purchase and install. There would then be on-going refilling and maintenance costs. We have over 50 parks and open spaces and most have multiple entrances. The bench marking findings demonstrated some difficulties where poo bag dispensers were located outside – in one trial in 4 parks all the dispensers were either destroyed or stolen, another reported that dispensers were 'robbed' almost as soon as they were filled and vandalised dispensers are no longer being replaced. There is the potential when free poo bags are provided in parks for those observed committing an offence to use the lack of poo bags in the park dispenser as a defence. We firmly believe that purchasing poo bags is the responsibility of all dog owners and whilst provision of them at events or during fouling patrols is beneficial, the cost to provide them via dispensers is prohibitive and contradicts the message of responsible dog ownership.
3.33	Our Dog Wardens will continue to engage with the public to encourage reporting of dog fouling and to provide free poo bags where appropriate. Our Park Wardens will do the same within our parks.
3.34	Outcome 11 – We will continue to encourage reporting and to provide free dog poo bags at events, at community centres, during fouling patrols and in our engagement with visitors to our parks.

	<u>SERVICE DELIVERY</u>
3.35	ACTION 12 – Continue to deliver a visible response to reports of fouling.
3.36	Through our benchmarking we determined that none of the 8 responding councils patrol 7 days a week as is the case in Belfast. All councils had some scope for variations in the timings of patrols to take account of problem areas, time of year etc. Two of the responding councils have used WISE Enforcement (an external, self-funding company) to enhance / support their Dog Warden fouling patrols. There was no agreement about the best time of day to detect fouling and it was considered to be extremely difficult to detect and more opportunistic in witnessing rather than at planned locations and times. There was a mix of high viz and low viz patrols across the 8 councils with 3 using a blend of both.
3.37	Outcome 12 – We will continue to deliver a visible response to reports of fouling with the use of social media to highlight our activities.
3.38	ACTION 13 – Consider dog enclosures in parks; more bins; more resources to deal with dog fouling; and more FIDO machines.
3.39	Bench marking revealed that 5 of the 8 responding councils have separate dog enclosures in their parks. Within Belfast there are 2 dog enclosures – one at the Grove and one at Stormont. Previous Committee approval was granted in August 2018 with regards to pilot dog enclosures in the West, South & East, however, due to financial pressures, resourcing and Covid this was not progressed. The financial and resourcing pressures still exist, however, this will be refreshed and updated and taken back through the Area Working Groups and then to Committee for approval.
3.40	Outcome 13 – Officers to revisit and refresh the 2018 report and to include graffiti and other pressures such as Anti-Social Behaviour.
	<u>ENFORCEMENT</u>
3.41	Action 14 – Bring back report to Committee on increasing dog fouling fine to maximum of £200.

3.42	Outcome 14 – See Part 2 of this Committee Report.
3.43	<u>LEGISLATION</u> Action 15 – Consider if new legislation is needed.
3.44	There is provision within the existing legislation for Councils to decide to introduce Control Orders for specific scenarios and in Belfast we have one for dog fouling and one for the maximum number of dogs that can be walked by one person. A legal process which involves public consultation must take place before a council makes a dog control order. Back in 2012/23 the Council did consider Dog Control Orders for dogs on leads and exclusion zones but ultimately decided that more information / consultation was needed prior to introducing additional Dog Control Orders.
3.45	All but one of the responding councils have dog control orders including dog exclusion zones and dogs on leads. They apply at various locations e.g. in parks, cemeteries and other specified land owned by the Council and if appropriate at various times. They are restricted to Council owned land because the legislation states: <i>‘No offence is committed where the person has a reasonable excuse for failing to keep the dog on a lead, or the owner, occupier or other person or authority having control of the land has consented (generally or specifically) to the person failing to do so.’</i>
3.46	The primary consideration is to balance the interests of those in charge of dogs against the interests of those affected by the activities of dogs, bearing in mind the need for people, in particular children, to have access to dog-free areas and areas where dogs are kept under strict control, and the need for those in charge of dogs to have access to areas where they can exercise their dogs without undue restriction. Those who responded provided anecdotal evidence that fouling is less likely to happen when a dog is on a lead and our own Dog Wardens agree.
3.47	Outcome 15 – We already have Byelaws that require dogs to be kept on leads on certain council owned land but there are difficulties with enforcement (including lack of a fixed penalty) however a feasibility study could be carried out regarding the introduction of a Control Order for Dogs on Leads in our parks, cemeteries etc. This is to be considered as part of the update report in Action 13.

	<u>FINANCE</u>
3.48	Action 16 – Report back to Committee in August with costings of options where appropriate.
3.49	Where appropriate, estimated costings have been included under the relevant actions throughout the report. In addition a separate Committee Report, including costings for Action 13 will be submitted at a later date.
	PART 2 - PROPOSED CHANGES TO FIXED PENALTY FINES FOR DOG CONTROL OFFENCES
3.50	In our report for Committee on 7 March 2023 we provided details of The Environmental Offences (Fixed Penalties) (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 which came into force on 30 December 2022 and amend the previous 2012 Regulations. The effect is to alter the amount of a fixed penalty capable of being specified by the Council for certain fixed penalties. We detailed 4 options for the Committee to review and after some discussion it was agreed to defer until a future meeting. 4 councils in NI have already increased their fines and we would ask that the options below are considering again.
3.51	OPTIONS • Option 1 – no change • Option 2 – increase to maximum of £200 with reduction if paid within 10 days. Suggested reduction to £100 as an incentive to pay the fixed penalty promptly and avoid court action. • Option 3 – increase but not to maximum with reduction if paid within 10 days. Could be anything from £90 - £190, with any level of reduction. • Option 4 – Consider applying any changes made to the fixed penalty limits for dog fouling offences to littering offences. The Council previously agreed to set the level of fixed penalty fine for littering at £80, reduced to £60 if paid within 10 days. There

	would be no additional signage costs as most signs include information about dog fouling and littering.
3.52	<u>Finance and Resource Implications</u> <u>Part 1</u> There is currently no additional budget available to implement any of newly the suggested outcomes in this report. <u>Part 2</u> There are cost implications if changes are required to signage. We do already have a budget for signage and cost varies depending on the size of the sign and the method of mounting but is in the region of £20 - £25 plus VAT each. The livery on some council vehicles would also need to be removed or updated.
3.53	<u>Asset and Other Implications</u> None
3.54	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u> None.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Green Dog Walkers Pledge Form Appendix 2 – Green Dog Walkers Flyer Appendix 3 – Indoor Community Poster Appendix 4 – Think Again Banner Appendix 5 – 1st Billboard Winner Appendix 6 – 2nd Billboard Winner

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Subject:	Proposals for dual language street signs
Date:	10 th October, 2023
Reporting Officer:	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control
Contact Officer:	Ian Harper, Building Control Manager Roisin Adams, Property and Legal Coordinator

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒								
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted. Insert number 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime									
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted? <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td style="text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td style="text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td style="text-align: center;">☐</td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	☐	After Council Decision	☐	Sometime in the future	☐	Never	☐
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After Council Decision	☐								
Sometime in the future	☐								
Never	☐								

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

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To consider applications for the erection of dual language street signs for seven existing streets within the City.

2.0	Recommendation																														
2.1	The Committee is asked to: Agree to the erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at, Cavanmore Gardens, Wolfhill Gardens, Wolfhill Link, Millview Court, Westrock Crescent Gransha Way and The Manor.																														
3.0	Main Report																														
	<u>Key Issues</u>																														
3.1	The Council may erect a second street nameplate in a language other than English pursuant to Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1995.																														
3.2	Members are asked to consider the following applications to erect a second street nameplate showing the name of the street expressed in a language other than English. The second language is Irish.																														
3.3	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>English Name</th><th>Non- English Name</th><th>Location</th><th>Persons surveyed</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Cavanmore Gardens, BT11 8LZ</td><td>Gairdíní an Chabháin Mhóir</td><td>Between Glassmullan Gardens and Tullymore Gardens, BT11</td><td>106</td></tr> <tr> <td>Wolfhill Gardens, BT14 8NP</td><td>Gairdíní Chnoc an Mhactíre</td><td>Off Wolfhill Drive ,BT14</td><td>82</td></tr> <tr> <td>Wolfhill Link, BT14 8DY</td><td>Nasc Chnoc an Mhactíre</td><td>Off Thornberry Road, BT14</td><td>45</td></tr> <tr> <td>Millview Court, BT14 8PY</td><td>Cúirt Radharc an Mhuilinn</td><td>Off Hazelbrook Drive, BT14</td><td>34</td></tr> <tr> <td>Westrock Crescent, BT12 7NQ</td><td>Corrán na Carraige Thiar</td><td>Off Westrock Gardens, BT12</td><td>36</td></tr> <tr> <td>Gransha Way, BT11 8AQ</td><td>Bealach na Gráinsí</td><td>Off Gransha Gardens, BT11</td><td>29</td></tr> </tbody> </table>			English Name	Non- English Name	Location	Persons surveyed	Cavanmore Gardens, BT11 8LZ	Gairdíní an Chabháin Mhóir	Between Glassmullan Gardens and Tullymore Gardens, BT11	106	Wolfhill Gardens, BT14 8NP	Gairdíní Chnoc an Mhactíre	Off Wolfhill Drive ,BT14	82	Wolfhill Link, BT14 8DY	Nasc Chnoc an Mhactíre	Off Thornberry Road, BT14	45	Millview Court, BT14 8PY	Cúirt Radharc an Mhuilinn	Off Hazelbrook Drive, BT14	34	Westrock Crescent, BT12 7NQ	Corrán na Carraige Thiar	Off Westrock Gardens, BT12	36	Gransha Way, BT11 8AQ	Bealach na Gráinsí	Off Gransha Gardens, BT11	29
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	The Manor, BT10 OPL	An Mainéar	Off Oakhurst Avenue, BT10	90	
3.4	The translations were authenticated by Queens University, the approved translator for Belfast City Council.				
3.5	In accordance with the Council's policy for the erection of dual language street signs, surveys of all persons appearing on the electoral register plus owners or tenants in actual possession of commercial premises, for the above streets were carried out and the following responses were received.				
3.6	Cavanmore Gardens, BT11 36 (33.96%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate 70 occupiers (66.04%) did not respond to the survey.				
3.7	Wolfhill Gardens, BT14 14 occupiers (17.07%) were in favour of the erection of a second street nameplate. 3 occupiers (3.66%) had no preference either way. 65 occupiers (79.27%) did not respond to the survey.				
3.8	Wolfhill Link, BT14 14 occupiers (31.11%) were in favour of the erection of a second street nameplate. 31 occupiers (68.89%) did not respond to the survey.				
3.9	Millview Court, BT14 10 occupiers (29.41%) were in favour of the erection of a second street nameplate. 24 occupiers (70.59%) did not respond to the survey.				
3.10	Westrock Crescent, BT12 9 occupiers (25%) were in favour of the erection of a second street nameplate. 4 occupiers (11.11%) had no preference either way.				

3.11	• 23 occupiers (63.89%) did not respond to the survey. Gransha Way, BT11 • 13 occupiers (44.83%) were in favour of the erection of a second street nameplate. • 1 occupier (3.45%) was not in favour of the erection of a second street nameplate. • 15 occupiers (51.72%%) did not respond to the survey. 3.12 The Manor, BT10 • 34 occupiers (37.78%%) were in favour of the erection of a second street nameplate. • 56 occupiers (62.22%) did not respond to the survey. <u>Assessment against policy</u> 3.13 The Council's policy on the erection of a second street nameplate requires that at least fifteen percent (15%) of the occupiers surveyed must be in favour of the proposal to erect a second street sign in a language other than English, to progress to Committee for consideration. 3.14 All of the surveys listed above demonstrate compliance with the threshold contained within the Policy. However, the Committee is reminded that the Council retain a residual discretion under the Policy to decide to erect or not to erect a street sign in a language other than English in certain circumstances. This will be done on a case-by-case basis. 3.15 The Policy states that it may be appropriate to depart from the procedures in this Policy when there are clear reasons for doing so. This may include taking into account: (a) the views of the Occupiers of the street; (b) the results of the initial assessment for the application, including any identified potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs; (c) consideration of the local context of the application; (d) any other Council policies or strategies related to the application; and (e) all material considerations relating to the application. <u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> 3.16 There is a cost of approximately £1,470 to cover the cost of the manufacturing and erection of approximately 11 dual language street signs. The cost for these street signs has been allowed for in the current budget.
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3.17	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> Each application for a dual language street sign is subject to an initial assessment for any potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs. The initial assessments and elected member notification carried out for the 6 applications being considered did not identify any potential adverse impacts to prevent the surveys being carried out.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	None

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Subject:	Applications for dual language street signs for Cardigan Drive and Dunblane Avenue
Date:	10 th October 2023
Reporting Officer:	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control
Contact Officer:	Ian Harper, Building Control Manager Roisin Adams, Business Coordinator

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

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

☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To consider if a street survey of occupiers will be carried out for Cardigan Drive and Dunblane Avenue relating to the erection of dual language street signs where an objection has been received from an Elected Member representing the relevant District Electoral Area.

2.0	Recommendation									
2.1	Members are asked to consider the report and the objections raised in relation to applications for dual language street signs received for Cardigan Drive and Dunblane Avenue and either: a) Agree that a survey of occupiers be carried out on the streets identified; or b) Agree that no survey will be carried out on the grounds of the potential adverse impacts identified by the objections and close these applications									
3.0	Main Report									
	<u>Key Issues</u>									
3.1	The power for the Council to consider applications to erect a second street nameplate in a language other than English is contained in Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1995.									
3.2	The procedures developed under the revised Dual Language Street Sign Policy involves a notification of applications to Elected Members. The purpose of this notification is to allow members to identify those applications in their DEA or the city centre in respect of which it may be appropriate for the Council to exercise its residual discretion not to apply the Policy due to the local context.									
3.3	In this regard objections have been received for the following applications: - <table><tr><th>Street</th><th>DEA</th><th>Member</th></tr><tr><td>Dunblane Avenue</td><td>Oldpark</td><td>Cllr Jordan Doran</td></tr><tr><td>Cardigan Drive</td><td>Oldpark</td><td>Cllr Jordan Doran</td></tr></table>	Street	DEA	Member	Dunblane Avenue	Oldpark	Cllr Jordan Doran	Cardigan Drive	Oldpark	Cllr Jordan Doran
Street	DEA	Member								
Dunblane Avenue	Oldpark	Cllr Jordan Doran								
Cardigan Drive	Oldpark	Cllr Jordan Doran								
3.4	Cllr Doran has provided the following statements in relation to these objections: - ➤ “Dunblane Avenue is a mixed and diverse community, and I have strong concerns that the proposal to add an Irish street name to Dunblane Avenue would have a strongly negative impact on community relations within the area”. ➤ “Cardigan Drive has a mixed and diverse community in and around it, and I have reservations that the proposal to add an Irish street name to Cardigan Drive would have a negative impact on community relations within and surrounding the area”.									
3.5	Members are also reminded that each application is subject to an initial assessment by officers for any potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs. This assessment is carried out when the application is being processed and where any adverse impacts are identified that information will be brought to Committee.”									

3.6	The initial assessments were carried out by officers for Dunblane Avenue and Cardigan Drive and no potential adverse impacts were identified through this process.
3.7	These applications are being brought to Committee to determine if a survey of residents of these streets will take place, considering this information and the objections received from Councillor Doran.
	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.8	If it is decided to carry out the survey, the resulting tasks are included within the normal resources for the process.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.9	Each application for a dual language street sign is subject to an initial assessment for any potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs. No potential adverse impacts have been identified through this process.
3.10	Cllr Doran has raised potential for adverse impacts on good relations through an objection received during the Elected Member notification procedure.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	None

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Subject:	Proposal for dual language street signs at Wynchurch Avenue
Date:	10 th October, 2023
Reporting Officer:	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control
Contact Officer:	Ian Harper, Building Control Manager Roisin Adams, Property and Legal Coordinator

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒								
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Sometime in the future	☐								
Never	☐								

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

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To consider the results of the resurvey of residents in Wynchurch Avenue relating to an application for the erection of dual language streets signs in Irish. Members are reminded that

	the decision to resurvey the occupiers of this street was approved at a Committee meeting on 13 th June 2023 and subsequently ratified by full Council on 3 rd July 2023.										
2.0	Recommendation										
2.1	The Committee is asked to: consider the contents of this report and determine if a second street nameplate in Irish is to be erected at Wynchurch Avenue.										
3.0	Main Report										
	<u>Key Issues</u>										
3.1	The Council may erect a second street nameplate in a language other than English pursuant to Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1995.										
3.2	Members are asked to consider the following application to erect a second street nameplate showing the name of the street expressed in a language other than English. The second language is Irish.										
3.3	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>English Name</th><th>Non- English Name</th><th>Location</th><th>Persons surveyed</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Wynchurch Avenue, BT6 OJP</td><td>Ascaill Wynchurch</td><td>Off Rosetta Road, BT6</td><td>113</td></tr> </tbody> </table>			English Name	Non- English Name	Location	Persons surveyed	Wynchurch Avenue, BT6 OJP	Ascaill Wynchurch	Off Rosetta Road, BT6	113
English Name	Non- English Name	Location	Persons surveyed								
Wynchurch Avenue, BT6 OJP	Ascaill Wynchurch	Off Rosetta Road, BT6	113								
3.4	The translation was authenticated by Queens University, the approved translator for Belfast City Council.										
3.5	At the meeting of the Council's People and Communities Committee on 13 th June, the Elected Members considered the application from an occupier of Wynchurch Avenue to erect a street nameplate in Irish, in addition to the English name. The original survey of occupiers for this application took place between 9 th March 2023 and 10 th April 2023 and obtained the following results:										
3.6	Original Survey – 113 Occupiers Surveyed 20 occupiers (17.70%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate. 30 occupiers (26.55%) were not in favour of the erection of a second street name plate. 4 occupiers (3.54%) had no preference either way. 59 occupiers (52.21%) did not respond to the survey.										

3.7	Exercising the residual discretion afforded to it, the Committee decided that a resurvey of the occupiers of the street should be carried out and this decision was ratified by full Council on 3 rd July 2023.
3.8	A resurvey of Wynchurch Avenue took place between 8 th August 2023 and 4 th September 2023 and the outcome is reported below.
3.9	In accordance with the Council's policy for the erection of dual language street signs, surveys of all persons appearing on the electoral register plus owners or tenants in actual possession of commercial premises, on Wynchurch Avenue were carried out and the following responses were received.
3.10	Re-survey – 113 Occupiers Surveyed • 17 occupiers (15.04%%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate. • 32 occupiers (28.32%) were not in favour of the erection of a second street name plate. • 2 occupiers (1.77%) had no preference either way. • 62 occupiers (54.87%) did not respond to the survey.
3.11	One survey response which was not in favour of the erection of the dual language street sign was received after the survey closed on 4th September. This is not included in the figures above; however, it is a matter for members to determine whether they should take this representation into account and the weight to be attached to it. <u>Assessment against policy</u>
3.12	The Council's policy on the erection of a second street nameplate requires that at least fifteen percent (15%) of the occupiers surveyed must be in favour of the proposal to erect a second street sign in a language other than English, to progress to Committee for consideration.
3.13	The re-survey for Wynchurch Avenue demonstrates compliance with the threshold contained within the Policy. However, the Committee is reminded that the Council retain a residual discretion under the Policy to decide to erect or not to erect a street sign in a language other than English in certain circumstances. This will be done on a case-by- case basis.

3.14	The Policy states that it may be appropriate to depart from the procedures in this Policy when there are clear reasons for doing so. This may include taking into account: (a) the views of the Occupiers of the street; (b) the results of the initial assessment for the application, including any identified potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs; (c) consideration of the local context of the application; (d) any other Council policies or strategies related to the application; and (e) all material considerations relating to the application. <u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.15	There is a cost of approximately £570 to cover the cost of the manufacturing and erection of approximately 4 dual language street signs. The cost for these street signs has been allowed for in the current budget. <u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.16	Each application for a dual language street sign is subject to an initial assessment for any potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs.
3.17	The initial assessment and elected member notification carried out for the Wynchurch Avenue application did not identify any potential adverse impacts to prevent the surveys being carried out.
3.18	One resident in favour of the dual language nameplates sent a letter raising concerns for the attention of the People and Communities Committee on 16th June 2023 following the Committee decision on 13th June to resurvey Wynchurch Avenue. They believed that a new canvass of residents would likely see more votes against bi-lingual signage, and it is profoundly undemocratic. They are of the opinion “that the practice of “recall” votes initiated by Committee is likely to have a chilling effect on future applications for bilingual signage”. They allege that “the committee believes the anti-Gaelic talking point that a supplementary sign is a sectarian marker rather than, as the rest of the world believes, evidence of tolerance and pluralism.” The council received comments on three returned survey forms.
3.19	One resident who responded in favour of the dual language sign has stated “please do not ignore our vote and make us do this a third time”.

3.20	Another resident from Wynchurch Avenue who is not in favour of the dual language name plate has concerns about the cost of the sign and feel that it is a waste of money. They are happy for a second sign as long as it's not public money and feel that those who really want it should pay for it.
3.21	A resident who is not in support of the dual language name plate said that this was an inclusive mixed area where both communities have coexisted beside each other. While they support the rights on those who use the Irish language, they do not see the benefit of the change, and feel it will add nothing except to single out the street.
3.22	Another resident provided a letter addressed to the Elected Members regarding this application. They raised concerns that the majority of voting residents do not want the signs erected, that people live in the street due to the fact that it is mixed, and that the erection of the signs would create an opportunity for a sense of unease in a street where people live in harmony.
3.23	They also raised concerns that the street could become a target for those who oppose the signs, that erecting signage reflecting one or other community is divisive and unnecessary, and that the money could be used much more effectively.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	None

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