

# Public Document Pack

## BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

### **SUMMONS TO ATTEND THE MONTHLY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**TO: THE LORD MAYOR, ALDERMEN AND THE COUNCILLORS OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL**

Notice is hereby given that the monthly meeting of the Council will be held in hybrid format, both in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Belfast and remotely via Microsoft Teams, on Monday, 4th December, 2023 at 6.00 p.m., for the transaction of the following business:

1. Summons
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes of Council Meetings (Pages 1 - 22)
5. Official Announcements
6. Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Pages 23 - 60)
7. Minutes of People and Communities Committee (Pages 61 - 92)
8. Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Pages 93 - 126)
9. Minutes of Licensing Committee (Pages 127 - 132)
10. Minutes of Planning Committee (Pages 133 - 152)
11. Minutes of Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee (Pages 153 - 158)
12. Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee (Pages 159 - 166)
13. Minutes of Standards and Business Committee (Pages 167 - 168)
14. Motion
  - a) Cost of School Uniforms and P.E. Kits (Pages 169 - 170)

The Members of Belfast City Council are hereby summoned to attend.

Chief Executive

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## Council

### MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall and remotely, via Microsoft Teams, on Wednesday, 1st November, 2023 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murphy) (Chairperson);  
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Groogan);  
Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers; and Councillors Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower, Bradley, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Collins, de Faoite, Doherty, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R. M. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Hanvey, Kelly, Long, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, Maskey, F. McAteer, G. McAteer, McCabe, McCann, McCormick, McCusker, McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKeown, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, McMullan, Murray, Nelson, Nic Bhranair, Ó Néill, Smyth, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

### Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

### Apologies

No apologies were reported.

### Declarations of Interest

Councillor T. Brooks declared an interest in relation to the minute of the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 20th October, under the heading "Hardship Fund – Emerging Considerations", in that a family member was employed by Save the Children, one of the partners named within the funding model and in relation to the minute of the meeting of the People and Communities Committee of 10th October, under the heading "Update on Social Supermarkets", on the basis that she was a Director of a charity which was in receipt of funding.

The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Groogan) and Councillors Beattie, Canavan Doherty and McCusker and declared an interest in relation to the minute of the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 20th October, under the heading "Hardship Fund – Emerging Considerations" and the minute of the meeting of the People and Communities Committee of 10th October, under the heading "Update on Social Supermarkets", in that they were either employed by or on the board of organisations which were in receipt of funding.

Councillor McDonough-Brown declared an interest in relation to the minute of the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 20th October, under the heading

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“Hardship Fund – Emerging Considerations”, in that his partner was employed by Save the Children, one of the partners named within the funding model.

(The Lord Mayor, on the advice of the Chief Executive, informed those Members who had declared an interest in relation to the aforementioned two minutes that they would not be required to leave the Chamber in the event of them being raised, on the basis that they did not involve the allocation of funding to specific organisations at this stage.)

Councillor Ferguson declared an interest in relation to the minute of the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 20th October, under the heading “Minutes - Toilet Facilities - Cregagh Wanderers Container”, due to his involvement with Nettlefield and Glentoran Football Clubs, which were part of the same LIF project. As that item did not become the subject of discussion, he was not required to leave the Chamber.

Councillor T. Brooks declared an interest in relation to the minute of the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 20th October, under the heading “QUB Civic Commitment to the South Belfast University Area”, in that she was employed by Queen’s University. As that item did not become the subject of discussion, she was not required to leave the Chamber.

Councillor Whyte declared an interest in relation to the minute of the meeting of the People and Communities Committee of 10th October, under the heading “Invite to 2023 WHO European Healthy Cities Network Annual Business Meeting”, on the basis that a family member was employed by Belfast Healthy Cities. As that item did not become the subject of discussion, he was not required to leave the Chamber.

Councillor Nic Bhranair declared an interest in relation to the minute of the meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 11th October, under the heading “Update on Major Events”, in that she was a Board Member of An tOireachtas. As the issue raised under that minute did not relate to that organisation, she was not required to leave the Chamber.

Councillor Flynn declared an interest in relation to the minute of the meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 11th October, under the heading “Employability and Skills Workplan – Mid Year Update”, on the basis that his employer was mentioned as operating a digital economy. As that item did not become the subject of discussion, he was not required to leave the Chamber.

Councillor Duffy declared an interest in relation to the minute of the meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 11th October, under the heading “Employability and Skills Workplan – Mid Year Update”, in that he worked for an organisation which ran an employment academy. As that item did not become the subject of discussion, he was not required to leave the Chamber.

Councillors G. McAteer, McCabe, Ó Néill and Verner declared an interest in relation to the motion on Arts Cuts, on the basis that either they or a family member were employed by an organisation which was in receipt of funding from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and left the meeting for the duration of the debate.

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Councillor McDonough-Brown declared an interest in relation to the motion on Arts Cuts, in that a family member worked for the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and left the meeting whilst it was being discussed.

Councillors Long, McCormick, McCusker, McKeown, McMullan and Smyth declared an interest in relation to the motion on Pay Awards for Health and Social Care Trust Staff, on the basis that either they or a family member were employed by the Health and Social Care Trust and left the meeting for the duration of the debate.

Councillor Maghie declared an interest declared an interest in relation to the motion on Pay Awards for Health and Social Care Trust Staff, in that she worked for an organisation which lobbied on behalf of some Health and Social Care Trust staff and left the meeting whilst it was being debated.

Councillor McKeown declared an interest declared an interest in relation to the motion on Secure Needle/Drug Waste Bins, on the basis that his employer was mentioned therein and left the meeting whilst it was being discussed.

**Minutes of the Council**

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murphy),  
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly meeting of the Council of 4th October be taken as read and signed as correct.

**Official Announcements**

The Lord Mayor referred to the recent death of Mr. Kevin O'Doherty, a member of the Resources and Fleet Service within the City and Neighbourhood Services Department and of Mr. Hugh Russell, award-winning photographer and former boxing champion and, on behalf of the Council, extended his sympathy to their families.

Councillor Doran pointed out that the Belfast Boys' Model School had recently attained a National Nurturing Schools Award and congratulated those pupils involved.

Councillor I. McLaughlin paid tribute to the organisers of the series of events which had been held to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Shankill Bomb.

Councillor S. Douglas congratulated East Belfast woman Ms. Emma-Rosa Dias and her team at Afro-Mic Productions, an award-winning independent television production company, on their success to date.

At the request of Councillor R. Brooks, the Lord Mayor undertook to forward a letter of congratulations to the Ledley Hall Boys' and Girls' Club to mark the 80th anniversary of its formation.

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Councillor Smyth referred to the serious flooding which had occurred across parts of Northern Ireland recently and expressed solidarity with those householders and businesses who had been affected.

In response to Councillor Smyth, the Chief Executive reported that Council staff were providing Newry, Mourne and Down District Council with assistance, as part of a mutual aid protocol in place with the other councils, under the Council's emergency planning arrangements.

**Change of Membership on Committees**

The Chief Executive reported that notification had been received from the Alliance Party of the following changes to Committees:

- Councillor Long to replace Councillor Maghie on the Climate and City Resilience Committee; and
- Councillor Maghie to replace Councillor Long on the Standards and Business Committee.

The Council noted the changes.

**Request to Address the Council**

The Chief Executive reported that a request had been received from Mr. Stephen Beggs, Chair of Equity's Northern Ireland Committee, to address the Council in relation to the motion on Arts Cuts to be considered later in the meeting.

The Council approved the request and Mr. Beggs was welcomed by the Lord Mayor.

Mr. Beggs informed the Council that research by the Creative Industries Federation had found that, in addition to generating considerable added value for the United Kingdom's economy, creative enterprises drove and unlocked innovation, delivered significant social impact and invested heavily in the regeneration of communities.

He reported that, in response to an announcement earlier in the year of a 10% cut in the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's funding allocation from the Department for Communities, Equity had immediately initiated a campaign of resistance. He outlined the extent of that campaign and stated that, whilst the cut in funding had eventually been set at 5%, it was, nevertheless, significant and damaging for the arts sector in Northern Ireland, which had already seen a 30% reduction over the past ten years. Per capita spend on the arts in Northern Ireland was, he stressed, significantly lower than in the rest of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

He went on to explain that, when the 5% cut in funding had been confirmed, Equity had re-launched its successful campaign and welcomed the fact that, should the motion be adopted, the Council would be a co-signatory to the union's latest open letter to the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Communities, calling for the cut to be reversed and arts spending to be increased. Mr. Beggs highlighted the fact that many artists had either left or

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were considering leaving Northern Ireland due to an absence of employment opportunities and the lack of parity in funding and stressed that, if neglected, the arts sector would suffer irreparable damage. He added that the Department for Communities had confirmed in a letter to Equity that the next funding round would be equally difficult for the arts sector and concluded by calling upon the Council to support the motion.

The Lord Mayor thanked Mr. Beggs for his presentation.

**Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee**

Moved by Councillor Black,  
Seconded by Councillor McDowell,

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

**Amendment**

**Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

**Illumination of the City Hall**

Moved by Councillor Collins,  
Seconded by Councillor Flynn,

That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 20th October, under the heading "Issues Raised in Advance by Members – Illumination of the City Hall" be amended to provide that the Council agrees also to write to the Irish Government calling for the expulsion of the Israeli Ambassador.

On a recorded vote, nine Members voted for the amendment and twenty-eight against, with twenty-three no votes and it was declared lost.

<b>For 9</b>	<b>Against 28</b>	<b>No Vote 23</b>
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Groogan); and Councillors Collins, de Faoite, Doherty, Flynn, Lyons, McKeown, Smyth and Whyte.	Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers; and Councillors Bell, Bower, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Bunting, Cobain, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Ferguson, Hanvey, Kelly, Long, Maghie, F. McAteer, McCormick, McDonough-Brown, McDowell, I. McLaughlin, McMullan, Murray, Nelson and Verner.	The Lord Mayor (Councillor Murphy); and Councillors Anglin, Beattie, Black, Bradley, Canavan, Carson, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R. M. Donnelly, Duffy, Garrett, Gormley, Magee, Maskey, G. McAteer, McCabe, McCann, McCusker, R. McLaughlin, Nic Bhranair, Ó Néill and Walsh.

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**Further Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Flynn,  
Seconded by Councillor Smyth,

That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 20th October, under the heading “Issues Raised in Advance by Members – Illumination of the City Hall” be amended to provide that the Council calls also for an immediate and comprehensive arms embargo on all parties to the conflict.

On a recorded vote, forty-three Members voted for the amendment and fifteen against, with two no votes and it was declared carried.

<b>For 43</b>	<b>Against 15</b>	<b>No Vote 2</b>
The Lord Mayor (Councillor Murphy); The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Groogan); and Councillors Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower, Bradley, T. Brooks, Canavan, Carson, Collins, de Faoite, Doherty, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R. M. Donnelly, Duffy, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Hanvey, Long, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, Maskey, F. McAteer, G. McAteer, McCabe, McCann, McCusker, McDonough-Brown, McKeown, R. McLaughlin, McMullan, Murray, Nelson, Nic Bhranair, Ó Néill, Smyth, Walsh and Whyte.	Aldermen Lawlor, McCoubrey and McCullough; and Councillors R. Brooks, Bunting, Cobain, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Ferguson, Kelly, McCormick, McDowell, I. McLaughlin and Verner.	Aldermen Copeland and Rodgers.

At the request of Councillor Beattie, the Council agreed:

- i. that the illumination of the City Hall should take place at the earliest opportunity, taking into account the call-in period, and that it should be widely publicised on the Council’s media platforms; and
- ii. that the Social Policy Working Group review the Ethical Framework element of the Social Value Procurement Framework, in the context of procurement practices relating to any country found to have committed war crimes.



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**Quarterly Update on Motions**

**Erection of a Blue Plaque  
for Mr. Olaudah Equiano**

At the request of Councillor McMullan, the Council granted approval also for Council officers to engage with representatives of Clifton House who were working to increase awareness around Mr. Equiano's significance to Belfast.

**Adoption of Minutes**

Subject to the foregoing amendment and additions, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 20th October, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, were approved and adopted.

**Minutes of People and Communities Committee**

Moved by Councillor Murray,  
Seconded by Councillor M. Donnelly,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 10th October, be approved and adopted.

**Amendment**

**Responsible Dog Ownership**

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,  
Seconded by Councillor McKeown,

That the decision of the People and Communities Committee of 10th October, under the heading "Responsible Dog Ownership" be rejected and, accordingly, the Council agrees to adopt Option 2, as set out within the Committee report.

On a recorded vote, nineteen Members voted for the amendment and forty-one against and it was declared lost.

<b>For 19</b>	<b>Against 41</b>
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Groogan); and Councillors Bell, Bower, T. Brooks, de Faoite, Doherty, Flynn, Hanvey, Long, Lyons, Maghie, F. McAteer, McDonough-Brown, McKeown, McMullan, Murray, Nelson, Smyth and Whyte.	The Lord Mayor (Councillor Murphy); Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers; and Councillors Anglin, Beattie, Black, Bradley, R. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Collins, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R. M. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas,

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	S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett, Gormley, Kelly, Magee, Maskey, G. McAteer, McCabe, McCann, McCormick, McCusker, McDowell, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Nic Bhranair, Ó Néill, Verner and Walsh.
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**Reference Group on Older People**

At the request of Councillor Ferguson, the Council agreed that a report be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the protocol on the use of the Lavery and Conor Rooms in the City Hall.

**Update on Alleygates**

At the request of Councillor McKeown, the Council agreed that the next report on alleygates being presented to the Committee should examine the potential for proceeding immediately with the installation of alleygates at those locations where there were no issues to be addressed.

**Update on Off Street Parking**

At the request of Councillor Black, the Council agreed that stakeholders from the University Area be invited to a future meeting of the Committee in relation to the residents' parking scheme and that the Department for Infrastructure also be invited to discuss issues around road safety and parking for local communities.

**GLL Annual Schedule of Charges 2024/25**

At the request of Councillor Collins, the Committee agreed that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee on the status and content of the current contract with GLL and, at the request of Councillor de Faoite, agreed that careful consideration be given, in agreeing any future extensions or new contract with GLL or any other provider, to the clause relating to price increases.

**Adoption of Minutes**

Subject to the foregoing additions, the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 10th October were approved and adopted.

**Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee**

Moved by Councillor Nic Bhranair,  
Seconded by Councillor McDonough-Brown,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 11th October, be approved and adopted.

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**Update on Major Events**

At the request of Councillor Bunting, the Council agreed that Council officers would investigate the possibility of releasing tickets for the Christmas Switch On event in the evening of 8th November, as well as in the morning, to enable working families to apply.

**Correspondence from the Department for Infrastructure**

At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the Council agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Department for Infrastructure expressing disappointment with its response to the motion on a Rosetta Way “Quietway”, with the letter to request the Department to:

- i. initiate the actions required for the delivery of the Rosetta Way “Quietway”, as outlined within the motion;
- ii. proceed with the implementation of Quiet Streets/Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and other road safety schemes at a local level, rather than await the outcome of the review of such schemes in England, which had been initiated by the Prime Minister; and
- iii. provide information on the timeline for the completion of the design and audit of the agreed puffin crossing on the Knockbreda Road and proceed to install the crossing as soon as possible thereafter.

At the request of Councillor Long, the Council agreed that the aforementioned letter also request the Department to respond to the correspondence which had been forwarded to it following the adoption by the Standards and Business Committee, on 27th June, of his motion on the Standard of Repairs to Roads and Footpaths.

**Adoption of Minutes**

Subject to the foregoing additions, the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 11th October were approved and adopted.

**Minutes of Licensing Committee**

Moved by Councillor McKeown,  
Seconded by Councillor Doran and

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

**Minutes of Planning Committee**

Moved by Councillor Garrett,  
Seconded by Councillor Maskey and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 17th October, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

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**Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee**

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

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 12th October, be approved and adopted.

**Minutes of Standards and Business Committee**

Moved by Councillor McDonough-Brown,  
Seconded by Alderman Rodgers and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 24th October, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**Motions**

**Arts Cuts**

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor de Faoite proposed:

“Belfast City Council:

- i. is alarmed at the proposed 5% cut in funding to arts organisations funded by the Department for Communities through the Arts Council NI;
- ii. commends Equity NI, the arts community, its supporters, and the community at large for resisting these proposed cuts, including over 12,500 individuals signing Equity’s petition which asked for more investment in the arts, not less;
- iii. notes that Arts Council NI funding has decreased, in real terms, by 30% over the last decade, despite evidence that investment in the arts has a real terms economic benefit for the City and the North as a whole;
- iv. further notes that the Department for Communities has indicated that it may implement further cuts in arts funding in the financial year 2024/25;
- v. recognises that Stormont Permanent Secretaries are being forced to take, without mandate, difficult decisions that should be taken by locally elected Ministers and a devolved Executive and Assembly;

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- vi. further recognises that, too often, the Council is forced to step in and financially support arts and cultural organisations which have lost funding from Stormont Departments, putting pressure on our ability to deliver existing arts and cultural schemes;
- vii. calls for a reversal in cuts to the arts and agrees to join as a signatory to Equity NI's latest open letter to the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Communities; and
- viii. further calls for the restoration of a reformed Executive and Assembly to take decisions which can future-proof the arts sector and protect funding in the future."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Lyons.

After discussion, the motion was put to the Council and passed.

**Pay Awards for Health and Social Care Trust Staff**

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

"Belfast City Council:

- i. notes with concern the recent letter from the Chief Executives of the six Health and Social Care Trusts to the Secretary of State to emphasise in the strongest possible terms the need for concrete action on pay awards for HSC staff;
- ii. expresses frustration that a pay offer for HSC staff has not yet been tabled for the financial year 2023/24;
- iii. recognises the toll on HSC staff by severe pressures on services and significant issues with recruitment and retention;
- iv. condemns the refusal by the DUP to participate in the reform and reformation of the Executive, which would allow for local decisions on HSC pay to be taken with haste; and
- v. calls for a fair pay offer for HSC staff to be tabled immediately."

The motion was seconded by Councillor de Faoite.

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Lawlor,  
Seconded by Councillor Kelly,

That the wording in point iv. of the motion be replaced with the following:

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“notes that His Majesty's Government must ensure that Northern Ireland receives the funding it needs, so that recommendations from the NHS Pay Review Body can be implemented by the Department of Health, as it did in December, 2022.”

On a recorded vote, fifteen Members voted for the amendment and thirty-one against and it was declared lost.

<b>For 15</b>	<b>Against 31</b>
Aldermen Lawlor, McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers; and Councillors R. Brooks, Bunting, Cobain Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Ferguson, Kelly, McDowell, I. McLaughlin and Verner.	The Lord Mayor (Councillor Murphy); The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Groogan); and Councillors Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower, Bradley, T. Brooks, Canavan, Carson, Collins, de Faoite, Doherty, M. Donnelly, R. M. Donnelly, Duffy, Flynn, Gormley, Hanvey, Lyons, Magee, Maskey, F. McAteer, G. McAteer, McCann, Murray, Nelson, Nic Bhranair, Walsh and Whyte.

The original motion, standing in the name of Councillor Doherty, was thereupon put to the Council.

On a recorded vote, thirty-one Members voted in favour of the motion and none against, with 15 no votes and it was declared carried.

<b>For 31</b>	<b>Against 0</b>	<b>No Vote 15</b>
The Lord Mayor (Councillor Murphy); The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Groogan); and Councillors Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower, Bradley, T. Brooks, Canavan, Carson, Collins, de Faoite, Doherty, M. Donnelly, R. M. Donnelly, Duffy, Flynn, Gormley, Hanvey, Lyons, Magee, Maskey, F. McAteer, G. McAteer, McCann, Murray, Nelson, Nic Bhranair, Walsh and Whyte.		Aldermen Lawlor, McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers; and Councillors R. Brooks, Bunting, Cobain, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Ferguson, Kelly, McDowell, I. McLaughlin and Verner.

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**Secure Needle/Drug Waste Bins**

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

“This Council notes with concern the rising number of needles being discarded and drug paraphernalia waste in Belfast city centre from intravenous drug use. Since the City has come out of the pandemic, it has seen an increase in the number of vulnerable people suffering from addiction issues in the City centre. With this increase, it has seen that needles and syringes are not only being discarded in public places but also in some standard public waste bins in the City Centre, potentially putting the public and Council staff at increased risk of a sharp’s injury.

It notes also that Glasgow has recently installed a new secure disposal bin to reduce drug-related litter and for service users to positively discard needles after they have finished injecting and improve collective community safety in its City centre.

This Council will, therefore, commit to working with relevant partners, including the Public Health Agency, Government Departments, PSNI, BIDs, businesses and organisations supporting the vulnerable in the City centre core, towards the installation of specific needle/drug waste bins in key locations that are known to have high incidences of needle finds.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor McCusker.

Councillor Smyth sought and was granted approval by the Council to add the following paragraph to the end of his motion:

“To initiate this work, the Council will invite the Public Health Agency to a meeting of the People and Communities Committee to explore the legalities and logistics of the installation of such secure needle/drug waste bins, including best practice around community consultation.”

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor McCormick,  
Seconded by Councillor S. Douglas,

That the following paragraph be added to the end of the motion:

“The Council will also commit to liaising with the relevant community/resident organisations before the placement of any disposal bins in the respective residential areas to ensure community approval before installation.”

On a vote, sixteen Members voted for the amendment and thirty-five against and it was declared lost.

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The motion standing in the name of Councillor Smyth and including his amendment was thereupon put to the Council and passed as follows:

“This Council notes with concern the rising number of needles being discarded and drug paraphernalia waste in Belfast city centre from intravenous drug use. Since the City has come out of the pandemic, it has seen an increase in the number of vulnerable people suffering from addiction issues in the City centre. With this increase, it has seen that needles and syringes are not only being discarded in public places but also in some standard public waste bins in the City Centre, potentially putting the public and Council staff at increased risk of a sharp’s injury.

It notes also that Glasgow has recently installed a new secure disposal bin to reduce drug-related litter and for service users to positively discard needles after they have finished injecting and improve collective community safety in its City centre.

This Council will, therefore, commit to working with relevant partners, including the Public Health Agency, Government Departments, PSNI, BIDs, businesses and organisations supporting the vulnerable in the City centre core, towards the installation of specific needle/drug waste bins in key locations that are known to have high incidences of needle finds.

To initiate this work, the Council will invite the Public Health Agency to a meeting of the People and Communities Committee to explore the legalities and logistics of the installation of such secure needle/drug waste bins, including best practice around community consultation.”

Lord Mayor  
Chairperson



# Council

## SPECIAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall and remotely, via Microsoft Teams, on Wednesday, 29th November, 2023 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murphy) (Chairperson);  
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Groogan);  
Aldermen Lawlor, McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers; and  
Councillors Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bradley, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Collins, de Faoite, Doherty, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R. M. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Hanvey, Kelly, Long, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, Maskey, G. McAteer, McCabe, McCann, McCormick, McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKeown, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, McMullan, Murray, Nelson, Nic Bhranair, Ó Néill, Smyth, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

### Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

### Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported for Alderman Copeland and Councillors Bower, F. McAteer and McCusker.

### Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

### Motion

#### International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

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

“This Council notes that the United Nations (UN) has designated 29th November as the 'International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people'. The Council will hold a Special Council on that date to give our solidarity and support to the Palestinian people of Belfast.

This Council recognises that this International Day of Solidarity comes at a time when the world has watched the indiscriminate murder of thousands of civilians in the Middle East.

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We look on at the horrific onslaught in the Middle East and the daily bombardment of Gaza and the pain and suffering being inflicted on the civilian population there, and know from our own experience in Ireland, that only through ceasefires, dialogue, negotiation and peaceful political accommodation will this nightmare end.

This Council calls for immediate ceasefires, for the immediate release of all hostages, and for the unconditional adherence by all parties to their commitments under international law and the UN charter.

The position of the Israeli Ambassador to Ireland is now untenable, the Ambassador should no longer enjoy diplomatic status in Ireland while Israel refuses the imperative for ceasefires and as the suffering and death toll grow.

This Council also recognises the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people is an important opportunity for the international community to highlight the continued denial to the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights as defined by the UN General Assembly, namely, the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty, and the right to return to their homes and property, from which they have been forcibly displaced.

This Council acknowledges the findings by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese that 'Israel's cruel policies of segregation, dispossession and exclusion across all territories under its control clearly amount to apartheid'.

In light of these findings, this Council calls on the UN to take meaningful action and re-establish its 'Special Committee against Apartheid' to dismantle Israel's apartheid systems."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Nic Bhranair.

**Amendment 1**

Moved by Councillor Maghie,  
Seconded by Councillor Nelson,

That the Motion, standing in the name of Councillor Beattie, be amended as follows:

"This Council notes that the United Nations (UN) has designated- 29th November- as the 'International Day of Solidarity with the- Palestinian- people'. The Council ~~meeting will hold a Special Council on that date to give~~ **demonstrate** our solidarity and support ~~to for~~ the Palestinian people of Belfast.

This Council recognises that this International Day of Solidarity comes at a time when the world ~~has watched~~ **is watching unprecedented war crimes being committed against the Palestinian people.**

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***We mourn the loss of over 14,000 Palestinians killed in the recent atrocities and express our horror and condemnation at Israel's collective punishment of Palestinians in Gaza, including the indiscriminate murder of thousands killing of civilians in the Middle East and destruction of civilian infrastructure, the forced expulsion of over 1 million Palestinians from Northern Gaza and the catastrophic consequences of Israel's total siege.***

~~We look on~~ ***also express our alarm*** at the horrific onslaught ~~dehumanising rhetoric of Israeli officials, and escalating settler violence~~ in the Middle East ~~West Bank~~.

***This Council also reiterates our condemnation of the daily bombardment of Gaza murder and the pain and suffering being inflicted on the civilian population there, and kidnapping of hundreds of Israelis on 7th October by Hamas. We*** know from our own experience in Ireland, that only through ceasefires, dialogue, negotiation and peaceful political accommodation will this nightmare end.

This Council calls for ***an*** immediate ~~ceasefires~~ ***ceasefire***, for the immediate ***end to the siege of Gaza*** and the release of all hostages, and for the unconditional adherence by all parties to their commitments under international law and the UN charter.

~~The position of the Israeli Ambassador to Ireland is now untenable, the Ambassador should no longer enjoy diplomatic status in Ireland while Israel refuses the imperative for ceasefires and as the suffering and death toll grow.~~

***We also call on the Irish and UK governments to support an International Criminal Court investigation into war crimes in Gaza and Israel.***

This Council also recognises the ~~International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people~~ is an important opportunity for the international community to highlight the continued denial to the ~~Palestinian people~~ of their inalienable rights as defined by the UN General Assembly, namely, the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty, and the right to return to their homes and property, from which they have been forcibly displaced.

This Council acknowledges the findings by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese that 'Israel's cruel policies of segregation, dispossession and exclusion across all territories under its control clearly amount to apartheid'.

~~In light of these findings, this Council calls on the UN to take meaningful action and re-establish its 'Special Committee against Apartheid' to dismantle Israel's apartheid systems.~~

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***This Council agrees that to sustainably end the devastating cycle of violence in the region, the Israeli Government must end the occupation and blockade of the Gaza Strip, and dismantle the systematic discrimination of Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.***

***Finally, this Council calls upon international leaders to urgently coordinate political negotiations to use the ongoing atrocities as a catalyst to secure Palestinian statehood and liberation for Palestinians through a two state solution.”***

The motion, as amended, therefore read:

“This Council notes that the United Nations (UN) has designated 29th November as the 'International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people'. The meeting will demonstrate our solidarity and support for the Palestinian people of Belfast.

This Council recognises that this International Day of Solidarity comes at a time when the world is watching unprecedented war crimes being committed against the Palestinian people.

We mourn the loss of over 14,000 Palestinians killed in the recent atrocities and express our horror and condemnation at Israel's collective punishment of Palestinians in Gaza, including the indiscriminate killing of civilians and destruction of civilian infrastructure, the forced expulsion of over 1 million Palestinians from Northern Gaza and the catastrophic consequences of Israel's total siege.

We also express our alarm at the dehumanising rhetoric of Israeli officials, and escalating settler violence in the West Bank.

This Council also reiterates our condemnation of the murder and kidnapping of hundreds of Israelis on 7th October by Hamas.

We know from our own experience, that only through ceasefires, dialogue, negotiation and peaceful political accommodation will this nightmare end.

This Council calls for an immediate ceasefire, for the immediate end to the siege of Gaza and the release of all hostages, and for the unconditional adherence by all parties to their commitments under international law and the UN charter.

We also call on the Irish and UK governments to support an International Criminal Court investigation into war crimes in Gaza and Israel.

This Council also recognises the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people is an important opportunity for the international community to highlight the continued denial to the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights as defined by the UN General Assembly, namely, the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty, and the right to return to their homes and property, from which they have been forcibly displaced.

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This Council acknowledges the findings by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese that 'Israel's cruel policies of segregation, dispossession and exclusion across all territories under its control clearly amount to apartheid'.

This Council agrees that to sustainably end the devastating cycle of violence in the region, the Israeli Government must end the occupation and blockade of the Gaza Strip, and dismantle the systematic discrimination of Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Finally, this Council calls upon international leaders to urgently coordinate political negotiations to use the ongoing atrocities as a catalyst to secure Palestinian statehood and liberation for Palestinians through a two state solution."

The Council agreed to vote on the amended motion, when nine Members voted for the motion and forty-seven against and it was declared lost.

**Amendment 2**

Moved by Councillor Collins,  
Seconded by Councillor Flynn,

That the following paragraphs be added to the end of the motion standing in the name of Councillor Beattie:

*"The Council also recognises that Israel has proven immune to the normal procedures of international pressure and diplomacy. Further notes that Israel is currently in defiance of over 50 UN resolutions passed against it, yet continues to advance a policy of illegal settlements, land seizure, denial of rights, including the right to return home to Palestinians, continues to target civilian infrastructure, continues to imprison over 5000 prisoners with no prospect of fair treatment or trial, and in doing so has demonstrated a consistent refusal to uphold standards of human rights, or comply with international law. The Council therefore commits to supporting the campaign demands of the movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel.*

*To this end, the Council:*

- I. will host a meeting of trade unionists across workplaces in Belfast, to help facilitate the coming together of a network of activists committed to promoting the principles of boycott, divestment and sanctions in trade unions and workplaces across Belfast;*
- II. will write to Queens University encouraging it to rescind the position of honorary chancellor to Hilary Clinton;*
- III. will refuse to host US diplomats, such as the recent visit of US Special Envoy Joe Kennedy, at the City Hall while the US continues to lend political and military support to Israel;*

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*IV. publicly calls for the Irish government to refuse to allow US troops or military equipment to pass through Shannon or any other airport while Israeli apartheid continues; and*

*V. publicly calls on the British Government to scrap its BDS [Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters)] Bill and urges the UK government to rescind its political and military support for Israel's campaign of genocide and ethnic cleansing."*

On a vote, four Members voted for the amendment and fifty-one against and it was declared lost.

The Proposer, Councillor Beattie, with the consent of the Council, agreed to accept the insertion of the following paragraphs:

*"We also call on the Irish and UK governments to support an International Criminal Court investigation into war crimes in Palestine.*

*This Council agrees that to sustainably end the devastating cycle of violence in the region, the Israeli Government must end the occupation and blockade of the Gaza Strip, and dismantle the systematic discrimination of Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.*

*Finally, this Council calls upon international leaders to urgently coordinate political negotiations to use the ongoing atrocities as a catalyst to secure Palestinian statehood and liberation for Palestinians through a two-state solution."*

Furthermore, he agreed to accept the insertion of the following paragraphs from the amendment, standing in the name of Councillor Collins:

*"The Council therefore commits to supporting the campaign demands of the movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel.*

*To this end, the Council:*

- will host a meeting of trade unionists across workplaces in Belfast, to help facilitate the coming together of a network of activists committed to promoting the principles of boycott, divestment and sanctions in trade unions and workplaces across Belfast;*
- publicly calls for the Irish government to refuse to allow US troops or military equipment to pass through Shannon or any other airport while Israeli apartheid continues; and*
- publicly calls on the British Government to scrap its BDS [Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters)] Bill and*

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*urges the UK government to rescind its political and military support for Israel's campaign of genocide and ethnic cleansing."*

He further agreed to the addition of the following paragraph, at the request of Councillor de Faoite:

*"The Council will also reinstall the Christmas charity collection box on the marble in City Hall to collect donations for Medical Aid for Palestine."*

The Motion, as amended, therefore read:

"This Council notes that the United Nations (UN) has designated 29th November as the 'International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people'. The Council will hold a Special Council on that date to give our solidarity and support to the Palestinian people of Belfast.

This Council recognises that this International Day of Solidarity comes at a time when the world has watched the indiscriminate murder of thousands of civilians in the Middle East.

We look on at the horrific onslaught in the Middle East and the daily bombardment of Gaza and the pain and suffering being inflicted on the civilian population there, and know from our own experience in Ireland, that only through ceasefires, dialogue, negotiation and peaceful political accommodation will this nightmare end.

This Council calls for immediate ceasefires, for the immediate release of all hostages, and for the unconditional adherence by all parties to their commitments under international law and the UN charter.

We also call on the Irish and UK governments to support an International Criminal Court investigation into war crimes in Palestine.

The position of the Israeli Ambassador to Ireland is now untenable, the Ambassador should no longer enjoy diplomatic status in Ireland while Israel refuses the imperative for ceasefires and as the suffering and death toll grow.

This Council also recognises the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people is an important opportunity for the international community to highlight the continued denial to the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights as defined by the UN General Assembly, namely, the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty, and the right to return to their homes and property, from which they have been forcibly displaced.

This Council acknowledges the findings by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese that 'Israel's cruel policies of segregation, dispossession and exclusion across all territories under its control clearly amount to apartheid'.

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In light of these findings, this Council calls on the UN to take meaningful action and re-establish its 'Special Committee against Apartheid' to dismantle Israel's apartheid systems."

The Council therefore commits to supporting the campaign demands of the movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel.

To this end, the Council:

- will host a meeting of trade unionists across workplaces in Belfast, to help facilitate the coming together of a network of activists committed to promoting the principles of boycott, divestment and sanctions in trade unions and workplaces across Belfast;
- publicly calls for the Irish government to refuse to allow US troops or military equipment to pass through Shannon or any other airport while Israeli apartheid continues; and
- publicly calls on the British Government to scrap its BDS [Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters)] Bill and urges the UK government to rescind its political and military support for Israel's campaign of genocide and ethnic cleansing."

The Council will also reinstall the Christmas charity collection box on the marble in City Hall to collect donations for Medical Aid for Palestine.

This Council agrees that to sustainably end the devastating cycle of violence in the region, the Israeli Government must end the occupation and blockade of the Gaza Strip and dismantle the systematic discrimination of Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Finally, this Council calls upon international leaders to urgently coordinate political negotiations to use the ongoing atrocities as a catalyst to secure Palestinian statehood and liberation for Palestinians through a two-state solution."

The Council agreed to vote on the amended motion, standing in the name of Councillor Beattie, when thirty Members voted for the motion and sixteen against, with nine no votes and it was declared carried.

Lord Mayor  
Chairperson



## Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 24th November, 2023

### MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND  
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Black (Chairperson); and  
Councillors Beattie, Bunting, Cobain, de Faoite,  
M. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly, Ferguson, Garrett, Hanvey,  
Long, Maghie, Maskey, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin,  
Nelson, Nic Bhranair, Smyth and Whyte.

Also attended: Councillor Collins.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;  
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of  
Corporate Services;  
Ms. N. Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and  
Civic Services;  
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;  
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;  
Ms. C. Matthews, Director of Resources and Fleet;  
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and  
Development;  
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City Operations;  
Ms. S. Toland, Director of City Services;  
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;  
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;  
Mr. K. Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty;  
Ms. S. Williams, Governance and Compliance Manager;  
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and  
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

An apology was reported on behalf of Alderman McCoubrey.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 20th October were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 1st November, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

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**Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Beattie and M. Donnelly declared an interest in relation to agenda item 2j – Update on Hardship Fund, on the basis that the organisation for which they worked operated a social supermarket and left the meeting whilst that item was being considered.

Councillor Nelson declared an interest in respect of agenda item 2n – Update on The MAC, in that he had accepted a ticket for an event there and left the meeting for the duration of the discussion.

Councillor Whyte declared an interest in respect of agenda item 2n – Update on The MAC, on the basis that it was a client of the company for which he worked and left the meeting whilst it was under consideration.

**Restricted Items**

**The information contained in the reports associated with the following fourteen items is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.**

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following fourteen items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

**Financial Reporting – Quarter 2 2023-24**

The Director of Finance submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing information on the financial position for Quarter 2 2023/24 and the half-year Treasury Management Report.

He reported that, at the end of Quarter 2, the financial position for the Council had shown an underspend of £2.7m, representing 3.4% of the net expenditure budget, which could be attributed to employee underspends and savings from retendered contracts. The Quarter 2 Departmental forecast was an underspend of £1.4m, representing 0.8% of the net expenditure budget. He pointed out that work was ongoing to identify the drivers behind the overspends within a number of Departments and how their service delivery models could be reviewed to meet the financial challenges ahead.

The Director went on to provide an update on the forecast reserves balance, rates finalisation and capital projects and recommended that the Committee:

- i. note the contents of the report, including the Treasury Management Report and agree to continue for the remainder of 2023/24 with the Finance Strategy, which had been formulated to protect the financial sustainability of the Council; and

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- ii. agree that the reallocation of forecast underspends be considered as part of the year-end finance report.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Revenue Estimates 2024-25 and  
Medium-Term Financial Planning**

The Director of Finance submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing information on the key issues which would influence the rate setting process for 2024/25 and the development of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan for 2024/25 to 2026/27. The report made reference to the current financial position, business as usual Departmental estimates, uncontrollable costs, the Estimated Penny Product 2024/25, inflation outlook, efficiencies and capital financing and outlined the timeframe associated with the rate setting process.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

**Discretionary Payments**

The Director of Finance reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 22nd September, it had agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting setting out revised criteria which could be put in place to allocate funding from underspends to groups and organisations.

He reviewed the process for the management of in-year underspends and submitted for the Committee's approval the following criteria for 2023/24, with revisions to the criteria currently in place in bold:

1. **The total discretionary payments may not exceed £700k.**
2. **The amount per applicant is capped at £20k.**
3. The application for the discretionary payment links to one or more of the council's corporate priorities / **Belfast Agenda.**
4. There is direct benefit to be obtained to the council or its district or inhabitants.
5. The activity or initiative in respect of assistance being sought is being promoted by a person or organisation living or operating, or otherwise having a direct connection with the City.
6. The request for a discretionary payment does not relate to an event or initiative which falls within a funding stream established through the remit and statutory power of any other committee of the council (in which case it should be so referred).

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7. **Whilst it is preferable** that the request relates to a specific event, activity or initiative, **due to funding cuts announced by Central Government Departments, the cost-of-living crisis and increase to the National Living Wage, requests will be accepted for running costs for the 2023/24 financial year**, but not for a contribution to general funds.
8. The benefit to be obtained will be commensurate with the payment to be made.

After discussion, the Committee approved the revised criteria for 2023/24, including the funding amounts, subject to the removal of point 5, the strengthening of point 7 by removing the reference to specific events, activity or initiative and the inclusion of an additional point stating that funding would not be provided to an organisation/group which would be eligible under an existing funding stream.

The Committee agreed also that, in future, reports on applications for discretionary funding should set out clearly the rationale behind the recommendations being made and noted that the Director of Finance would submit to a future meeting a proposed scoring matrix.

#### **Request for Funding - West Wellbeing Suicide Prevention Centre**

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor Collins drew the Committee's attention to his motion calling for emergency funding of £50K to be allocated to West Wellbeing Suicide Prevention Centre which the Committee, at its meeting on 22nd September, had agreed to consider as part of the Quarter 2 Financial Report.

He stated that it was his understanding that the request would instead be dealt with under the discretionary payment scheme, which was capped at £20k and voiced concern in this regard, given the urgent need to ensure that the organisation was in a position to continue to deliver its full range of services for the remainder of 2023.

In response, the Director of Finance stated that requests of this nature were dependent upon funding being available for reallocation and pointed out that the Quarter 2 finance report, which had been considered earlier in the meeting, had indicated that none was available. The request would, therefore, be dealt with as part of the year-end financial report.

Noted.

#### **Targeted Acquisition**

The Committee granted approval for officers to commence 'without prejudice' discussions in respect of privately owned lands in the City centre, located in close proximity to other Council owned lands and which might be available for acquisition for comprehensive housing led mixed use regeneration purposes, as outlined within the report.

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The Committee granted approval also for a letter to be forwarded to Invest NI seeking clarification on its future plans for the former Mackie's site.

**Update on Smart Belfast Programme**

The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services drew the Committee's attention to a report providing an update on the current initiatives being progressed under the Smart Belfast urban innovation programme and recommending that it:

- i. approve a contract for funding for £3.8 million with DSIT to deliver the Belfast Wireless Innovation Region Hub programme and agree, in accordance with Standing Order 48(a), that this decision would not be subject to call-in, as the ability not to implement it immediately would result in the breach of a contractual duty;
- ii. approve a £928,373 contract for funding with the Department for the Economy to deliver the 'Augment the City' SME challenge call;
- iii. approve the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and BT Northern Ireland to deliver a joint research and development project within the City Hall exhibition, as part of Belfast 2024, with BT committing a financial contribution to the joint project;
- iv. note the launch of the £100,000 SME Maritime Mile Hub-In challenge competition to support collaborative innovation with local communities;
- v. grant approval for the Lord Mayor to write to the Mayor of Sejong welcoming his invitation to host a Belfast city delegation in May 2024 (fully funded by Connected Places Catapult) and to issue a reciprocal invite to Sejong in 2024;
- vi. approve the Council's continued participation in Innovation City Belfast, the recruitment of a City Innovation Commissioner and the Council's contribution to supporting an office of the commissioner for an initial two-year period; and
- vii. approve the participation of the Challenge Fund manager on the outward visit to Toronto MaRS Discovery District to support the development of the forthcoming Belfast Region City Deal Challenge Fund programme.

The Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting on the potential for creating a mechanism to ensure that local communities, thematic groups etc. were fully involved in the engagement process for initiatives of this nature. The Committee agreed also that, in future, all reports making reference to community consultation, whatever the issue, would list the names of the organisations/groups consulted.

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**Appointment of Strategic  
Director of City Operations**

The Committee noted the contents of a report providing details of the recruitment and selection process which had resulted in the appointment of Mr. David Sales to the post of Strategic Director of City Operations.

**Organisational Reviews and Change Programme**

The Committee noted the contents of a report providing an update on the progress on the work programme for the organisational reviews and change portfolio, including timescales, and on the review of the Continuous Improvement Section, which was responsible for progressing organisational reviews and change portfolio projects.

**Update on Physical Programme**

The Director of Property and Projects submitted for the Committee's consideration a report seeking approval to move projects within the Capital Programme and providing an update on the Black Mountain Shared Space and Shankill Women's Centre PEACE IV capital projects.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i granted approval to move the IT Programme – Grants Management System project to Stage 3 – Committed and agreed that the necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated, with the contract to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver;
- ii noted, in relation to the proposed Grants Management System, that Digital Services would be informed of the points which had been raised by Members around user friendliness, the migration of data and the need for consultation with existing users;
- iii granted approval for the St. George's Market – New Stalls project to be added as a Stage 1 – Emerging project to allow for a business case to be developed;
- iv agreed that a report be submitted to the relevant Committee on the potential for extending the hours of trading at St. George's Market and that the Market Traders' Association be included in any discussions;
- v agreed that the Special EU Programmes Body be invited to meet either with the Committee or the Party Leaders to discuss the ongoing challenging issues and risks associated with the Black

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Mountain Shared Space and the Shankill Shared Women's Centre projects, depending upon the outcome of its response, with an opinion on the Council's legal position to be sought; and

- vi agreed that a legal opinion be sought on the validity of the decision to exclude Northern Ireland from the latest round of Levelling Up funding.

(Councillor M. Donnelly declared an interest as soon as reference had been made to the Black Mountain Shared Space project, on the basis that he was on the Board of that organisation, and left the meeting for the duration of the discussion.)

**Review of Summer Community Diversionary Fund**

The Strategic Director of City Operations informed the Committee that the Summer Community Diversionary Programme, to which £500,000 had been allocated, had been established to support the delivery of community-based festivals and programmes aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour linked to the key dates of 11th July and 8th August. All activity should promote positive cultural expression and contribute to the achievement of the T:BUC outcomes of increasing participants' sense of community belonging and celebrating cultural diversity.

He reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 21st April, it had agreed that a review be undertaken of the Summer Community Diversionary Programme and, accordingly, submitted for the Committee's approval a proposed Terms of Reference for that review. He added that the Bonfire Panel, at its meeting on 5th September, had agreed that the review should be undertaken by an external consultant, in order to provide an independent perspective and that, should the Terms of Reference be approved, a procurement exercise would be undertaken, with up to a maximum of £15,000 to be allocated from existing Departmental budgets.

After discussion, during which several Members emphasised the need to retain those elements of the Summer Community Diversionary Programme which had been proven to be effective to date, the Committee approved the Terms of reference for the review and agreed that it should also take into consideration those groups in east and south Belfast which were delivering related programmes with demonstrable results.

**Update on Hardship Programme 2023/24**

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing an update on the development and implementation of the Hardship Programme for 2023/24, which sought to alleviate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on vulnerable people across the City. Funding of £1,019,000 was being made available for the financial year 2023/24 and the Committee, at its meeting on 20th October, had approved an indicative budget allocation and delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services and the Director of City and Organisational Strategy to realign in-year underspends within the overall funding framework.

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After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the realignment of budgets agreed through delegated authority in respect of Fareshare (-£40,000), Family Support Hubs (+£25,000) and Social Supermarkets (+£15,000);
- ii. agreed not to accede to the Red Cross' request for an indicative management fee of 22% (£16,666), with a report to be presented to the meeting in December on potential options for the redistribution of its allocation of £75k to support persons over the age of 55, having explored other delivery organisations and any scope for an open call process;
- iii. noted the acceptance, subject to letter of offer, of additional funds from the Public Health Agency to enhance and augment the Warm and Well Programme in nine designated hotspots;
- iv. noted the updates on the Schools' Project, communications approach and indicative timescales for the implementation of the Hardship Programme, as set out the report; and
- v. agreed that any further reallocations beyond the £75k referred to above, be allocated to schools.

**Belfast 2024**

The Committee agreed, in light of a number of issues which had been raised by Members, to hold a special meeting to consider the Belfast 2024 programme, including the commissioning of a bespoke, signature project entitled 'Power Plants', in the form of a series of sculptures by Oliver Jeffers, to be located within the grounds of the City Hall.

**Alleygates Phase V**

The Strategic Director of City Operations drew the Committee's attention to a report providing an update on Phase V of the Council's alleygating programme and seeking approval to proceed with the next steps, following the completion of the initial consultation exercise on the location of gates.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. agreed to proceed with the publication of a Gating Order for the installation of gates in those streets where the threshold for responses to the consultation had been 40% and above;
- ii. agreed to proceed with a ten-week consultation exercise for all remaining streets, using canvassers, local community groups etc., with Members to be informed when that process had commenced; and



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- iii. noted that a report would be submitted to its next monthly meeting on the terms of reference for a local inquiry, where an objection to a proposed Gating Order had been received.

**Funding Requests**

The Strategic Director of City Operations submitted for the Committee's consideration the following requests for funding, which had been referred to it by the People and Communities Committee and for which no provision had been made within the revenue estimates for 2023/24 and beyond:

**Capacity Building Grant Budget – TechDesk CIC**

The Committee granted approval to increase the Capital Building Grant Budget by £47,500 per annum for the financial years 2023-26, to enable a grant payment to be made to TechDesk CIC.

**New Parks Assets**

The Committee agreed to allocate an annual budget of £15,000 to each of the following new parks assets, which did not have specific animation budgets, to allow for the early development of local community programming:

- Ballysillan Park
- Lower Shankill Park
- Marrowbone Park
- Páirc an Lonnain
- Páirc Nua Chollan
- Paisley Park and
- Pitt Park.

**Lagan Valley Regional Park**

The Committee agreed, in light of the shortfall in funding from the Department for Infrastructure, to allocate £21,000 to the Lagan Valley Regional Park, on condition that it be matched by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and agreed also that a review be undertaken of future funding requirements.

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**Reusable Period Product Scheme**

The Committee agreed to allocate an additional £35,000 to enable the existing Reusable Period Product Scheme to be continued, with the future of the scheme to be reviewed in the context of whether The Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, being introduced in May, 2024, included reusable period products.

The Strategic Director of City Operations submitted also for the Committee's consideration the following additional request for funding:

**Coláiste Feirste**

The Committee agreed to allocate approximately £50,000 to Coláiste Feirste to assist with the provision of sporting facilities for public use.

**Update on the MAC (Metropolitan Arts Centre)**

The Committee agreed to defer to a special meeting a request to provide The MAC with funding of £50k to assist it in addressing a significant in-year operating deficit.

The Committee agreed also that, in order to facilitate a timely decision, the special meeting be held before 11th December and that the Council delegate authority to the Committee to take any such decision or decisions as may be determined.

**Matters referred back from Council/Motions**

**Motion - Mental Health Accessibility Audit**

The Committee was informed that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 24th October, had referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Garrett and seconded by Councillor McCormick, to this Committee for consideration:

“Northern Ireland (NI) has the highest prevalence of mental health problems in the UK.

It is estimated that only 40% of people in NI who seek help can access effective mental health care and 79% of those do not receive the service they need.

This Council will conduct an online survey open to everyone who lives in the Council district to assess accessibility to mental health support within each District Electoral Area.

The survey will include but not be limited to assessing stakeholders' ease of access to mental health support, sample stakeholders' understanding of their rights regarding mental health, document the source of stressors

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and the number of services perceived to be providing mental health and well-being support in the district.

As leaders in the field of mental health provision, this Council will work with MindWise in co-designing and hosting the survey and will invite a representative from MindWise to give deputation to the relevant or interested Committee or Committees."

The Committee agreed to adopt the motion, with a report to be submitted to a future meeting on how it could be facilitated.

**Motion - Childcare Provision**

The Committee was informed that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 24th October, had referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Maghie and seconded by Councillor Bower, to this Committee for consideration:

"This Council recognises childcare as vital social and economic infrastructure, a crucial form of early intervention, early education, an anti-poverty tool and a means by which to improve productivity and gender equality in the labour market across the Council area; believes that childcare should be child-centred, high quality and accessible to all children; and commits to reviewing how the Council can support childcare provision in the area, including reviewing whether schemes supported by the Council during school holidays can be expanded."

The Committee agreed to adopt the motion, with the report to be submitted to a future meeting on how it could be facilitated to examine also the provision of childcare support for Council staff.

**Motion - Rugby World Cup**

The Committee was informed that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 24th October, had referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Lyons and seconded by Councillor Maghie, to this Committee for consideration:

"This council recognises the historic success of the Irish rugby team in the Rugby World Cup 2023 and agrees to hold a civic reception in its honour."

The Committee agreed to adopt the motion.

**Motion - Right to Food - Response  
from Department of Education**

The Committee agreed to refer to the Social Policy Working Group a response which had been received from the Department of Education to the motion on a Right to Food, as passed by the Council at its meeting on 4th October.

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**Governance**

**Schedule of Meetings 2024**

The Committee approved the following schedule of meetings for 2024, with all meetings to commence at 9.30 a.m.:

- Friday 12th January (Rate setting, if required)
- Friday 19th January
- Friday 23rd February
- Friday 22nd March
- Friday 19th April
- Friday, 24th May
- Friday, 21st June
- No monthly meeting in July
- Friday 23rd August
- Friday 20th September
- Friday 25th October
- Friday 22nd November and
- Friday 13th December

**Change of Date of Council Meeting**

The Committee approved the change of date of the Council meeting in January from Tuesday, 2nd to Monday, 8th, with proceedings to commence at the usual time of 6.00 p.m.

**Code of Conduct - Disclosure  
of Restricted Information**

The Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

- 1.1 At the Council meeting on 4th October, the Chief Executive, in response to a Member’s query, agreed to consider in conjunction with the City Solicitor, any internal measures which could be taken in respect of Members posting restricted information on social media, particularly when there were commercial sensitivities.
- 1.2 The City Solicitor has provided this report, which outlines the general duty of confidence in this regard and the steps that may be taken if a Member discloses confidential information.

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- i. note the contents of this report, including the provisions within the 2014 Act and the Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors in respect of the treatment of restricted information;
- ii. note the steps that may be taken should a disclosure of confidential information be suspected; and
- iii. consider the proposal to include a reference to ‘restricted’ reports and the duty of confidence in the Chairperson’s statement.

**3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 Access to Meetings and Documents**

Part 8 of The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (‘the 2014 Act’) sets out the rules around public access to council meetings and documents.

A meeting of the council must be open to the public at all times, except where the council by resolution has excluded the public during an item of business whenever it is likely, due to the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during that item, that either:

- ‘confidential information’ would be disclosed to the public in breach of the obligation of confidence, or
- ‘exempt information’ would be disclosed to the public.

**‘Confidential information’ means ‘information provided to the council by a government department upon terms (however expressed) which forbid the disclosure of the information to the public; and information the disclosure of which to the public is prohibited by or under any statutory provision or by the order of a court’.**

**‘Exempt information’ is defined in Section 51 and Schedule 6 of the 2014 Act.**

**The Council has the power by resolution to mark certain reports as ‘restricted’ and to exclude the public from proceedings whilst such reports are discussed. Reports which are marked restricted are required to describe the nature of the ‘exempt information’ from the categories listed in Schedule 6 of the 2014 Act.**

### **3.2 The Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors**

**The Code of Conduct for Councillors Paragraph 4.15 is clear that a Member must not disclose any confidential information to the public unless authorised to do so. Confidential information includes any information discussed during a closed session of a council meeting.**

#### ***Code paragraph 4.15***

***‘You must not disclose confidential information or information which should reasonably be regarded as being of a confidential nature, without the express consent of a person authorised to give such consent; or unless required to do so by law.’***

**The Commissioner’s Guidance for Councillors includes the following guidance in relation to the disclosure of confidential information:**

***‘Confidential information may take a number of forms. Sometimes, the confidential nature of the information will be explicit, such as when a document is marked ‘confidential’. In other cases it will be clear from the nature of the information or from the circumstances in which it was provided to you that the information is confidential: all of the following types of information are confidential in nature:***

- commercial information, such as information relating to a contract or a contractor’s business;**

- personal information such as information relating to a person's employment;
- information which is confidential as a result of a statutory provision. For example, the Commissioner's investigations must be conducted in private and therefore all information relating to his investigations should be regarded as confidential;
- information discussed in the closed sections of meetings should always be treated as confidential; and
- legal advice obtained by your council, whether it was provided by external lawyers or by your council's own legal staff, is covered by legal privilege and should not be disclosed without the permission of the council'.

**3.3 What are the next steps if a disclosure of information is suspected?**

- 3.3** It is clear from reading the provisions in both the 2014 Act and the Code of Conduct that Members are not permitted to disclose any confidential or exempt information which is the subject of discussion during a closed session of a council meeting.

If such an occurrence takes place, whether intentionally or otherwise, there are a number of steps that could be taken, including:

- that the Council deal with the matter internally;
- that the Council may refer the matter to the Commissioner for Standards; or
- that any person may refer the matter to the Commissioner for Standards.

**3.4 Steps the Council may take Internally**

In the majority of cases, the Chief Executive or the City Solicitor may recommend that the Council deal with the matter internally and will immediately alert the Member concerned to their duty of confidence under the Code of Conduct. This may take place during the council proceedings or immediately afterwards if the disclosure is not apparent at the time. The Member will also be advised to remove any such disclosure of confidential information from social media or any other medium where it may be viewed or listened to.

(Note: Whilst the Council has developed an Internal Dispute Resolution Protocol, it can only be used to deal with potential breaches under 'Code Paragraph 4.13(a) – You must show respect and consideration for others'. The Protocol is not designed to deal with complaints made under any other provisions of the Code and such complaints should be made directly to the Local Government Commissioner for Standards).

**Recommendation to add to the Chairperson's statement re restricted items**

As Members will be aware, prior to dealing with restricted items the Chairperson reads a statement seeking approval to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting (see excerpt below).

**Proposal to Exclude the Public from the Committee Meeting**

*'That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the Press and public from the Committee meeting during discussion of agenda items <> to <> inclusive as, due to the nature of those items, it is likely that there would be disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42 (4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.'*

It is recommended that the following short sentence is added to this statement:

*'Members are reminded that the content of 'restricted' reports and any discussions which take place during closed session must be treated as 'confidential information' and that no such information may be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct'.*

**Member Training on the Code of Conduct**

Members are also reminded that Council officers offer regular training on the Code of Conduct with the last session having been provided after the election in June 2023 and delivered by the Chief Executive, the City Solicitor and the Commissioner for Standards. Members are encouraged to avail of this training as and when it is offered.

**3.5 Council may refer a matter to the Commissioner for Standards**

Depending on the nature and seriousness of the disclosure, the Chief Executive or the City Solicitor may in certain



circumstances decide that it is in the interests of the Council that they refer a matter to the Commissioner for Standards to investigate an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct. These instances are rare and often involve allegations of serious misconduct and/or conduct which could cause reputational damage to the Council.

**3.6 Any person may refer a matter to the Commissioner for Standards**

Any person can refer a matter to the Commissioner for Standards with respect to an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct for Councillors. Such referrals will usually be from another Councillor or from a member of the public and will often be in relation to allegations of serious or clear breaches of the Code of Conduct.

**3.7 Financial and Resource Implications**

There are no financial or resource implications connected to this report.

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

There are no equality or good relations implications connected to this report.”

The Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed that, in future, the Chairperson of each Committee would make reference to restricted reports and Members’ duty of confidence under the Code of Conduct in their opening statement.

**Election Accounts May, 2023**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 To advise the Committee of the cost to the Council of the Local Government Elections held in May, 2023.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to note the report.**

**3.0 Main Report**

**Key Issues**

- 3.1 The local council expenditure for delivering Local Government Elections is, under the provision of the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962, constrained by a scale of expenditure set by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.
- 3.2 The Local Election Fees and Expenses Scale for Belfast City Council for May, 2023 was £909,463. This excludes the cost of candidates' mailing, which is not included within that maximum. However, that cost still must be met by the Council.
- 3.3 The direct cost to the Council was £292,476.96 and the Electoral Office of Northern Ireland's costs charged to the Council were £551,858.00.
- 3.4 Therefore the cost of administering and delivering the election was £844,335, which was £65,127.68 under the budget set by the Northern Ireland Office (NIO).
- 3.5 With the additional cost of candidates' mailing being £26,345.28 this brings the total cost to the Council to £1,120,353.92.
- 3.6 Compared with the cost of the Elections in 2019 of £853,008.64, this is an increase of £267,345.28.
- 3.7 This increase is due principally to the general increase in costs since four years ago, particularly staffing costs. Given this increase, a review of how we administer and deliver the elections will be undertaken to identify any potential cost saving measures going forward.
- 3.8 A breakdown of the cost is attached to this report.

3.9 **Financial and Resource Implications**

None associated with this report. The Council sets, each year during the rate setting process, an amount into a specified reserve to cover the cost of elections and there was sufficient funding in the budget to cover this year's election.

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

None associated with this report."

**Appendix**

**Local Government Election Account**

**Staff Costs**

Polling staff, Count staff, training, security	527,073.55
<b>Staff Costs Total</b>	<b>527,073.55</b>

**Administration Costs**

Advertising	9,726.67
Stationery and Printing	63,290.00
Postage (poll cards, proxy poll cards, postal votes, staffing)	143,157.00
Use of Premises	12,680.00
Transportation	25,557.00
Equipment	56,142.00
Materials for verification and count	6,709.10
<b>Administration Costs Total</b>	<b>317,261.77</b>

**SUB TOTAL                      844,335.32**

**Postage**

Candidates' Election Addresses	276,018.60
<b>Candidates' Election Postage Costs Total</b>	<b>276,018.60</b>

**GRAND TOTAL                      1,120,353.92**

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

**Physical Programme and Asset Management**

**Asset Management**

**Gasworks Northern Fringe**

The Committee approved the disposal of c68 m<sup>2</sup> of land on Site A Gasworks Northern Fringe and of c24 m<sup>2</sup> on Site D to Radius Housing Association, with the Council to receive £12,500 and £3,200 respectively.

**2 Royal Avenue**

The Committee approved the surrender of a lease to AIB Group NI PLC in respect of the ATM structure at 2 Royal Avenue, for which the Council had received a nominal rent.

**Cherryvale Playing Fields**

The Committee granted approval to commence the vesting process in respect of c25 m<sup>2</sup> of land separating Cherryvale Playing Fields from the public footpath and Road, with the Council to be liable for the costs associated with the application and maintenance of the land moving forward.

**Gregagh Green**

The Committee approved the grant of a licence to Cregagh Wanderers Football Club for general container provision at Cregagh Green, with the licence to be drafted by the Legal Services Section on the instructions of the Estates Management Unit.

**Station Street Car Park**

The Council approved the renewal of a licence agreement with the Department for Communities in relation to the Council operated off-street car park at Station Street, with the Council to pay a licence fee, as assessed by Land and Property Services and retain all revenue generated.

**Leisure Centres**

The Committee granted approval to enter into seven-year legal agreements with electric charge point operator EASYGO to regulate the operation of electric vehicle chargers at the seven leisure centre sites listed below, with the legal agreement for each site to be finalised and agreed with the Legal Services Section and EASYGO to be responsible for the installation, maintenance and operation of the charging points for the duration of the term:

- Avoniel Leisure Centre
- Ballysillan Leisure Centre
- Brook Leisure Centre
- Girdwood Community Hub
- Grove Wellbeing and Treatment Centre
- Whiterock Leisure Centre and
- Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre.

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**Finance, Procurement and Performance**

**Update on Contracts**

The Committee:

- approved the public advertisement of tenders, as per Standing Order 37a, as detailed in Table 1 below;
- approved the award of Single Tender Actions, in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Table 2 below, with the term of the St. Patricks Day contract with Tradfest to be renegotiated to one year and a report to be submitted at the earliest opportunity to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee providing:
  - i. further information on the difficulties which had been experienced around the tender process for this contract, in terms of preparedness for future years; and
  - ii. an update on the award of the contracts for the other three elements of the St. Patrick's Day programme; and
- approved the modification of the contract, as per Standing Order 37a, as detailed in Table 3 below.

**Table 1: Competitive Tenders**

<b>Title of Tender</b>	<b>Proposed Contract Duration</b>	<b>Est. Max Contract Value</b>	<b>SRO</b>	<b>Short Description of Goods / Services</b>
Maintenance, repair and inspection of grounds maintenance plant and equipment	Up to 5 years	£750,000	D. Sales	Maintenance, repair and inspection of grounds maintenance plant and equipment to fulfil the requirements of the OSS service
Telephone service provision - calls / lines / broadband	Up to 12 months	£152,131	P. Gribben	The corporate telephony solution required so that all devices and users have ongoing service provision
Planned preventative maintenance for backup generators to 7 Council Properties	Up to 3 years	£120,000	S. Grimes	Recurring contract for backup generators to 7 properties to cover callouts, repairs and planned maintenance
MTC for fire and intruder alarms maintenance	Up to 3 years	£210,000	S. Grimes	Recurring contract which covers callouts, repairs,

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				planned maintenance and small works to fire and intruder alarms systems to all council properties
Online civic engagement platform	Up to 4 years	£78,000	P. Gribben	Current contract for civic engagement platform expires in Aug 24
Collection and recycling of scrap metal and abandoned vehicles	Up to 4 years	£900,000 (Income)	C. Matthews	Recurring contract to ensure the Council recycles scrap metal and maximises associated income.
Supply and delivery of office furniture including office design and fit-out service	Up to 5 years	£250,000*	N Largey	Various departments and buildings in the ongoing office furniture needs covering simple repair/ replacement requirements through to new office fit out and redesign services. * Estimated £50k per annum spend. Spend is cross-departmental and not solely Legal and Civic Services.
The provision of external mail collection service for outbound mail from the centralised mailroom	Up to 3 years	£400,000	P. Gribben	To provide the continued operation and support of the mailroom and outbound post

**Table 2: Single Tender Actions**

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason Code
Support and maintenance of eSourcing tendering solution	Up to 2 years	£73,000	P. Gribben	Licences for the continued use of eSourcing until new finance system is in place	Bravosolutions UK Ltd	3
Provision of a city centre weekend music programme as part of the overall St Patrick's	Up to 3 years	£210,000	J Greer	A formal tender process was carried out which resulted in a NIL return. A direct award is being made to a local social enterprise	Belfast Tradfest	1

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day celebrations				with experience in delivering musical festivals.		
Booking system for Belfast Castle and Malone House	Up to 3 years	£36,000	P Gribben	Continued use of the booking system at BC and MH until a replacement system can be procured. Based on current programme of work within Digital Services, capital investment required and associated planning required it is unlikely this would be actioned until 2 to 3 years. Kinetic Solutions are the only supplier of the current booking system and associated licences/software.	Kinetics Solutions	3

**Table 3: Modification to Contract**

<b>Title of Contract</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Modification</b>	<b>SRO</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Supplier</b>
T2335 Procurement of a Local Area Energy Plan for Belfast and Queens Island (Fully funded)	Up to 11 months	Additional 4 months	J. Tully	Requesting a 4 month extension of contract period up to 31 March 2024 to due to implementation delay. No additional expenditure	Energy Systems Catapult

**Accounting Treatment of  
Belfast Investment Fund**

The Director of Finance submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

**"1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with information on how the accounting treatment of the Belfast Investment Fund.

**2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the report.

**3.0 Main Report**

- 3.1 At the Council meeting on 1st October, the Chief Executive agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee outlining the accounting treatment in relation to the allocation of funding for the Belfast Investment Fund..
- 3.2 The Belfast Investment Fund was first set up to support partnership projects across the city, with a recurring amount included in the revenue estimates of £3.27m. The intention being to borrow the money to pay for the projects with the recurring budget covering the borrowing costs.
- 3.3 Due to slippages in delivery of projects to date, the majority of projects have been funded by the recurring budget without the need to borrow. As at period 7 (31 October 2023), the fund has an amount of £5,379,365 allocated to it.
- 3.4 The fund would be designated as a cash backed fund, however, this does not mean that the Council has £5.4m sitting in an account waiting to be spent on Belfast Investment Fund projects. Similarly, it does not have cash/investments to support all its useable reserves. For information, as at 31st March 2023, the Council had useable reserves of £87,787,629 but only held cash and cash equivalents of £19,140,662.
- 3.5 This is due to the Council using its cash to fund capital expenditure, referred to as internal borrowing, and then only using external borrowing as and when required to ensure it has adequate working capital.



- 3.6 By applying this approach to managing its cash balances the Council minimises its cost of carry, i.e., the difference borrowing rates and investment returns.**

**Accounting Treatment**

- 3.7 As mentioned above, the annual amount include in the estimates is £3.27m. Every month 1/12th of this amount is debited to the cost centre and credited to the balance sheet, BIF Account. At the end of the financial year an amount is transferred from the BIF balance sheet account to finance the capital expenditure incurred on Belfast Investment Fund projects.**

- 3.8 Financial and Resource Implications**

**None**

- 3.9 Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment**

**None.”**

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the  
Social Policy Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Social Policy Working Group of 14th November.

**Equality and Good Relations**

**Minutes of the Meeting of the  
Shared City Partnership**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Shared City Partnership of 6th November, including the recommendations:

**Schedule of Meetings**

- to approve the schedule of meetings for 2024, with a commencement time of 1.30 p.m.;

**Membership of Shared City Partnership**

- to note the update and approve the approach for the filling of vacant positions, as set out within the minutes;

**Good Relations Scope of Work**

- to note the update and that an updated Action Plan would be submitted to the meeting of the Partnership in December, which would aim to further build sustainable good relations within communities; and

**Peace Plus**

- to note the update.

**Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 –  
Department of Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs Annual Monitoring Return**

The Committee approved the Annual Monitoring Return to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for 2022-23 [here](#), which provided evidence of how the Council had met certain duties under the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.

**Modern Slavery Act 2015: Updated Modern  
Slavery Statement and Corporate Action Plan**

The Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with the updated annual Modern Slavery Transparency in Supply Chains Statement to meet the obligations of the Modern Slavery Act, 2015 and an update on the related corporate action plan.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- i. note the updated annual Modern Slavery Transparency in Supply Chains Statement (the 'Transparency Statement') [here](#);**
- ii. approve the addition of the Transparency Statement to the UK Government's online registry; and**
- iii. note the progress made on the action plan [here](#)**

**3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 Background**

**The Modern Slavery Act 2015 (the 'Act') aims to address slavery and trafficking by enhancing support and protection**

for victims, giving law enforcement the tools needed to target today's slave drivers and ensuring perpetrators can be severely punished. It also includes a provision in Section 54 to encourage organisations to ensure their supply chains are slavery-free, known as the Transparency in Supply Chains arrangements ('TISC').

### **3.2 Key Issues**

The Council has voluntarily published an annual Transparency Statement on its website since 2015. This sets out what the Council has done to ensure there is no modern slavery in its supply chains or any part of its business.

This year, the annual Transparency Statement has been reviewed by Commercial and Procurement Services, the Council's Safeguarding Officer, the Council's Registrar for Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships and the Equality and Diversity Officer and has been refreshed to reflect current guidance on its content. An updated version for 2022-23 can be accessed in paragraph 2.1 above which, following Council ratification, will be published on the Council's website.

### **3.3 Recent changes to the Transparency Statement Requirements**

The TISC provisions currently apply to commercial organisations, however, in recent years both the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Department of Justice have reviewed and consulted on these provisions and their potential application to the public sector:

- In July 2018, the Home Secretary undertook an independent review of the Act and made recommendations, one of which was to strengthen Section 54 by extending the requirement to publish Modern Slavery Statements to government and the public sector;
- In July 2019, the UK Government launched a consultation on measures to strengthen the TISC arrangements and published its proposals on how it planned to take this work forward. Many of the proposed changes will require legislative change which has not happened to date. The proposed changes would see a strengthening of the TISC arrangements for commercial businesses, and would, for the first time, extend them so they apply to the public sector; and

- In January 2022, the Northern Ireland Department of Justice ('DOJ') published its report, summary of responses and next steps in response to its consultation on TISC. It found that overall, there is widespread support for the strengthening of TISC arrangements.

#### **3.4 Approach to Modern Slavery in Northern Ireland**

In October 2022, the DOJ launched a public consultation on a new three-year draft Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Strategy.

The DOJ noted in its consultation that the UK Government plan to make additional changes to the TISC provisions in the Act. The additional changes include:

1. Reporting on specific topics;
2. Publishing the MS statement on a public registry;
3. Setting a deadline for submitting a statement annually;
4. Extending the requirement to publish a statement to public sector organisations with a turnover of over £36million; and
5. The introduction of financial penalties for those that do not publish a slavery statement.

The public consultation closed in January 2023. The DOJ Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Unit has advised that a report has been drafted and is awaiting sign off.

#### **3.5 It should be noted that the Legislative Consent of the Northern Ireland Assembly will be required to extend any UK Government changes to Northern Ireland.**

Alongside the consultation, the DOJ published a progress report on the commitments laid out in the 2021-22 Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Strategy for Northern Ireland. The Progress Report states in part that the DOJ 'will engage further with public sector procurement leads once the additional measures to strengthen TISC are progressed in legislation and will become mandatory for all businesses with an annual turnover of over £36million.'

- 3.6 In March 2021, the UK Government launched an online modern slavery statement registry. Since its launch, over 7,000 statements have been submitted covering over 23,350 organisations on a voluntary basis.

Members asked to approve the addition of the Belfast City Council Transparency Statement to this registry.

3.7 Action Plan

In October 2021, the Council approved an action plan to tackle modern slavery to be taken forward by various departments. This was based on guidance from NILGA. An updated version can be accessed in paragraph 2.1 above.

Members should note that the suggested action of developing a Council protocol for reporting suspicions of Modern Slavery has been removed because Government guidance states that suspicions should be reported either to the police or to the Modern Slavery Helpline.

Members should also note that an initial awareness session for relevant Council managers on recognising Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking was held on 17 November 2022 by the Department of Justice.

3.8 Reporting

The Governance and Compliance Manager co-ordinates an annual report on progress to be brought to CMT and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

3.9 Financial and Resource Implications

The implementation of the action plan will involve staff from City and Neighbourhood Services, Legal Services, Governance & Compliance Services, Commercial and Procurement Services, Corporate HR and Marketing and Corporate Communications.

3.10 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

Any equality, good relations or rural needs implications will be identified using the council's usual screening process."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Equality and Diversity Annual Report to the  
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland 2022-23**

The Committee was advised that the Council was required, under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, to provide the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland with an annual report on the progress of the implementation of its Equality Scheme, as well as an update on the delivery of its Disability Action Plan.

Accordingly, the Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services submitted for the Committee's approval the annual report for 2022/23.

The Committee approved the annual report for submission to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland [here](#) and noted that an update on the delivery of the Disability Action Plan would be submitted to the Commission in due course.

**Draft Changing Places Toilet Policy**

The Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

**"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the Committee's approval to issue the draft Changing Places Toilet Policy for public consultation.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to grant approval to issue the draft policy [here](#) for public consultation.**

**3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 Background**

**A motion proposed by Councillor Ross McMullan calling for the introduction of a Changing Places Toilets Policy for Belfast City Council was referred to this Committee by the Council on 1st September 2021. The Committee adopted the motion and agreed that a report be brought back to a subsequent meeting providing details on how it would be facilitated, resourced and managed.**

**An update report was brought to the Disability Working Group in February 2023, summarising the motion and the proposed approach. A Changing Places Toilet Policy officer working group has met regularly over the past few months and their input has helped inform the various factors which the policy**

must consider including how it will be facilitated, resourced and managed.

A further update was brought to the Disability Working Group on 10th October, which endorsed the draft Policy and recommended that it be brought back to this Committee for approval.

### **3.2 Draft Policy and Key Issues Arising**

The final draft policy being presented for Committee approval can be accessed. A summary of the policy is included below.

#### **Buildings**

- Members will note that the requirement to provide Changing Places Toilet (CPT) facilities in all large new builds of a certain size is enforced through the amended Building Regulations rather than through this policy.
- The policy restates this requirement but goes further by adding consideration of CPTs where we extend or refurbish existing buildings, even if the provision of CPTs were not required by the amended building regulations.

#### **Council Estate**

- The policy, as drafted, would also commit the Council to carrying out a review of where CPT facilities could be installed on the council estate.
- When reviewing the provision of any future CPT facilities within the Council estate we will consider the existing level of provision on the Council estate and also the availability of CPT facilities in non-Council assets.
- Whilst cost alone will not be the deciding factor in any decision, the cost of installing any specific Changing Places facility will need to be carefully considered in conjunction with all of the other capital programme priorities identified by the Council.
- The management and maintenance of any such CPT facility will need to be carefully considered when examining any proposal. Following installation there will be ongoing costs associated with cleaning, checking and maintaining the equipment within the facility.

### **Events**

- The draft policy extends to events and creates new requirements upon both the Council and external events organisers.
- When organising public events, the Council will consider if it can take place at a venue that already has a Changing Places facility or will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that customers have access to either a fixed or portable Changing Places facility as part of the design of the event.
- The Council will require external organisers of all large-scale public events (e.g. concerts, festivals) on council property to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that customers have access to either a fixed or portable Changing Places facility as part of the design of the event.
- It will be a condition of hire that any large-scale event (whether it needs an entertainments licence or not) must have a Changing Places facility. This should be included in the lease agreement between council and the event organiser. It should also be a condition of hire that event organisers must complete the Planning Checklist at Section E of the Council's 'Inclusive Events Guide' for review by the EDU team.
- As a further step, we will consider the requirement to include an access audit within the Event Management Plan which is submitted in support of the event. It would then be for the organiser to justify why they would not be required to include a CPT as part of their site set-up. An officer of the Council involved in management of the land for hire must ensure these steps are followed.
- The Council when organising smaller public events, will encourage small scale events organisers to undertake an accessibility audit and provide a Changing Places facility where possible.
- The Council's 'Inclusive Events Guide' has been refreshed. The new Small Scale Events Checklist has been circulated to the Committee.



**Responsibility**

- The Legal and Civic Services Department will be the corporate lead for this policy however actions will be required across different departments including Place and Economy and City and Neighbourhood Services.

3.3 It is proposed that an application be made to the Department for Communities' Access and Inclusion Programme in 24/25 to secure funding which could contribute towards the purchase of a mobile changing places unit which could be used at events.

3.4 **Financial and Resource Implications**

There are potential resource implications associated with this policy and its implementation may result in the need for future capital funding by Council.

3.5 **Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications**

A Changing Places Toilet Policy may have potential equality, good relations and rural needs implications and will be subject to our normal screening process as appropriate.

3.6 The introduction of such a policy will present an opportunity for the council to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life."

The Committee adopted the recommendation to issue the draft policy for public consultation.

**Operational Issues**

**Minutes of the Meeting of the  
Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 16th November.

**Update to Health and Safety Policy Statement**

The Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services informed the Committee that there was a statutory requirement upon the Council to have a Health and Safety Policy Statement in place and to revise it, as and when required. The Statement provided information on the Council as an organisation and its commitment to health and

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safety and the work being done to achieve its commitments and was signed on an annual basis by the Chief Executive, the Chairperson of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and the nominated Director for health and safety matters. The document had last been reviewed and signed in April, 2019, prior to the Coronavirus pandemic.

She reported that a review of the Statement had recently been undertaken and drew the Committee's attention to a minor amendment relating to the commitments on setting objectives and targets.

The Committee approved the revised Health and Safety Policy Statement [here](#) and noted that it would be communicated to Council staff through Interlink, health and safety committees and corporate health and safety training.

**Requests for the use of the City  
Hall Grounds for Events in 2024**

The Committee approved the following requests for the use of the City Hall Grounds and noted that each organiser would be required to submit an event management plan and risk assessment in advance of their event:

- Action Cancer Breast Foot Forward Walk – 7th June;
- Pride Picnic – 20th July;
- Féile Rocks Pride Concert – 27th July;
- Belfast One Film Screening – 10th and 11th August; and
- Belfast Mela Carnival Parade Party – 17th August.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the  
Cost of Living Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Cost of Living Working Group of 16th November.

**Requests for use of the City Hall  
and the Provision of Hospitality**

The Committee adopted the recommendations in respect of those applications received up to 10th November, as set out below:

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
<b>2024 EVENTS</b>						
Pharmacy Forum	8 February 2024	<b>Rewarding Excellence Awards</b> celebrating excellence in pharmacy profession and fellowships awarded for outstanding contributions. Numbers attending – 100	B & C	No (charity)	Yes, Tea and coffee Reception	Approve No Charge Tea and Coffee Reception  <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on arrival</i>
European Youth Parliament	27 February 2024	<b>NI Regional Session of Youth Parliament</b> - teams of secondary students debate and present their ideas and solutions on current topics. Numbers attending – 100	B & D	No (Charity)	Yes, Tea and coffee Reception	Approve No Charge Tea and Coffee Reception  <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for soft drinks on arrival</i>
Indian Women Association Belfast	10 March 2024	<b>International Women's Day Celebration</b> - Cultural programme of lunch and entertainment.  Numbers attending 100	D	No charge as not for profit group	Yes, Tea and coffee Reception	Approve No Charge Tea and Coffee Reception  <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on arrival</i>
Association of Canadian Studies in Ireland (ACSI)	9 May 2024	<b>Reception for the 21st Biennial International Conference of the Association of Canadian Studies in Ireland</b> for guests attending their 3 day congress taking	A & B	No as (Charity and linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality

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		place in Queens University.  Numbers attending - 150				
British Council Northern Ireland	5 September 2024	<b>Study USA Graduation 2024</b> for students returning to Northern Ireland following completion of their year's study in the United States under the Study USA programme and in recognition of their achievements and to celebrate the success of the programme,  Numbers attending - 120	A & B	No (Charity)	Yes, Tea and coffee Reception	Approve No Charge Tea and Coffee Reception  <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on arrival</i>
DFK International	7 November 2024	<b>DFK Annual Gala Ball -</b> Dinner and entertainment for guests attending their 7 day congress  Numbers attending - 130	A & B	No (Waiver as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
Polish Educational and Cultural Association	23 November 2024	<b>Polish Independence Day 2024 –</b> Celebration event to promote diversity and reflect on positive contribution of Polish community.  Numbers attending – 160	C & D	No charge as Charity	Yes, Tea and coffee Reception	Approve No Charge Tea and Coffee Reception  <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on arrival</i>

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2025 EVENTS						
Ulster University  (Local organiser for the British Accounting & Finance Association Conference)	1 May 2025	<b>British Accounting &amp; Finance Association Conference Dinner and entertainment</b> for guests attending their 3 day congress taking place in Ulster University.  Numbers attending - 400	A &B	No (Waiver as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality

**Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

**Request for Update on Motion on  
Overdose Prevention Facility in Belfast**

The Committee agreed, at the request of Councillor Smyth, that a report be submitted to its next monthly meeting providing an update on the above-mentioned motion, which had been passed by the Council at its meeting on 1st March, with specific reference to meetings held, legal advice sought and partners engaged with.

Chairperson

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## People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 7th November, 2023

### HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor Murray (Chairperson);  
Councillors Bell, Black, Bower, R. Brooks, Bunting,  
Canavan, Cobain, de Faoite, Doherty, M. Donnelly,  
R-M Donnelly, Flynn, Kelly, Magee, Maghie,  
McAteer, Ó Néill and Verner.
- In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;  
Ms. N. Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and  
Civic Services;  
Mrs. C. Matthews, Director of Resources and Fleet;  
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director City Operations;  
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services; and  
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

No apologies were reported.

### **Minutes**

The Committee was asked to note that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10th October had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st November, subject to the following variations/amendments:

- Under the heading Update on Alleygates, the Council agreed that the next report on alleygates being presented to the Committee should examine the potential for proceeding immediately with the installation of alleygates at those locations where there were no issues to be addressed;
- Under the heading Reference Group on Older People - Greater Belfast Seniors' Forum (G6), the Council agreed that a report be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the protocol on the use of the Lavery and Conor Rooms in the City Hall;
- Under the heading Update on Off Street Parking, the Council agreed that stakeholders from the University Area be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee in relation to the residents' parking scheme and that an invitation be re-issued to the Department for Infrastructure to discuss issues around road safety and parking for local communities; and
- Under the heading GLL Annual Schedule of Charges 2024/25, the Committee agreed that a report be submitted to the next meeting of

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the Committee on the status and content of the current contract with GLL and that careful consideration be given, in agreeing any future extensions or new contract with GLL or any other provider, to the clause relating to price increases.

Under the heading 'Update on Off Street Parking', with the agreement of Councillor Black, who made the request at the Council meeting, the Committee agreed to refer the decision taken at the November Council to invite the stakeholders from the University Area, namely the Forward South Partnership, to a future City Growth and Regeneration Committee. In relation to the issues around road safety and parking for local communities it agreed to refer this matter to be raised at the special meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 22nd November, at which the DfI would be in attendance to present its Autumn update.

The minutes of the meetings of 10th October were taken as read and signed as correct.

**Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Canavan, M. Donnelly and Doherty declared an interest in agenda item 4c Social Supermarket Update in that they were associated with or worked for an organisation which had applied for funding and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

**Item Withdrawn from Agenda**

The Committee noted that agenda item 5 (b) Playground Improvement Programme had been withdrawn from the agenda.

**Committee Schedule 2024**

The Committee approved the schedule of meetings for the People and Communities Committee as outlined below and agreed that all meetings would commence at 5.15 pm:

- Tuesday 9th January at 5.15 pm
- Tuesday 6th February at 5.15 pm
- Tuesday 20th February at 5.15 pm – Special Housing
- Tuesday 12th March at 5.15 pm
- Tuesday 9th April at 5.15 pm
- Tuesday 7th May at 5.15 pm
- Tuesday 21st May at 5.15 pm - Special - BCYC
- Tuesday 11th June at 5.15 pm
- Tuesday 6th August at 5.15 pm
- Tuesday 3rd September at 5.15 pm – Special Housing HIP Update
- Tuesday 10th September at 5.15 pm



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- Tuesday 8th October at 5.15 pm
- Tuesday 5th November at 5.15 pm
- Monday 9th December – Special – BCYC
- Tuesday 3rd December at 5.15 pm

**Presentation**

**Keep Recycling Local**

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Ms. N. Carruthers representing Keep Recycling Local.

The representatives commenced by thanking the Committee for the opportunity to present on the work of the Keep Recycling Local campaign. Ms. Carruthers advised that the campaign had been established by businesses and other organisations to highlight the positive changes required in the way recyclables were collected and to ensure that recyclable materials collected in Northern Ireland (NI) were reprocessed in NI. She explained that, if this was to be achieved, it would aid NI's circular economy in terms of supporting local businesses and jobs.

The representative explained that the current problem with recycling, in most of the NI Councils, was the co-mingling of recyclable materials, this resulted in 91,000 tonnes of recyclables being exported around the globe which was a massive cost to businesses, the NI economy and the environment.

She drew the Members' attention to the policy context in NI and referred to the DAERA consultation on a single waste strategy for NI.

The representative detailed the following three steep solution:

1. To collect key materials separately;
2. To change key legislation to incentivise local reprocessing over export; and
3. To make information on end destinations of recycling more publicly accessible.

She advised that, if recyclables were to be kept separate, over 80% of the recyclable materials could be recycled locally instead of the 10% currently being recycled as a result of co-mingled collections. It was acknowledged that Belfast City Council did not co-mingle recycle glass and paper/cardboard.

The presentation concluded with the representative asking the Council to consider introducing a 3-stream collection system, like the one adopted by Antrim and Newtownabbey Council and also to support DAERA in its ambition to introduce a single waste policy across all of Northern Ireland and to promote the need for better public awareness and education.

The representative addressed a query in relation to the capacity of the wheelie box trial and stated that she would be more than happy to provide further information in relation to

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capacity issues or to organise a site visit to member companies, she urged the Members to contact her directly if they had any further queries.

The Chairperson thanked the representative for her informative presentation, and she left the meeting.

The Committee noted the presentation.

**Restricted**

**The information contained in the reports associated with the following four items is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.**

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following four items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Noted.

**Alleygates Consultation Update**

(Mr. S. Leonard, Neighbourhood Services (OS Portfolio Lead), attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the consultation exercise carried out in relation to the Alleygate Phase 5 sites.

The report outlined the consultation process that had been undertaken, detailing that a letter, containing a questionnaire, had been issued to 2000 properties within the proposed Phase 5 gating location areas. The Members were advised that, due to a low response in July, a further letter had been reissued to properties who had not completed the original survey, with a closing date for the end of August.

The Committee considered the responses and noted that there had been a number of objections received, it was felt by officers that many of these were access concerns which could be addressed during the installation period. It was also noted that consultation with the Department for Infrastructure and PSNI had taken place, with support for the locations and 'Agreement in Principle' having been received for the proposed gating locations.

The Strategic Director then drew the Members' attention to advice from Legal Services, following its review of the findings.

The Committee noted the unprecedented level of objections received, higher than any other previous phases of Alleygates. It was noted that there had been difficulties with the consultation and that the low number of returns might be due to this being the first time an online consultation process had been used. Previous consultations had used door to door

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canvassers, who could aid residents in completing the survey forms. The consultation had been accessed over 800 times but only 694 online forms had been completed.

The Committee noted that the next stage of the Alleygating process would be to move directly to the public notification, by sending a Notice of Intention to each property stating that Belfast City Council sought to make a Gating Order, however, it was suggested that, at this stage, the Council would instead re-open the consultation process, using canvassers to revisit those properties who had not completed the online survey. It was felt that this might help to improve the level of responses across the programme area and assist to move the programme towards the notification period and to provide the Council with a more robust evidence base upon which to decide whether to progress to the next stage in the alleygating process.

Several Members voiced their frustration that this process was taking so long to progress and noted that many of the constituents were eagerly awaiting the installation of these gates, some of which had been made and were ready to be installed.

Following a query as to why those streets which had not received any objections could not be progressed, the Strategic Director advised that it would be more cost effective to undertake as one complete phase of works.

The Members discussed the challenges of consulting through letters and the complexity of the questionnaire issued, especially for their older constituents. In considering alternative consultation options, it was suggested that local community/leisure facilities could be used. Whilst officers undertook to investigate this alternative, it was noted that this might not be suitable for older people with mobility issues. The Members also asked to be given a list of those streets with properties that had not responded to enable them to liaise with their constituents in advance of the canvassing occurring to help them understand the process and officers undertook to clarify if this would be possible.

Several Members highlighted that they were keen not to see this process held up any longer than necessary and, whilst they acknowledged that consultation was required for some of the areas, they were concerned that this was delaying all of the proposed alleygates.

During discussion the Members also highlighted the ongoing issues with unadopted alleyways and it was proposed by Councillor R. Brooks, seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed that the Council would convene a special meeting of the People and Communities to specifically consider the advancement and vesting of unadopted alleyways.

Detailed discussion ensued, following which the Committee agreed:

- to refer the list of proposed phase 5 alleygates to the Party Group Leaders with consideration to be given to progressing the streets that had not received any objections and how best to progress the next stage of canvassing, with a report to be submitted to the November meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee;
- to clarify if Elected Members could be furnished with a list of those streets with properties that had residents that had not completed a survey prior to canvassing commencing; and

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- agreed that a special meeting of the Committee be convened in January to consider the vesting of unadopted alleyways and that representatives from DfI and relevant stakeholders be invited to attend.

**Update on late night hot food premises  
opening hours on Ormeau Road**

The Committee was reminded of the issues associated with the late opening of hot food premises on the Ormeau Road, Belfast, which had resulted in representations having been made to the January 2023 meeting of the Committee. The Members were reminded that, at this meeting, the Committee had agreed that it was minded to make a Closure Order and had agreed that the business operator be afforded the opportunity to make representations at a future meeting of the Committee, prior to a final determination.

The Members were then provided with an update on the progress since that decision. They were advised that, following facilitated discussions, an agreement had been reached between the hot food business operator, local residents and LORAG in relation to the future operation of the premises.

The Director drew the Members' attention to the conditions that had been agreed which formed the negotiated agreement. He also advised that a review meeting had been held since the commencement of the new arrangements and it appeared that the new arrangements had been successful in addressing the residents' concerns. LORAG had acknowledged the efforts of the business operator to address the residents' concerns through the range of measures implemented and had agreed that the residents would continue to support the current arrangements, subject to a review in six months.

The Director outlined that Council officers were concerned, however, that other business operators in the area might be tempted to open later to attract the customers that would previously have gone to the other hot food establishment, which would clearly negate the good work that had already taken place. It was noted that one establishment within the vicinity of the residents already appeared to be opening later. The Committee was advised that officers were engaging with the business operator to seek a similar negotiated agreement.

The Committee:

- agreed not to make a Closure Order at this time, subject to compliance with the agreement and a review in six months' time; and
- agreed the proposed approach in respect of other hot food premises in Lower Ormeau Road Area, as outlined in paragraph 3.4 of the report.

**Six Monthly Leisure Management Contract  
Compliance and Performance report**

The Committee was reminded that it had previously been agreed that contract compliance and performance reports would be presented, at a strategic level, to Committee on a six-monthly basis in November and May. That would allow for sufficient time to collate

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and verify management information data related to the preceding six-month periods of April to September and October to March.

The six-monthly reports, as submitted, included detailed quarterly information on the two relevant quarters within each six-month period.

The Committee noted the:

- information provided in paragraph 3.2.1 of the report in relation to contract compliance;
- information provided at paragraph 3.2.2 in relation to key performance indicators;
- supporting narrative presented at paragraph 3.2.3;
- facility asset management monitoring information set out at paragraph 3.2.4; and
- Health and Safety compliance assurances presented at paragraph 3.2.5.

**Six Monthly Healthwise and Physical  
Activity Referral report**

The Committee noted the six-monthly progress update on the exercise and health referral programmes managed by GLL in Belfast, which included an overview of the various health related contracts and services along with the key performance indicators.

**Committee/Strategic Issues**

**Lagan Valley Regional Park – Response  
From Department for Infrastructure**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 8th August, it agreed to write to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) to express its concern at the withdrawal of core funding for Lagan Valley Regional Park for the financial year 2023-24.

The Committee was advised that a response had been received from Ms. Violeta Morrison, PPTO, Rivers Directorate. In her response, she advised *‘that the Department was fully appreciative of the close working relationship that had existed between the Department and Lagan Valley Regional Park. The Department understood that the withdrawal of the discretionary funding of £42k from Lagan Valley Regional Park had left the Park in a precarious situation, however, the decision to cut all discretionary spending and, therefore the funding to LVRP, had been taken at Departmental level due to overall budget cuts that had affected all Departments’*. She reiterated that the Department’s Inland Waterways team would *‘not be able to enter into a new Operational Service Agreement (OSA) with LVRP’*.

A Member stated that this was a disappointing but not unexpected response from the DfI and referred to the valuable work undertaken out by the LVRP staff and the impact that this cut in funding would have.

It was proposed by Councillor Murray, seconded by Councillor McAteer and agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that additional funding of

£21,000.00 be awarded to the LVRP from reserves and to write to LCCC asking it to contribute the same amount to address the shortfall in funding from the DfI.

**Smokefree Generation consultation response  
and update on Vaping - Notice of Motion**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

- 1.1 To update the Committee on the motion passed at Council in relating to vaping, including a draft Council response to the UK wide ‘Smokefree Generation’ consultation (published on 12th October 2023 by Department of Health and Social Care, in partnership with the Department of Health in Northern Ireland) which makes proposals for restrictions on the sale of tobacco and vapes, including a proposed UK wide ban on the sale of disposable vape products.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 The committee is asked to:**

- (i) Note the updates on current policy context and recent strategic level engagements in relation to tobacco control and vaping issues; and**
- (ii) Agree the BCC draft response to the public consultation ‘creating a Smoke free Generation – your views’ and agree that officers submit the response by 6th December**

**3.0 Main Report**

- 3.1 Council previously agreed the following notice of motion in April 2023:**

***‘Belfast faces a growing problem of vaping by children and young adults. These products are addictive, damaging to health and often contain illegal substances.***

***The legislation covering their sale is inadequate. While it is illegal to sell them to under 18s there is no registration of retailers, no restriction on the display of the products and no resources to identify illegal and harmful additives.***

***Some disposable vapes are designed to be attractive to children and many are discarded in the street posing an environmental and health risk.***

***In the face of a developing public health crisis this Council will convene a working group with other stakeholders, including the***

*Department of Health, the Public Health Agency and the PSNI to consider measures to strengthen current legislation and enforcement, including the consideration of a ban on the sale of disposable vapes.*

*Furthermore, the Council will ban the use of vapes by under 18s in all its sites and premises.'*

3.2 A previous update provided to the Committee at its meeting on 13th June 2023 indicated that Officers would engage with key partners, including Department of Health and the Public Agency to explore options for Elected Members to discuss potential measures to strengthen the control and restrictions around youth vaping.

3.3 Over recent months, concerns surrounding the sale and use of nicotine inhaling product (NIPs), including disposable vapes have been highlighted by a range of agencies, partners and working groups. These concerns have included matters relating to health impacts and addiction for young people, and environmental considerations. A range of public bodies and charitable organisations have publicly called for a complete ban on disposable vapes, including NILGA , the LGA in England and Wales, and the Welsh and Scottish Governments, with widespread media coverage at national and regional levels.

3.4 Since the last update to committee in June, Officers have engaged with officials from Department of Health and other partners such as the Public Health Agency who are represented on a range of multiagency groups, to seek updates on potential for input to the new NI Tobacco Strategy, and to identify options for suitable engagement by Elected Members. Whilst this work with the Department was still in progress, the UK Government have now brought forward a UK wide consultation on proposals for increased controls on tobacco and youth vaping - *'Creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping: your views'*.

3.5 Tobacco industry declaration

The UK is a party to the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. This places an obligation on public authorities and policy makers to protect the development of public health policy from the vested interests of the tobacco industry.

3.6 Smokefree Generation Consultation

On 4th October 2023, the UK's Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) published a command paper '[Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation](#)' setting out proposed

action to protect future generations from the harms of smoking by creating the first smokefree generation, and measures to crack down on youth vaping. The command paper was followed on 12th October 2023 by publication of a UK wide public consultation on the proposals.

### **3.7 Proposed changes to tobacco controls**

The health impacts of smoking are well researched and documented, and whilst smoking rates have been falling nationally, a significant number of the population still smoke and experience impacts on their health. To further address these concerns the government is proposing to bring forward legislation making it an offence to sell tobacco products to anyone born on or after 1 January 2009. In effect, the law will stop children turning 14 or younger this year from ever legally being sold tobacco products - raising the smoking age by a year each year until it applies to the whole population. This will create a smoke-free generation by ensuring children and young people do not become addicted in the first place.

### **3.8 Proposed changes to vaping controls**

The consultation also sets out proposed measures to address youth vaping including:

- restricting flavours (options include potential bans on fruit, menthol and mint flavourings)
- regulating point of sale displays (including proposals for vapes to be off display)
- regulating packaging and presentation (including proposals for plain packaging of vapes with no colours or logos).
- considering restricting the supply and sale of disposable vapes (including a potential ban on disposable vapes)
- consideration of whether regulations should extend to non-nicotine vapes
- taking action on the affordability of vapes
- enforcement measures including fixed penalty notices

### **3.9 Draft Council response to the Smokefree Generation Consultation**

A draft response to the consultation has been prepared for the Committee's consideration and approval. The draft response highlights the Council's support for the strengthened measures being proposed, and highlights that measures addressing smoking and vaping will contribute to the Councils outcomes and priorities in the Belfast Agenda, helping to create a city where everyone experiences good health and wellbeing, and supporting



a city that is attractive, welcoming and environmentally sustainable.

- 3.10 The Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) report '[Use of e-cigarettes among young people in Great Britain](#)' shows that the number of children using vapes has tripled in the past 3 years and a staggering 20.5% of children in Great Britain had tried vaping in 2023. According to the [Northern Ireland Young persons behaviour and attitudes survey 2022](#), 21.3% of 11 to 16 year olds in Northern Ireland reported having ever used an e-cigarette.
- 3.11 Members will be aware there is a need to balance the desire to address issues surrounding youth vaping while also recognising the role that vaping products can play in supporting smoking cessation for adults. The draft consultation response prepared for the committee therefore highlights the potential impact that increased controls could bring, by restricting supply to young people, and also aiding enforcement controls, while facilitating sale of products for smoking cessation support.
- 3.12 Members will also be growing concern over the increasing environmental impacts of disposable vaping products due to lithium batteries and hard to recycle components, and the increasing volume which are littered or thrown in the bin. Recent [research on vape disposal by YouGov commissioned by Material Focus](#) found that almost 5 million disposable vapes are either littered or thrown away in general waste every week. These products have significant implications for waste collection facilities, with increased risk of fires.
- 3.13 There are measures already in place to ensure responsible production and disposal of waste electrical and electronic items through the [Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations 2013](#) (WEEE) and obligations under the [Waste Batteries and Accumulators Regulations 2009](#). However, evidence suggests compliance with these obligations is low, given the recent surge of businesses supplying disposable vapes. Both the WEEE and batteries regulations are being reviewed, with consultations planned. The Councils draft response highlights these waste concerns in support of proposals for a ban on disposable vapes.
- 3.14 The Council's draft response to the consultation also highlights the need for Government to ensure that enforcement services are adequately funded and resourced, to ensure that any new regulatory provisions can be fully utilised.

Elected Members are requested to approve the draft consultation response which is provided in Appendix 1. The closing date for the consultation is 6 December 2023.

**3.15 Use of vapes in Council premises:**

With regards to the Notice of Motion proposal for 'the Council to ban the use of vapes by under 18s in all its sites and premises', the Corporate Health and Safety Manager will bring a report to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in due course regarding the use of electronic cigarettes in Council sites and premises.

**3.16 Financial and Resource Implications**

None

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

None.”

The Committee:

- noted the updates on current policy context and recent strategic level engagements in relation to tobacco control and vaping issues; and
- agreed the BCC draft response to the public consultation 'creating a Smoke free Generation – your views' available [here](#) and agreed that officers submit the response by 6th December, subject to the additions of points regarding restricting nicotine levels in alternative tobacco products to 0.8mg and access to smoking cessation clinics.

**Social Supermarkets Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the operation of the Social Supermarket Fund and seek members approval to operate an open call for grant applications to the Social Supermarket Fund in 24/25 as outlined in the report.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report and to grant approval to operate an open call for grant applications to the Social Supermarket Fund in 24/25 as outlined in the report.**

**3.0 Main Report**

**Overview**

**Background**

- 3.1** In September 23, Council approved the approach to allocate Social Supermarket funding for 23/24. During discussions, elected members expressed a desire that going forward, this funding programme should be administered through an open call. Officers in City & Neighbourhood Services have since engaged with the Central Grants Unit (CGU) in Place & Economy who have advised that an open call process for 24/25 can be facilitated.
- 3.2** For council to operate an open call for 24/25, the application period would run from early December 2023 until end of January 24 and applications would be open to any constituted group delivering eligible projects. CGU support would ensure that applications are administered within a recognised independent process that allows for separation of duties between project delivery and administration staff.
- 3.3** Members will be aware that Social Supermarket Funding is provided 100% by Department for Communities (DfC) through the Community Support Programme Letter of Offer. The availability of funds for 24/25 is dependent upon the allocation received from DfC.
- 3.4** The operation of an open call process requires a lead in period of approximately 4 months and in order to ensure readiness, council would need to operate the call in advance of confirmation of the level of funding in 24/25 from DfC. If an open call was not agreed until confirmation of funding levels was received, it would not allow for the practical delivery of activity. Members will note that in 23/24, the funding for social supermarkets was not confirmed by DfC until in July 23. Had an open call process been implemented only on confirmation of funding, support would not have been available to organisations until January 24.
- 3.5** DfC officials have advised that Social Supermarket funding is delivered through a ringfenced welfare reform mitigations budget which is agreed in principle until March 25 and that it is likely that the starting budgetary position would be the same as 23/24, ie; approximately £415,000 for Belfast City Council. In the unlikely event that no funding is made available from DfC, Council will be under no obligation to make awards to organisations who have applied.

3.6 It is suggested that the following parameters for an open call be applied;

- Eligible projects will be those that can demonstrate that they provide food/food support to individuals impacted by poverty and provide wraparound support through their own services and/or a referral network
- The delivery time frame will be 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025
- Maximum level of award will be £50,000. (This is the maximum level of award available through the capacity grant, which is the largest Community Provision grant and is a reasonable limit given the likely level of Social Supermarket funding from DfC in 24/25 will be approximately £415,000.)
- Allocation of funding to projects will be based on a quality score.

3.7 If the maximum award is agreed as £50,000, this is above the threshold for delegated authority and a full list of applications, scores and suggested allocations will have to be brought to members in March 24 for their consideration and approval.

Support for new projects 23/24

3.8 An element of 23/24 funding (10%) was directed towards the development of new projects. The closing date for receipt of these applications was 24th October 23. By this date, officers had received the following requests for support; Hanwood Trust, Upper Springfield Development Trust and People's Kitchen Belfast. Greater Shankill Community Council will take on the funding allocated to Greater Shankill Partnership who are unable to deliver the project this year.

3.9 Officers have reviewed the detail provided in these applications and are content that they meet the objectives of the programme and provide value for money. Members had agreed that these allocations would be approved under delegated authority and Letters of Offer will have been issued by the time of the Committee meeting.

3.10 At the SP&R meeting on 19th October, members recommended that £150,000 of Hardship Funding be made available to support social supermarkets. Officers will contact all organisations who have received an allocation for 23/24 and make a pro rata allocation of the additional funds, dependent on the organisations' ability to spend by 31st March 2024.

**3.11 Financial and Resource Implications**

**All resources required to support the 23/24 approach are currently in place. No funding for 24/25 has yet been confirmed by the Department for Communities as the Social Supermarket Fund is 100% funded by DfC. However, DfC officials have indicated that the budget is likely to be in the region of the 23/24 budget of £414,000.**

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

**None identified at present. Equality Screening of the 24/25 grant application process will be completed.”**

The Committee granted approval to operate an open call for grant applications to the Social Supermarket Fund in 2024/25 as outlined in the report.

**Belfast Boxing Strategy Update**

The Strategic Director drew the Members’ attention to the contents of a report which provided an update on the implementation of the Belfast Boxing Strategy, for the period April to September 2023 (Quarters 1 and 2). The report noted that the Irish Athletic Boxing Association Ulster Branch (IABA) had advised that it anticipated that all the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) would be achieved by the end of 2023/24.

The Committee was reminded that, pending the development of Council’s Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy, the Committee had agreed at its March 2023 meeting to extend the current strategy and related work programme from 1st April 2023 until 31st March 2024.

The Committee noted the progress to date of the Belfast Boxing Strategy annual work plan for 2023/24.

**Stadia Community Benefits Initiative Update**

The Members were reminded that that the Stadia Community Benefits Initiative agreement was for a period of ten years with a financial commitment from the Council and IFA in place until the end of March 2026. Delivery was managed through monthly meetings of the Delivery Board, which reported quarterly to the Policy and Performance Board. In addition, financial and performance reports were presented to the Council and other Partner Boards.

The report noted that, in terms of performance, delivery to date in Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 of year 7 (financial year 2023/24) had continued. It further highlighted that a number of joint initiatives, including a schools coaching programme and a best practice conference were planned for Quarter 4.

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The Action Plan for 2023/24 had been produced by the Partners and included a mixture of sports specific programmes with both National Governing Body specific coach education courses, along with some joint collaborative initiatives.

The Committee noted the progress of the Stadia Community Benefits Initiative for 2023/2024 and the update on the action plan.

**Partner Agreements Update**

The Committee noted the quarterly progress report in relation to Partner Agreements at seven sites and that all Partners had been compliant on reporting matters and financial checks for April – September 2023.

The Strategic Director referred to a request to extend all existing agreements. He advised that, as the Committee was aware, the Council was currently developing a new policy regarding the management of assets within the community with a pilot being delivered across a number of sites. One of the sites included in the initial pilot was Ulidia Playing Fields and this site had been assessed using the pilot approach.

The Director continued that it was anticipated, following a review of the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) pilot process, the sites might also be made available for consideration under new management arrangements, therefore, to ensure continuity of service provision, it was intended that the existing Partner Agreements would continue until any new arrangements had been put in place.

The Members noted that the Council was also in the process of producing both a Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy and a Playing Pitches and Outdoor Sports Facilities Strategy.

Following a query from a Member, the Strategy Director advised that a report on the CAT pilot process was due to be submitted to the Committee within the next few months.

The Committee noted the progress to date at the Partner Agreement sites.

**Consultation on Private Tenancies Act 2022**  
**Section 8: (Smoke, Heat and Carbon Monoxide alarms)**  
**and Section 10: (Electrical Safety Standards)**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

- 1.1 To update members regarding the consultations on The Smoke, Heat and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations (NI) and the Electrical Safety Standards Regulations (NI) as part of the new provisions contained in The Private Tenancies Act (NI) 2022.**

**2.0     Recommendation**

**2.1     The members of the Committee are asked to note the new legislative powers to be enforced by Councils in relation to the private rented sector regarding:**

- **The Smoke, Heat and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations (NI)**
- **The Electrical Safety Standards Regulations (NI)**

**Members are asked:**

- **To agree the Council's response to the consultation in respect of the above-mentioned regulations. (Appendix 6) and**
- **To agree the proposed levels for fixed penalty fines for the offences created under these new regulations as stated in this report.**

**3.0     Main Report**

**Key issues**

**3.1     Members were previously appraised at their January 2023 Committee of the new provisions contained in The Private Tenancies Act (NI) 2022 which received royal assent on the 27th April 2022 and the report provided the details of the elements of the new Order that come into effect on the 1st April 2023 for the following provisions:**

- **Tenancy Information Notice**
- **Receipts for cash payments**
- **Changes to Tenancy Deposits**
- **Increase in time for requirements relating to tenancy deposits**
- **Removal of the 6-month time barrier to prosecution of tenancy deposit offence**
- **Change in length of notice to quit**

**3.2     It was noted that there are still a number of provisions which require further consultation regarding new requirements to provide smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms and changes to electrical safety standards in private rented sector properties.**

**3.3     A 12-week stakeholder consultation was issued on 13 September 2023 with responses due by 6th December 2023 via the NICS**

Citizen Space platform in relation to The Smoke, Heat and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations(NI).

[The Smoke, Heat and Carbon Monoxide Alarms for Private Tenancies Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 202X Consultation - NI Direct - Citizen Space](#)

**and the Electrical Safety Standards Regulations (NI).**

[The Electrical Safety Standards for Private Tenancies Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 202X Consultation - NI Direct - Citizen Space](#)

It is a targeted consultation focusing on engaging and obtaining the views of NI tenants, landlords, electricians, council enforcement officers, and all associated professional bodies/representatives on the draft Regulations and guidance.

Prior to seeking this approval to proceed to formal consultation with stakeholders there has been engagement in shaping of the regulations with the DfC expert advisory panel representing:

- Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS)
- Local Council Environmental Health Officers who will enforce the regulations
- DoF technical staff in respect of electrical and building regulation adherence
- Electrical Safety First – campaigning organisation for electrical safety measures

- 3.4 The consultations states that these regulations do not cover Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) and single lets properties, as these are covered by separate legislation/guidance. Single let arrangements is housing leased from private landlords and used by the Housing Executive to accommodate homeless people. Single-lets are often managed by large private companies, such as Homecare Independent Living. The company, rather than the landlord, will deal with the resident and the Housing Executive. Residents tend to stay longer in single-lets than in other types of temporary accommodation. The Council is not aware of any specific legislation/guidance in relation to single lets and would seek clarification from the Department in respect of this matter.

The consultation survey questions will be responded to using the information contained in Appendix 6.

- 3.5 Comments in respect of technical matters are also contained in Appendix 6. We have also taken the opportunity to provide some feedback on the regulations and guidance to ensure there is no conflict or confusion with regard to responsibilities and



requirements for landlords. This feedback covers the linkage with Building Regulations and the standards to be met in this regard when installing mains wired smoke and heat detectors. There is also some feedback on how guidance can be improved, for example by incorporating additional siting and spacing information for detectors and for product/component standards to be incorporated in the regulations and guidance.

- 3.6 The Act creates new offences for which the Council will have to powers to issue fixed penalty notices. The Regulations propose a maximum fixed penalty of £500 for the offences relating to the alarms and £1000 for the Electrical Safety standards.
- 3.7 The Committee should note that the Smoke, Heat and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations are by negative resolution and can progress to be enacted after consultation but the Electrical Safety Standards Regulations will pause due to being draft Affirmative and will await the Assembly being reconvened to be progressed in that forum.

**The Smoke, Heat and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations(NI)**

- 3.8 The requirements under the above new regulations are as follows:
- There will be a lead in time of 12 months for landlords to comply.
  - Landlords will ensure there is a smoke alarm in the room which is most frequently used by the occupants for general daytime living purposes (normally the living room/lounge, except where the room includes an open kitchen) The definition of a room includes an integral garage.
  - Landlords will be required to ensure there is a smoke alarm in every circulation space (hall, stairs, landing or corridor) on each storey
  - Landlords will be required to ensure there is a heat alarm in every kitchen
  - Landlords will be required to ensure there is a carbon monoxide alarm installed in any room or circulation space of the dwelling-house which contains a fixed combustion appliance
  - Where the proximity of an open fireplace would make a smoke alarm impracticable, a heat alarm may be fitted.
  - Smoke and heat alarms must be interlinked, excluding carbon monoxide alarms:
  - Installed alarms which may either be hard wired or battery sealed or a combination of both
  - Smoke and heat alarms must be installed and maintained in accordance with British Standards BS 5839-6(b)

- Carbon monoxide alarms which must be installed and maintained in accordance with British Standards BS 50292(c)
- Battery sealed alarms should be tamper-proof units with long life batteries.
- Where a dwelling-house let under a private tenancy consists of a part of a building, the landlord may be required to position appliances in a part or parts of the building not comprised in the tenancy.

3.9 Enforcement of these proposed regulations will be via the option of the fixed penalty process, with a maximum penalty of £500 (set by the Council) or a maximum level 4 fine (£2500) imposed by the courts upon conviction.

It is proposed that the fixed penalty level offence is set by the Council at £500

3.10 Electrical Safety Standards Regulations (NI)

The requirements under the above new regulations are as follows;

- There will be a lead in time of 12 months for landlords to comply.
- The Regulations require landlords to have the electrical installations in their properties inspected and tested by a qualified person at an interval of at least every 5 years.
- Supply a copy of this report to the existing tenant within 28 days of the inspection and test.
- Supply a copy of this report to a new tenant before they occupy the premises.
- Supply a copy of this report to any prospective tenant within 28 days of receiving a request for the report.
- Supply the appropriate district council with a copy of this report within 7 days of receiving a written request for a copy.
- Retain a copy of the report to give to the inspector and tester who will undertake the next inspection and test.
- Where the report shows that further investigative or remedial work is necessary, complete this work within 28 days or any shorter period if specified as necessary in the report.
- Supply written confirmation of the completion of the further investigative or remedial works from the electrician to the tenant (and the appropriate district council within 28 days of completion of the works if linked to previous council intervention)

- District councils may, with the consent of the tenant, arrange to carry out remedial work in the following circumstances:
- If a landlord does not comply with a remedial notice.
- If the electrical safety inspection report indicates that urgent remedial action is required, and the landlord has not carried out the work within the period specified in the report.
- The district council can recover the costs incurred.

**3.11** Enforcement of these proposed regulations will be via the option of the fixed penalty process, with a maximum penalty of £1000 (set by the Council) or a maximum level 5 fine (£5000) imposed by the courts upon conviction.

**It is proposed that the fixed penalty level offence is set by the Council at £1000.**

**4.0 Financial and Resource Implications**

The new Regulations will provide Councils with additional enforcement powers to deal with issues in the private rented sector which will place resource demands on our existing resources. There is no financial support available from the Department for Communities (DfC) to assist Councils with these additional powers. The fixed penalty regime introduced for these offences may provide some income, but it will not cover the additional staffing and administrative resources required.

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

**None associated with this report.”**

The Members welcomed the Council's response to the Department for Communities- Consultation on Private Tenancies Act 2022 Section 8: (Smoke, Heat and Carbon Monoxide alarms) and Section 10:( Electrical Safety Standards), which had considered the new legislative powers to be enforced by Councils in relation to the private rented sector in these areas.

A Member stated that, whilst she welcomed the proposed new measures, she had reservations that the new Regulations did not cover Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) and single lets properties, as these were covered by separate legislation/guidance, and she requested that the Council highlight that it was not aware of any specific legislation/guidance in relation to single lets and asked officers to seek clarification in separate correspondence to the Department in respect of this matter.

In addition, in the absence of any other legislative provision to address the provision of Smoke, Heat and Carbon Monoxide alarms, and to ensure electrical safety standards in

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single let properties, the Council noted that it would welcome a review of the Department's position to ensure that tenants in single let properties were afforded the same degree of protection.

A Member highlighted that the current outdated Fitness Standard was not fit for purpose. This had previously been discussed at the January 2022 meeting of the People and Communities Committee, when it had considered the new provisions contained in The Private Tenancies Act (NI) 2022 and the Committee had agreed to write to the DfC at that time calling for it to be reviewed.

The Committee agreed:

- the Council's response to the consultation in respect of the above-mentioned regulations available [here](#), subject to the addition of a point highlighting that the Council was not aware of any specific equivalent legislation/guidance in relation to single lets and to seek clarification from the Department in respect of this matter in a separate letter of correspondence; and
- to also highlight to DfC the ongoing issues around the outdated Fitness Standard for private rentals and to call for a review of the legislation regarding the current fitness standards for tenants.

**Physical Programme and Asset Management**

**Shankill Bullring - Naming of New Park**

The Strategic Director advised that the new public park in the Lower Shankill was located at an area formally known as "The Bullring". The park was funded by the Department for Communities through its Building Successful Communities programme and comprised of:

- a MUGA;
- a play area for 0-3 years and 3-6 years;
- exercise equipment;
- self-contained community garden, including a toilet facility; and
- allotments.

The new park had opened to the public on 29th September 2023. He reminded the Committee that, at its August meeting, it had agreed to consult on three options for the name of the new park. A full public consultation had been undertaken using the Council's Your Say webpage between 20th September and 1st November 2023. A total of 901 responses had been received, with the breakdown as follows:

- Angel Park: 347 in favour (38.5%);
- Lower Shankill Park: 416 in favour (46.2%); and
- Rock Roots Park: 138 in favour (15.3%)

The Committee approved the name, Lower Shankill Park, for the new park at the Shankill Bullring.

**Naming of open space/playground at Moltke Street**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in September 2022, it had considered a report in relation to the open space/playground at Moltke Street, this had referred to the renaming of an existing playground adjacent to this open space. The Members were advised that this report should have referred to the open space and not the playground.

By way of clarity, the Members were asked to note that the open space would be named the Ruby Murray Village Green and that the playground adjacent would remain known as the Nubia Street Playground.

The Strategic Director confirmed that the Chair of the local Neighbourhood Partnership and other community representatives had been consulted and no issues had been raised.

The Members were also asked to note that an event to mark the naming of the park would be taking place later in the month and that this would include the planting of a tree and the relocation of an artwork to the park.

The Committee noted that the open space would be named the Ruby Murray Village Green and that the playground adjacent would remain known as the Nubia Street Playground.

**Operational Issues**

**Winter Preparedness Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on winter preparedness following a Notice of Motion (NOM) referred by Standards and Business Committee on 24/01/2023 requesting a Winter Preparedness Strategy to be presented by quarter 3 of this financial year. This report advises Members on measures taken by BCC and multiagency partners to support the people of Belfast over the winter period, specifically in terms of emergency planning and Age Friendly Belfast.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 That the committee considers and notes the arrangements in place for winter preparedness.**

**2.2 Members agree to the recommendation to permit DFI Rivers Staff access to Council land to complete necessary onsite maintenance of infrastructure, subject to relevant access agreements.**

**3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 Emergency Planning overview**

Belfast City Council has an emergency plan in place to prepare for, respond to and recover from all kinds of emergencies including severe winter weather. In addition, the regional severe weather plan is a multiagency approach to planning for, responding to and recovering from severe weather. These plans enable partner agencies to co-ordinate their response to and recovery from any severe winter weather.

**3.2 Council Site maintenance of grills and culverts**

DFI Rivers Staff are required to maintain grills and culverts upon Council lands acting within their statutory maintenance responsibilities. To facilitate this ongoing maintenance, an access agreement between Council and DfI to facilitate access is proposed.

**3.3 Community Resilience Group**

There are a number of community resilience groups in Belfast who are supported by multi agency partners to be better prepared for adverse weather, particularly relating to flooding. These community resilience groups have recently been re-engaged with, updating residents contacts details. Re-engagement includes awareness raising within these communities on existing resources including sandbag containers and equipment to help assist during adverse weather.

**3.4 Sandbag containers have been audited and continue to be replenished by multiagency partners including NIW, DfI Roads and DfI Rivers in preparation for winter. The sandbag containers have combination locks to improve speed of access by BCC staff or community volunteers when required. Locations of the sandbag containers are published on the Councilwebsite. <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Community/Community-Safety-and-Advice/Emergency-planning/Flooding-advice>**

**3.5 Snow clearance and salting**

DfI Roads continue their annual scheduled process of restocking grit boxes and also responding to requests through their online Public Interface Portal (PIP) - [Report an issue with ice or snow | nidirect](#). An agreement is in place between DfI Roads and Belfast City Council in which council resources can be used to treat predefined areas when prolonged severe icy conditions are

forecast. This protocol is triggered when a prolonged cold period is expected or experienced. The areas agreed include arterial routes into the city and streets in and around the city centre.

- 3.6 Members may recall a report agreed at People and Communities committee in February 2019 (Appendix 1) regarding the provision of salt for Members use in communities during prolonged severe winter weather. Small quantities of salt will be made available in council owned premises this winter, for Members' use in the community during prolonged, severe, high impact cold weather. Stocks of salt (25kg bags) will be made available at appropriate council community/leisure centres or other council sites. Higher elevations residential areas will be prioritised where icy conditions are more prevalent, and impacts are greater.

3.7 Information and Outreach

Links are in place with Age Friendly Belfast's multiagency group and homeless support groups to raise awareness when weather warnings are issued.

- 3.8 The winter emergency information has been updated on our BCC website which also contains a link to the NI Direct page: <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/community/community-safety-and-advice/advice/emergency-advice#495-2> Corporate Communications also have specific winter advice pages, which can be highlighted on the website and via BCC social media channels as required.

3.9 Age Friendly Belfast

Age Friendly Belfast hosts two seasonal planning meetings in May and November each year. Partners from community, voluntary and statutory organisations share their plans for the winter, raise any issues of concern and update contacts for communication of information in extreme weather. Some of the key projects to support older people over the winter are outlined below.

- 4.0 National Energy Action (NEA) co-ordinate the distribution of winter warmth packs provided by the Public Health Agency to local voluntary and community groups within Belfast. Individuals and organisations can make referrals for those at risk of living in fuel poverty. Contact National Energy Action on 028 9023009909 for further details. With continued high household energy costs remaining a concern, NEA continues to support vulnerable households via the Belfast Warm and Well project. See Appendix 2 for details and qualifying criteria.

- 4.1 Community and voluntary groups are hosting walks and other activities with older people in Autumn/Winter 2023. The ongoing Age Friendly activities provide activities to help tackle loneliness and isolation. Check-in schemes such as Good Morning schemes and local phone befriending will continue to provide important support for older people in the winter period.**
- 4.2 Age Friendly Belfast hosted a ‘Be Prepared’ drop in event on Tuesday 3rd October in 2 Royal Avenue, with a number of organisations offering advice on financial entitlements as well as ways to keep warm and well during the winter months.**
- 4.3 The Affordable Warmth Scheme is now being delivered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and referrals can be made through the Executive.**
- 4.4 Financial and Resource Implications**
- No financial or resource implications, being delivered within existing resources.**
- 4.5 Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessments**
- None.”**

A Member expressed concern at DfI’s current position not to grit footpaths and also around schools and asked that a letter be issued to the Department seeking an update on its proposed gritting programme for 2023/24 and asking it to extend its programme of works to include these areas.

A further Member highlighted that gritting did not take place around the area of Blythfield Park and Arellian Nursery School and officers agreed to investigate if this area could be added it to the Council’s programme of works and to update the Member accordingly.

During discussion, it was highlighted that on occasions salt and grit in the bins had gone hard and was therefore not useable and officers agreed to clarify if there was a system in place to monitor the usage of the bins and to establish whether the aggregate was fit for use.

A number of Members raised the availability of sandbags/salt and grit in their local areas and officers agreed to further investigate the provision in the greater falls areas, Dunville Park to be looked at as a possible location, Knocknagoney, Glen Darragh and the Cedar Grove areas and to update the Members accordingly.



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The Committee noted the proposed arrangements for winter preparedness and:

- granted authority for DfI Rivers Staff to access to Council land to complete necessary onsite maintenance of infrastructure, subject to the relevant access agreements; and
- agreed to write to DfI seeking an update on its proposed gritting programme and to ask it to consider adding schools to its programme of works and to reconsider its current position not to grit footpaths.

**Request for the use of a Park for 2024 event**

The Committee considered a request from Derriaghy District LOL No.11 seeking permission for the use of the Fullerton Park for the 12th July festivities. The purpose of the event was to celebrate the 334th Anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne with a parade, religious service and family fun day. There would be vendors attending the event to provide food and it was anticipated that a total of 3000 people would be in attendance.

The Committee granted authority to Derriaghy District LOL No.11 for the use of the Fullerton Park for the 12th July festivities and delegated authority to the Strategic Director of City Operations to ensure the following:

The Event Organisers:

- liaise with Council officers to ensure that all Health and Safety requirements are adhered to and an event management plan and risk assessment are produced that the Council is satisfied with; and
- work in partnership with Council staff, resolving any operational issues to the Council's satisfaction, including managing final booking confirmation dates and flexibility around 'set up' and 'take down' periods, and booking amendments.

The Committee noted that the above recommendations were taken as a pre-policy position, in advance of the Council agreeing a more structured framework and policy for events, which was currently being taken forward in conjunction with the Council's Commercial Team.

**Proposal for Dual Language Street Signs**

The Committee agreed to the erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at Ligoniel Place, Mountainhill Road, Norfolk Parade, Ladybrook Grove, Greenan and Alliance Avenue.

**Dual Language Street Sign  
Applications made by Developers**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

- 1.1 At the meeting of the People and Communities committee on 12th September it was agreed that a report would be brought to committee regarding requests for dual language nameplates made**

by developers of new streets. This followed a proposal from Cllr O'Neill provided below:

- 1.2 *“At present, there is no policy regarding Bilingual Signage for New Developments in the city. Developers or Housing Associations might make an ad-hoc request to the committee; however, there is no overarching policy.*

*Therefore, as a matter of practice, this council will amend its policy on naming a new street and will allow Developers/Housing Associations to request Bilingual signage as a part of their application for a new street, with the final sign-off being with the People and Communities Committee.”*

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the report and agree to the process for dual language street sign applications made by developers on new streets as outlined.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Key Issues

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 Dual Language Street Signs Policy, agreed in 2022, allows for an application for dual language nameplates in a new street to be made by a developer: -

*‘An application for the erection of a street sign in a language other than English may be made by an ‘Applicant’ which for purposes of this policy means: ... (c) a developer of a new street. Any application submitted by a developer with regard to a new street will be considered by the Council in accordance with Section 3(xi) of this policy.’*

- 3.3 Section 3(xi) of the policy states:

*“The Council will retain a residual discretion 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. 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.'*

3.4 The policy does not set out in detail how the applications would be processed, but states that applications would be considered in the order received. With the significant number of applications received, this would mean that any application received now from a developer of a new street would unlikely be considered until well after the street was occupied. However, dealing with a dual language street sign request at the same time as a street naming application is being considered for a new street may be appropriate and may result in efficiencies in terms of process and cost savings.

3.5 The legislation and policy state that the views of occupiers will be sought. Given there are no occupiers of the new street during development, no survey would be carried out. In the cases where a developer applies, the standard initial assessment would be carried out to assess if there are considered to be any potential adverse impacts on the grounds of equality or good relations.

3.6 Proposed process to be followed:

1. For the naming of the street in English, the standard procedure for requesting a street name would be followed, where the Building Control Service writes to the developer asking for the application to be submitted once the works on site have commenced.
2. The developer will have the option of also applying for dual language nameplates as part of this process.
3. The Building Control Service will process both requests together, including carrying out the initial assessment for the dual language application.
4. Elected Members will get notification of these applications through the normal process.

5. The translation will be requested from QUB as part of the processing of the application.
6. A committee report would be drafted to include the appropriate information for both street naming and dual language applications and presented to P&C committee for consideration. Where possible, this would include any information on existing dual language street signage in the adjoining streets, and any other relevant information from the initial assessment carried out
7. Members would consider the report in line with Section 3(xi) of the policy including any potential issues in relation to equality or good relations.

**3.7 Financial and Resource Implications**

If applications for dual language street nameplates are approved at the time of street naming in English, the developer would be responsible for erecting the nameplates and would cover the cost.

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

Applications for dual language nameplates made by developers would go through the standard initial assessment process to identify any potential adverse impact on the grounds of equality and good relations.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation at paragraph 2.0 of the report.

**Proposal for naming new streets and  
the continuation of an existing street**

The Committee approved the following applications for the naming of new streets and the continuation of an existing street:

<b>Proposed Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
Annalee Street	Off Alloa Street, BT14	Clanmil Housing Association
Hazel Way	Off Hazel Crescent, BT17	Toland House Properties

<b>Proposed Continuation of Existing Street</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
Hazel Drive	Between Lagmore Avenue and Lagmore View, BT17	Toland House Properties

**People and Communities Committee,  
Tuesday, 7th November, 2023**

**Christmas/New Year Waste  
Collections - Verbal Update**

The Director of Resources and Fleet advised the Members that a comprehensive article on waste and recycling, including dates for Bank Holiday Bin Collections over the Christmas and New Year period had been included within in most recent edition of City Matters. She also advised that all Elected Members would be emailed in due course regarding the Christmas/New Year waste collection arrangements.

The Director also took the opportunity to remind the Members that a site visit had been organised to Blackstaff Recycling Centre and a paper/card reprocessing plant, Huhtamaki Ltd in Dollingstown on Wednesday, 29th November.

It was agreed to extend this invitation to all Elected Members to ensure cross Party representation.

Noted.

Chairperson

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## City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 8th November, 2023

### HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Nic Bhranair (Chairperson);  
Alderman Lawlor;  
Councillors Bunting, Canavan, Douglas,  
Duffy, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Lyons,  
Maskey, McCormick, McDonough-Brown,  
McDowell, I. McLaughlin, McMullan, Murray  
and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;  
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration  
and Development; and  
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

#### **Apologies**

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors McAteer and McCabe.

#### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the 11th October were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st November, subject to the following additions:

- Under the heading Major Events Update, the Council agreed that Council officers would investigate the possibility of releasing tickets for the Christmas Switch On event in the evening of 8th November, as well as in the morning, to enable working families to apply; and
- Under the heading Correspondence from the Department for Infrastructure, the Council agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Department for Infrastructure to outline further requests.

#### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Nic Bhranair declared an interest in relation to agenda item (4.b) Mid - year Update on Make Yourself at Home Tourism Plan, on the basis that her employer was delivering the City Connections programme.

#### **Schedule of Meetings**

The Committee approved the schedule of meetings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee between January and December, 2024, as follows:

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,  
Wednesday, 8th November, 2023**

- Wednesday 10th January at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday 31st January at 5.15 pm (Special);
- Wednesday 7th February at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday 13th March at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday 27th March at 5.15 pm (Special);
- Wednesday 10th April at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday 8th May at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday 29th May at 5.15 pm; (Special);
- Wednesday 12th June at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday 7th August at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday 28th August at 5.15 pm (Special);
- Wednesday 11th September at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday 9th October at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday 23rd October at 5.15 pm (Special);
- Wednesday 6th November at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday 27th November at 5.14pm (Special); and
- Wednesday 4th December at 5.15 pm.

**Restricted Item**

**The information contained in the report associated with the following item was restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.**

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following item as, due to the nature of the item, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

**Vacant to Vibrant Scheme Update**

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided an update on the Vacant to Vibrant Programme and other complementary programmes outside the city centre, together with the recommendations from the Vacant to Vibrant assessment panel.

She also presented an overview on successful Vacant to Vibrant applicants to date.

During discussion, including comments from Members supporting the positive benefits of the scheme, the Director explained further the grant application process and vacancy rates. She highlighted that Key Performance Indicators were being implemented as part of the Future City Centre Framework.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the update in relation to the city centre Vacant to Vibrant Programme and other complimentary programmes outside of the



**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,  
Wednesday, 8th November, 2023**

city centre, including the Vibrant Business Destinations, Business and Cluster Community Grants and the information provided in the presentation which included an overview on successful Vacant to Vibrant applicants to date;

- Noted that a report would be submitted to the Committee on the two previous regeneration schemes which had been undertaken outside of the city centre, namely, the Renewing the Routes Scheme and the Dereliction Scheme, as agreed by Council in September 2023;
- Noted the update in relation to the Matchmaker Service aligned to the Vacant to Vibrant Programme and the updates on market activity in relation to new or relocating occupiers; and
- Agreed to the recommended grant award as outlined within Section 3.24 of the report.

**Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure**

**Future City Centre Programme:  
Revised Framework and Pragma Report**

The Committee considered the following report and associated appendices:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to:**

- Update Members on a refreshed Future City Centre (FCC) Programme based on previous recommendations from a refreshed Pragma Retail and Leisure Performance Strategy, ongoing stakeholder engagement and reflecting programmes, projects and activities underway across a number of inter-related areas.
- Seek approval to the proposed objectives and measurement indicators within the revised FCC Programme.

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- Note the contents of the report, including the important role the city centre plays for the wider city and region; the key findings of the refreshed Pragma Retail and Leisure Performance Strategy and updates on programmes of work and activity aligned to these recommendations.

- Note the progress in relation to shaping the Future City Centre Programme (FCC) and the updated City Centre governance structures.
- Approve the monitoring framework within the revised FCC Programme as attached at [Appendix 3](#) consisting of programme objectives and strategic indicators, noting that regular reports will be brought back to Committee on these measurement indicators.
- Note that Belfast does not receive the same level of specific regeneration funding programmes that other UK cities receive for city/town centres and high streets, as referenced below, and that a detailed report on this is to be brought to the SP&R Committee in the near future.

### **3.0 Background & Context**

- 3.1** Belfast and the city centre remains the economic driver for the region. The Regional Development Strategy 2035 recognises the need to enhance the distinctive role of the City Centre as the regional capital and the focus of administration, commerce, specialised services and cultural amenities. It highlights the need to support and strengthen the distinctive role of Belfast City Centre as the primary retail location in Northern Ireland.
- 3.2** The Belfast Local Development Plan highlights that Belfast city centre plays a significant role in the regional economy serving a wide catchment area beyond its plan area boundary. The city centre is also a regional centre for commerce, culture, tourism, recreation, entertainment, learning and employment, contributing £47million in non-domestic district rates (which represents 27% of all Belfast City Council's rates income). City centre jobs represent c33% of all Belfast jobs and 9.6% of all jobs in Northern Ireland. The success of the city as a whole is critically important, although like other UK cities, the city centre is viewed as the showcase for the wider city and the gateway for the region, supported by the major transport hubs serving the region. The diversification and inclusive economic growth of the city centre is crucial to Belfast's physical and economic development.
- 3.3** BCCRIS (Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy), the adopted regeneration policy for the city centre, recognises that the city centre is one of the most important places in the Region. The city centre is a place where investment impact can be maximised, where the majority of our rates are generated (per area) and therefore where momentum can be built to support inclusive growth in

Belfast's surrounding neighbourhoods. All communities in Belfast therefore have a direct interest in an inclusive economically thriving city centre. BCCRIS and A Bolder Vision both recognise the importance of connections to communities; this is a key theme throughout and includes both physical connectivity and ensuring that local people feel connected to the centre in a way that allows their full participation in its economic and social life.

- 3.4 Members will also recall that a report was brought to this Committee in March on the Regeneration Tracker which provided an overview of regeneration and development activity which took place across the city during 2022, as aligned to the Belfast Agenda and the policy areas within BCCRIS. This indicated positive progress across a range of asset classes and noted that in 2021/2022 there was a 2% growth in the rates base arising from additional development, which resulted in additional rates growth of £3.3m every year. However there remain a number of challenges impacting on the city centre including stalled regeneration schemes, poor public realm, limited city centre living, decline of certain high street retailers, lack of targeted regeneration funding programmes, severance with surrounding communities and a range of social issues.
- 3.5 The City Growth and Regeneration Committee in February 2020, noted the key findings and recommendations of a Retail Analysis, as developed by Pragma Consulting Limited; and the progress in relation to shaping a Future City Centre Programme that cut across various programmes of work and projects associated with regeneration, development, business, investment, cultural and vibrancy activities and operational issues. This included programme strands aligned to the Pragma Retail Analysis and Members had agreed that officers develop the Future City Centre Programme through engagement with city stakeholders. In April 2021, Members of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee received an update report on the Future City Centre Programme in the context of the ongoing challenges caused by the Covid – 19 Pandemic. The Committee noted the ongoing challenges of the city centre and its criticality to the recovery of the wider city and region as well as the need to adopt a multi-faceted approach to the re-imagination and recovery of the city centre.
- 3.6 The refresh of the Belfast Agenda was launched in April 2021 and continued most recently with the public consultation which closed on 2 October 2023. The city centre and its role in supporting the growth ambitions set out in the Belfast Agenda, as well as its importance as a place to visit, live, work

and invest in was highlighted by a large no of respondents. On the basis of this feedback from stakeholders and the public as a whole, the Future City Centre has emerged as a priority area within the 'Our Place' theme of the Belfast Agenda.

**3.7** In response to the emerging city centre issues, during 2022 a review was undertaken of existing mechanisms for engagement and improved governance to bring together the various city centre related facets and ensure synergy whilst avoiding duplication and silo approaches. Members will note this included the establishment of an All-Party Working Group on the City Centre which was approved by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 19 August 2022. The revised FCC Programme is aligned to the agreed city centre governance structures (included in [appendix 1](#)) which include:

- i. **Future City Centre Leadership Group** – a sub-group of the Belfast Agenda City Development Board which focuses on ensuring that issues are raised, and solutions achieved relating to the priorities for the Future City Centre Programme. Membership consists of representatives from a number of partners including BCC, city centre stakeholders including private sector, central government agencies, anchor institutions, Visit Belfast and BIDs and representation from the VCSE panel.
- ii. **Strategic Leadership Group (Complex Lives)** – A strategic and proactive partnership and multi-agency approach which brings together the NIHE, PHA, the Health and Social Care Board, Probation Board for NI, PSNI and Council, along with voluntary agencies. This is supported by a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) which meet on a weekly basis to understand the specific needs and to develop an individual support plan for the vulnerable person.
- iii. **Multi Agency Operational (tasking) Group** – this group seeks to address Clean, Green, Inclusive and Safe (CGIS) issues and overseeing the implementation of a CGIS action plan. Membership includes representatives from relevant government departments, PSNI Belfast Chamber, the city's three Business Improvement Districts and the NIHE.

**4.0** **Main Report**

**4.1** **Refreshed Retail and Leisure Performance Strategy**

As referenced above, in 2018/19, Pragma Consulting Ltd were commissioned to undertake a Retail Analysis of Belfast City

Centre to identify the challenges facing the city's retail sector and inform recommendations on how retail, leisure and supporting uses could drive the development of Belfast City Centre. This was previously considered by Committee and formed the basis of the Future City Centre Programme referenced above and agreed by Members as a basis for cross cutting themes of work for the city centre. Since then, a number of significant events such as the fire at Bank Buildings, Covid – 19 pandemic and global economic crisis have seen an acceleration of a number of trends identified within the report.

- 4.2 With Covid-19 having the potential for both short and long term change, the Council had recommissioned Pragma to revisit the findings to understand what has changed, and how the Council as an active stakeholder in the city centre, alongside other partners, can affect maximum positive change given the opportunities and resources available. It was recognised that there was a need to consider the purpose and functionality of the city centre and how it can adapt to becoming a multi-purpose location, combining retail and hospitality with business, residential, cultural, community and other facilities alongside new ways of working (hybrid/homeworking) and embracing innovation and digital technology. The key findings and recommendations from this recently refreshed work have informed various interventions, programmes and approaches that have being brought to this Committee for approval and noted to the City Centre All Party Working Group. A summary of key recommendations and an update on actions is attached in [Appendix 1](#).

4.3 **Future City Centre Programme**

The Future City Centre Programme, as previously agreed by Members, adopted a pillared approach across various thematic areas of regeneration and connectivity; business and investment; vibrancy and animation; clean green, inclusive and safe. The overall Programme has recently been recast to take into account the significant challenges brought about by the Bank Buildings fire, the Covid-19 pandemic, cost of living crisis and stakeholder feedback, as well as best practice advice and recommendations from external sources inc the refreshed Pragma Report 2022, Institute of Place Management, High Street Task Force etc.

- 4.4 The ethos of the FCC programme remains. However, this is now strengthened by the collectively (BCC, DfI, DfC and significant stakeholder and public input) developed blueprint for the city centre through A Bolder Vision, with key principles

around removing severance and barriers to movement between the centre of Belfast and the surrounding communities to improve access for all; facilitating city centre living; importance of a strong civic spine and enhancing the waterfront. A Bolder Vision embedded within the FCC programme presents a significant opportunity to ensure the restoration of a sense of collective pride in the centre of the city by the communities within and around it.

- 4.5 The revised and recast FCC framework has been brought about by a comprehensive programme of research and engagement. It reflects feedback from Elected Members of the City-Centre All Party Working Group during meetings held in late 2022 and early 2023. It is also a result of significant inter-departmental working to ensure joint working with all the relevant divisions in the Council, such as Economic Development, Culture, Tourism, Planning, Building Control, Climate, Smart Cities, Property & Projects, City Regeneration and Development, CNS and Strategic Hub.
- 4.6 The revised FCC Framework (attached in [Appendix 2](#)) was adopted by the City Centre All Party Working Group on 08 September 2023. It is aligned to the longer term ambitions of the refreshed Belfast Agenda and Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS). The revised FCC Framework Vision to create:

*‘A vibrant, unique and thriving place where people spend time, live, work, visit and invest’.*

- 4.7 As set out in the Framework ([Appendix 2](#)), this is supported by eight programme objectives, measured by 14 strategic indicators and underpinned by work within five thematic pillars, as below. The programmes of work and activities included in each pillar are not exhaustive and many involve other partners but they are intended to reflect the broad range of activities that are ongoing and are managed and reported via programme and project management arrangements for the various strands:

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Regeneration & Connectivity	Business & Investment	Animation & Distinctive Offering	Clean, Green, Inclusive & Safe	Vulnerability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major regeneration schemes</li> <li>BRCD projects including Belfast Stories</li> <li>City Centre Living / Houseing-led regeneration</li> <li>Connectivity and Active Travel</li> <li>Connected spaces &amp; places</li> <li>Vacant-to-Vibrant capital grant programme</li> <li>Matchmaking service to address vacancy</li> <li>A Bolder Vision</li> <li>Preservation of built heritage</li> <li>Environmental improvements</li> <li>Cathedral Gardens redevelopment</li> <li>Waterfront promenade framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business support programmes</li> <li>Attracting new-to-market brands</li> <li>City Investment Service</li> <li>Business tourism - conference subvention</li> <li>Night-time economy</li> <li>Business premises for cultural organisations/creative industries</li> <li>Test trading at markets</li> <li>Positioning the city to compete</li> <li>Maximising international opportunities in FDI, trade and education</li> <li>Smart Belfast programme</li> <li>Belfast Smart District</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2024 Year of Culture Projects</li> <li>Cultural animation activities and events, pop-up activities</li> <li>2 Royal Avenue programming</li> <li>UNESCO City of Music/ music strategy implementation</li> <li>Meanwhile uses</li> <li>Lighting Interventions</li> <li>Night-time economy</li> <li>Food and drink tourism</li> <li>City Hall exhibition including Augment the City experience</li> <li>Street dressing/ street art</li> <li>Annual events programme</li> <li>City markets</li> <li>Belfast HUB-IN at Maritime Mile</li> <li>Belfast Stories visitor attraction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced city centre cleansing regimes and tackling graffiti</li> <li>City centre cleanliness charter</li> <li>Safer Neighbourhood Officer city centre patrols</li> <li>ASB Officer advice/guidance</li> <li>Imagining use of open and civic spaces (support retail/hospitality sectors).</li> <li>Support the provision of parklets and greening the city initiatives.</li> <li>EVC strategy</li> <li>Tourism Accessibility Programme</li> <li>Green Tourism Accreditation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue multi-stakeholder approach to support alcohol and drug addiction, and rough sleeping.</li> <li>Delivery of Complex Lives (whole systems and people-centred approach)</li> </ul>

Cross-cutting enablers: Local Development Plan; Digital innovation; Inclusive Growth; Sustainability & Resilience; Development of a robust evidence base providing objective data on the above indicators and measures - to be used to inform the development of future actions; Taking an 'evidence led approach' by utilising best practice and corporate membership of IPM; and Legislation - Reform of licensing

#### 4.8 **Strategic Indicators**

As part of recent engagement, officers have identified a range of strategic indicators (across areas such as footfall, investment, tourism spend etc) as set out in the enclosed Framework which will be used to track the progress of the FCC programme objectives over the longer term. Work is ongoing to collate this data and develop appropriate monitoring mechanisms for all metrics. A technical report has been included at [Appendix 3](#), which provides further information on each of the indicators including its definition, source and performance data. Officers will report progress on these indicators on a regular basis.

4.9 The revised framework also includes performance measures, drawing on Outcomes Based Accountability thinking, whereby the vision, objectives and indicators refer to the population accountability for the entire city; and then the 'pillars' relate to performance accountability which link to individual workstreams that the council delivers or has a key role in.

#### 4.10 **Funding & Investment in Belfast**

While Belfast has experienced strong growth across some sectors there is significant public and private sector investment required to deliver on the outcomes of the Belfast Agenda. Belfast has experienced several years of in-year capital budgets from central government, limiting and removing the ability to deliver the required capital

infrastructure investment to support the sustainable, diversification of the city centre. This lack of major Executive capital investment is further compounded when considered in conjunction with the fact that other UK cities are eligible for significant funding directly aligned to city /town centre regeneration that NI cities /towns are not eligible for. These include specific regeneration funding streams available in other UK cities inc the High St Fund, the Better Towns Fund, Brownfield Fund etc and the absence of these dedicated funding streams provides a significant disadvantage to Belfast in terms of competing with other UK & Ireland city/ town centres and High Streets, but also in terms of dealing with, and recovering from economic shocks such as the Pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. A further report on this will be brought to a future meeting of this Committee and the SP&R Committee.

**5.0 Financial and Resource Implications**

The revised Future City Centre Programme only identifies existing programmes and workstreams that are already covered from existing budgets. As highlighted above, non-domestic district rates from the city centre contributes £47 million or 27% of the council's total rates income.

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

**Each workstream and/or programme and project will be separately equality screened as per our statutory requirements."**

During discussion, Members highlighted the positive indicators for change within the city centre and were encouraged by the information within the report. Members requested that the following issues be considered for inclusion within the Framework: The importance of gateways across the city and removing barriers that create a severance to local communities and the arterial routes; Public Toilet access; Best Practice; The inclusion of PM<sub>2.5</sub> as an indicator in the air quality in the City Centre monitoring Framework. The Director for City Regeneration and Development confirmed that work was ongoing through the framework on these issues and highlighted that a key element of A Bolder Vision for Belfast was re-imaging the Inner Ring, ending car dominance and removing severance to communities. She pointed out that, through the Clean, Green, Safe and Inclusive strand, colleagues in the City and Neighbourhood Services were considering the provision of public toilets and would report directly to the People and Communities Committee. The Director also confirmed that the inclusion of PM<sub>2.5</sub> was being incorporated into the air quality monitoring criteria.



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After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the contents of the report, including the important role the city centre plays for the wider city and region; the key findings of the refreshed Pragma Retail and Leisure Performance Strategy and updates on programmes of work and activity aligned to these recommendations;
- Noted the progress in relation to shaping the Future City Centre Programme (FCC) and the updated City Centre governance structures;
- Approved the monitoring framework within the revised FCC Programme ([Appendix 3](#)) consisting of programme objectives and strategic indicators and to the inclusion of the additional issues which had been raised by the Committee, noting that regular reports would be submitted to the Committee on these measurement indicators; and
- Noted that Belfast did not receive the same level of specific regeneration funding programmes that other UK cities received for city/town centres and high streets, as referenced in the report, and that a detailed report on this would be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in the near future.

**All Party Round Table on Connectivity,  
Active and Sustainable Travel**

The Committee was provided with an overview of the All Party Round Table on Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel which had taken place on 30th August, 2023.

It was reported that the session had enabled Members to explore the various stands of work ongoing across the organisation and with partners to ensure that the Council could effectively position itself in terms of what it could deliver, who it needed to work with and what it needed to influence to realise the wider associated benefits of connecting people to opportunities and creating a better connected and sustainable city.

In particular, the session looked at how this work cuts across various Committees and via the Community Planning process and provided an overview ([Appendix A](#)) of the streams of work underway, which enabled Members to see all this work holistically and how it feeds into the Council's strategic priorities and governance structures. This included the work being taken forward within the Community Planning structures via the Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel subgroup as part of the Belfast Agenda refresh and through the Climate and Resilience Board as well as Council led Physical Programme projects, A Bolder Vision and the strategic and large-scale infrastructure projects being led by public and private sector city partners.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development highlighted that Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel were integrated levers that cut across city stakeholders, including the Council, DfI and other Government departments, Sustrans, Translink,

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communities, businesses and anchor institutions and spanned across a number of strategic, policy and delivery areas including:

- The Local Development Plan and the Eastern Transport Plan (ETP);
- Belfast Agenda and A Bolder Vision;
- Council's capital delivery programme;
- Modal shift/behavioural change projects; and
- Net Zero Roadmap for Belfast.

A key focus of discussion had included the relationship of the ETP to other large priority schemes such as Belfast Streets Ahead, Glider Phase 2 and the key Junctions (Peter's Hill, Frederick Street, Clifton Street), with particular focus on the need to deliver the Belfast Cycling Network across the city.

She reminded the Committee that the Council had submitted a response to the DfI consultation on the Eastern Transport Plan as agreed by the Committee in October and encouraged Members to continue to engage in the development of this critical strategic document.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that other issues raised included the content within the Belfast Agenda's draft Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel Action Plan, including active travel for school children, play streets and school streets and opportunities to share and learn from best practice, for example, through Eurocities.

She pointed out that Members had also been advised of the work which had been undertaken by the CAST group (co-chaired by Sustrans and Translink) and the draft plan had been developed through a co-design process led by this group. Following public consultation on the draft Belfast Agenda, partners would consider potential revisions to the suite of Action Plans before final publication. It was intended that all action plans would remain dynamic, and delivery will be through respective subgroups.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development stated that it had been agreed that Members would feed the information discussed at the Round Table to their respective parties and that a copy of the presentation was attached at [Appendix A](#). She highlighted that it had also been agreed that the Round Table would reconvene on a future date to enable further discussion on the issues and to provide an opportunity for Members to feed into the work of the Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel sub-group within the Community planning structures. It was proposed that the next meeting would take place after the Belfast Agenda Action Plans were updated and invitations would be issued to the Party Group Leaders to nominate a representative.

The Committee:

- Noted the contents of the report in relation to the All Party Round Table meeting and the opportunity to shape the Belfast Agenda Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel Action Plan; and

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- Agreed that future sessions would take place to provide an opportunity for Members to have a focused and informed discussion around this strategic priority.

**Positioning the City to Compete**

**Northern Ireland Enterprise Support  
Service Update**

The Committee was reminded that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting in February, had agreed that Belfast City Council should lead on the submission of the application to UKSPF (Shared Prosperity Fund) for the 11-council Enterprise Support Service (ESS) model. It had also been agreed that the Council should lead on the future development and delivery of the service, subject to additional due diligence and risk management work being undertaken.

It was reported that a further update had been presented to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in August providing additional detail on the progress to date on the procurement process and the funding drawdown and identifying an emerging risk due to delays in issuing the funding agreement/MoU by DLUHC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities). In early September 2023, officers had received the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) setting out the terms and conditions of the funding offer and this was signed by the Chief Executive.

The Director of Economic Development advised that, having received the MoU, officers were able to proceed with the appointment of the contractors for the delivery of services to businesses, as well as the provision of support services such as marketing and communications and call handling. Following completion of the procurement process, successful contractors included:

- Engage and Foundation – Enterprise NI and Partners;
- Growth and Scaling – Derry City and Strabane District Council and Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council – Deirdre Fitzpatrick and Associates;
- Growth and Scaling – Belfast City Council – Full Circle Management Solutions;
- Growth and Scaling – Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, Mid Ulster District Council and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council – Full Circle MS;
- Growth and Scaling – Antrim and North Down Borough Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Newry Mourne and Down District Council – Full Circle MS;
- Growth and Scaling – Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council and Mid and East Antrim Borough Council – Mallusk Enterprise Park;
- Telehandling – Like Us NE; and
- Communications and Marketing – Ardmore.

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He informed the Committee that, following mobilisation of contracts across a number of work strands, it was expected that the go live date for service delivery would take place in early November. Given delays in issuing the MoU, officers were working with contractors to identify how the Council could maximise the delivery of the service while acknowledging that not all support services and resources were yet fully functional.

He advised that, as part of the mobilisation period, work had been undertaken to develop a new brand for the new service. The scoping exercise consisted of detailed surveys, focus groups and stakeholder workshops which led to the creation of a new brand/logo, 4 sub brands and brand guidelines.

He outlined the selected brand Proposition as follows:

*‘Go Succeed NI Business Support is a service to help potential entrepreneurs, new starts and existing businesses to maximise their potential and contribute to Northern Ireland’s economy. It provides would-be and existing businesses with flexible, tailored and easily accessible advice and support at any stage of their growth journey.’*

He explained that the brand Value is that Go Succeed was the go-to source of easily accessible advice and support for anyone starting or growing their business in NI.

He highlighted that, to accommodate marketing messages aimed at the widest possible range of businesses, and to allow for promotion of the specific support offerings applicable to each level, a set of Go Succeed sub brands had been created.

He advised that the formal launch of the brand and the new service was scheduled to take place on the 13th November in Belfast City Hall to mark the start of Global Entrepreneurship week.

The Director of Economic Development reported that, as part of the funding application to DLUHC, resources were secured for a number of staff roles in order to support programme delivery and provide appropriate management and oversight for funders and all council partners.

He reminded the Committee that the service was being funded through the new Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). This was the DLUHC fund that was established as a replacement for EU funding (ERDF and ESF). One strand of funding focused on ‘Supporting Local Business’. The Investment Plan for UKSPF in Northern Ireland was launched in December 2022. At that time, the Plan proposed that a central component of the Supporting Local Business strand would be the 11 council Enterprise Support Service. An indicative financial allocation of £17million - £12million programme delivery and £5million for small grants – was set aside for the service. UKSPF funding was available to March 2025 so the initial programme period would run from Autumn 2023 to March 2025.

He stated that the new service represented the ambition of all local authorities to deliver on our statutory responsibility around business start-up in a way that would make a real change over time, by working to address cultural attitudes towards entrepreneurship

and helping more businesses to start, grow and scale across the region. It could directly support the Belfast Agenda targets for job creation and economic growth and could also provide an important engagement mechanism to enhance business interaction with key investments, including those supported through City Deal.

The Committee noted the update on the Northern Ireland Entrepreneurship Support Service (ESS) and the planned go-live date for the new intervention and launch.

**Mid -Year Update on Make Yourself at Home Tourism Plan**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a mid-year update on progress against the Belfast - *Make Yourself at Home* Tourism Plan Year 2 Action Plan 2023/2024 Tourism and Events, including bids for large-scale events.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 Members are asked to:**

**Note the contents of this mid-year update report on Tourism and Events Year 2 Action Plan 2023/2024.**

**3.0 Main Report**

- 3.1 Driving the success of our leisure and business tourism market in Belfast is the ten year *Make Yourself at Home* Tourism Plan which was approved by Council and launched along with the Year 1 implementation plan in March 2022. Year Two of that implementation plan was approved by Council in April 2023 and this report will update members on what has been delivered at this mid-way point in the financial year.**

- 3.2 The *Make Yourself at Home* Tourism Plan sets out a vision for the future of tourism in the city that is centred on a people-based and sustainable model of development with a focus on:**

- Increasing the coherency of the Belfast experience**
- Supporting quality authentic products**
- Developing skills**
- Strengthening the city’s position through marketing and communications**

- 3.3 The plan sets out a shared vision for tourism in the city and is supported by 4 strategic themes:**

- Grow Belfast
- Experience Belfast
- Position Belfast
- Sustain Belfast

All four of these strategic themes are underpinned by the need to support inclusive economic growth and to differentiate the Belfast offer in an increasingly competitive global marketplace. A fifth strand to the plan considers key strategic opportunities that could bolster investment in the sector to support recovery and future growth.

**3.4 Strategic theme 1: Grow Belfast**

The following activity has been delivered against the theme of *Grow Belfast*:

- 3.5 Visit Belfast - Management of the Visit Belfast contract in respect of the delivery of marketing, destination management and visitor servicing - to deliver on increased visitor numbers staying longer and spending more, thereby supporting tourism jobs, economic impact and social benefits across Belfast. Monitoring the delivery of KPIs set for marketing of Belfast as leisure & business tourism destination. We have delivered a five-year extension of the Lease Sharing Agreement with Visit Belfast and a three-year sharing agreement with Translink for the operation of a ticketing desk within the Belfast Welcome Centre.**

Visit Belfast will update Officers in December 2023 on mid-year progress. A synopsis of current high-level data available for the year to date is as follows:

- Through its activities, Visit Belfast has generated circa £35 million for the local economy to date, generating an economic impact of £11 million through dealing with 477,424 enquiries and £26 million through winning 77 conferences, equating to 55,543 bed nights and 20,819 delegates.
- Throughout 2023, Visit Belfast has delivered four campaigns, generating a minimum economic impact of £21 million, including a City Branding and Marketing campaign in the lead up to, and duration of, the global One Young World Belfast Summit.
- Visit Belfast has also won a number of awards throughout the year, with the Business Tourism Team

securing the Conference and Incentive Travel Award for Best Conference Destination for the 3rd year in a row and the Meeting Industry Award for Destination Team of the Year for the 2nd year in a row. The Visitor Servicing Team also secured the NI Travel and Tourism Award for Best Tourist Information Centre for the 19th time.

- Visit Belfast is now ranked joint second for the best performing DMMO out of 100 destinations and Belfast is ranked 11th out of 100 city destinations, increasing the city's overall score by 2% this year in the Global Destinations Sustainability Index.

### **3.6 Conference Subvention Programme**

Members will be aware that in January 2021, Council agreed ongoing support for Conference Support in line with an updated criteria and support to ensure that Belfast, including ICC can compete internationally as a business tourism destination to win conferences for Belfast in an everchanging marketplace. This fund, which is match - funded by our partner Tourism NI, has ensured that Belfast, including ICC, remains competitive as a business tourism destination.

Officers continue to deliver the Conference Subvention Programme in partnership with Tourism NI and Visit Belfast. In the first 6 months of this year, our subvention scheme has contributed to supporting business tourism with an economic impact of £18 million, equating to 32,000 bednights and 12,000 delegates.

### **3.7 Strategic Theme 2: Position Belfast**

The following activity has been delivered against the theme of *Position Belfast*:

### **3.8 Positioning of Belfast in national and international Markets and Gateway role of Belfast for Visitors**

Officers have been working with Visit Belfast, Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland to strengthen the position of Belfast in national and international markets through marketing campaigns and PR activity. Work has included ensuring that Belfast is positioned as a Gateway city, a must-see urban destination on the island of Ireland by capturing GB and ROI city break market and attracting a greater share of out of state visitors to Ireland - primarily through contract management of Visit Belfast targeting leisure and business visitors.

3.9 Media Monitoring - Officers are exploring how we can implement media monitoring to measure the impact of positioning, consumer sentiments and changing perceptions which will be delivered by end March 2024, in partnership with NI Tourism Alliance and Tourism NI and other strategic partners. This will assist us in future planning for tourism and enable more accurate targeting of marketing, PR and social media campaigns.

3.10 Establish Research baselines, dashboard & examine digital opportunities for data capture - Officers are working with colleagues in Policy and research, Tourism NI, the NI Statistics and Research Agency and Tourism Ireland, to explore opportunities that will enable us to measure the impact of tourism both economically and socially for Belfast as there are sizeable gaps in the data currently available.

3.11 Strategic theme 3: Experience Belfast

The following has been delivered against the theme of *Experience Belfast*.

3.12 Neighbourhood Tourism Programme

This was approved by Committee in June 2023, with an investment of £500,000 in a 2-year programme to develop and enhance market-led tourism products and experiences across the city, with a view to sharing the benefits of a vibrant tourism sector throughout local neighbourhoods. The Investment Programme includes interim funding support for the City Connections programme until the end of current financial year.

Scoping of the Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme continues to support development of market-led cultural tourism products. The programme aims to promote enhanced visitor footfall, dwell time and spend across the city's neighbourhoods and extend tourism's economic and social benefits to communities throughout the city.

Work has been undertaken on draft guidance notes, application form, scoring matrix and potential FAQs in preparation for an 'open call'.

Work is also underway to commence a period of sectoral developmental engagement to inform the parameters of the Programme, identify needs, gaps and opportunities and consider alignment of the City Connections Programme.



This will be delivered through the appointment of an independent facilitator to undertake sectoral engagement and audit activity to inform and support the Programme's investment criteria, whilst continuing to strategically align with 'Belfast Stories'. Timeline for this engagement is from November through to February, with recommendations brought back to Committee end March.

### **3.13 City Connections**

The Tourism Investment Programme includes interim funding to two organisations (Fáilte Feirste Thiar in West Belfast and EastSide Tourism in East Belfast) to support their City Connections programme until the end of the current financial year. Both organisations are currently delivering on their agreed action plans.

### **3.14 Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Programme**

Officers continue to roll-out this programme which improves visitor accessibility to tourism facilities, products, and services. A Year 2 programme to deliver further training, which will strengthen skills and capacity building within the tourism sector to improve the accessibility of Belfast's tourism offer and increase the spend of the 'purple pound' is under way, aiming to support a minimum of 50 businesses this year.

The work undertaken to date will be consolidated in the next 6 months as Officers will:

- Submit a sponsorship proposal to Tourism NI to secure financial support for the implementation of the programme.
- Deliver an Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Seminar where experts and activists in access and inclusion will share their expertise with a target audience of 60 businesses including decision makers, policy makers and influencers.
- Development of 3 new online training programmes/assets that will be available free of charge to industry partners.
- Delivery of 2 free Living Library Accessible and Inclusive Workshops.
- A new industry engagement video profiling best practice to industry leaders and decision makers measured via audience viewers and engagement.

- 2 new public facing accessible and inclusive tourism video itineraries.
- Assets developed and those in the pipeline will be adapted to be included and promoted on the new Tourism NI eLearning Platform.
- All above will be delivered by a newly established Lived Experienced Team of individuals with a range of disabilities to ensure authenticity; and there will be ongoing consultation with the tourism industry and partners to ensure actions meet need and demand; and we have set up a new advisory group which will ensure that the impact of resources is maximised.

### **3.15 Food and Drink Tourism Programme**

Work on this programme has been progressing against this workstream with the following update:

- Establishment of the Belfast Food and Drink Network representing 16 businesses. Further collaboration will take place to progress the programme.
- Submission of a successful application to the NI Regional Food Programme .administered by the Department of Agriculture, Rural Affairs and the Environment. 40% towards total project cost has been offered.
- New positioning guidance for marketing and promotion of Belfast as a leading food and drink destination which has attracted in - kind support to a value of £10k from Visit Belfast.
- Development of 4 industry workshops to include two learning journeys to regional producers and networks building towards a 'meet the buyer' event in March 2024, with the aim to develop new business leads between city providers and producers.
- Delivery of a high-quality, sustainable, local Food and Drink Village at the Belfast Maritime Festival held in September 2023. The diverse offering generated a lucrative economic return for local businesses and producers. The village strengthened our status as a leading culinary destination, garnered positive feedback from our visitors and provided an exemplar visitor experience for all.
- Work has commenced to develop a new Dynamic Purchasing System for the provision of quality and sustainable food and drink at future events and festivals.

- Work has been ongoing with Belfast 2024 to ensure our food and drink offering will align with the aims and ambitions of the Food and Drink Tourism Plan.
- Preliminary scoping work has been undertaken to enable us to work towards our aspiration to achieve an international culinary accreditation/award.

**3.16 Audit of and Production of Development Plans to enhance the Visitor Experience at Council- owned Tourism Assets**

*Make Yourself at Home* identified the need for Council to utilise existing assets across the city to drive the visitor experience. Officers have been working with our colleagues across Council on background scoping of a Terms of Reference. This has been completed to secure expertise to undertake an audit and make recommendations for the enhancement of the visitor experience at Council-owned assets including Belfast Zoo, Belfast Castle, Tropical Ravine, City Cemeteries, Malone House, Ulster Hall, St George's Market and City Hall. It will be issued to market in the coming weeks through an open tender, with the aim to deliver a prioritised action plan for future implementation which creates synergy with the city's 'Belfast brand' and Tourism NI 'Embrace A Giant Spirit' brand to deliver on experiential tourism, thereby ensuring we enhance Belfast's reputation as a visitor destination and to deliver on our aim to increase visitor satisfaction, spend and longer stays.

This work will be delivered through extensive consultation with our colleagues across Council, strategic tourism partners and the tourism industry and preliminary findings which will make recommendations regarding how Council assets can contribute to the visitor experience in Belfast will be brought to Committee at end March 2024.

**3.17 Belfast Visitor Pass**

Officers have worked with input from stakeholders including Tourism NI and Visit Belfast, to finalise an agreed Terms of Reference to develop a feasibility study to benchmark against other cities and to scope the potential and options for a tourism visitor pass similar to what operates in other cities. This is being progressed through the engagement of expertise to work with visitor attractions and transport providers to provide recommendations of viable options for the delivery of a Visitor Pass for Belfast by end March 2024.

**3.18 Enhancing the Visitor Experience**

Work is progressing with an experienced provider to develop and implement a phased, prioritised Visitor Experience Action Plan to enhance the visitor experience across the city over the next decade and outline key tourism projects which may be suitable for development and introduction to market within 1 year, 2 years and 5 years. The action plan will be completed by March 2024.

**3.19 Visitor Signage, Wayfinding, Street Dressing**

The Tourism Plan identified the need for improvements in connectivity and accessibility through signage, wayfinding and interpretation. To maximise market opportunities and ensure that interventions will address long-term sectoral needs, there is a requirement to undertake an audit of visitor signage and city dressing. The audit will inform what investment is required to upgrade, update and future-proof our visitor signage, with particular consideration to be given to the use of appropriate digital mechanisms, as well as investment into city dressing. Officers are working on a brief for a scoping exercise to be undertaken in the coming months which will provide a detailed investment recommendation and action plan, with a report on outcomes and recommendations to be presented to Committee in the period January / February 2024.

**3.20 Strategic theme 4: Sustain Belfast**

The following has been delivered against the theme of *Sustain Belfast*:

**3.21 Global Destination Sustainability Index**

Members will be aware that following Committee approval in August 2020, Belfast signed up to the Global Destination Sustainability Index, which is one of the world's leading benchmarking and performance Index for cities, their events, and their visitor economy. It's purpose is to engage, enable and inspire cities to become more sustainable places to visit, meet and thrive in. In addition to benchmarking a city's environmental strategy and social sustainability performance, the GDS-Index assess criteria that are industry specific: industry supplier support (restaurants, hotels, conference centres) and convention bureau strategy and initiatives.

**3.22 The Index is based on 69 Indicators broken down into four categories:**

- City Environmental Performance
- City Social Performance
- Supplier Performance
- Destination Management Performance

Officers have worked with Visit Belfast and a range of partners and Belfast has now completed its third year of benchmarking resulting in being rated 11<sup>th</sup> out of 100 destinations, increasing year on year score by 2% and maintaining our place within the top 20 cities. This assists in ensuring Belfast is globally competitive in securing conferences and business events for Belfast, resulting in associated economic benefit and sectoral support. We will be working with our colleagues in the Resilience Team, Visit Belfast, TNI and industry partners to encourage continuous improvement to ensure that Belfast is a sustainable tourism destination.

**3.23 Green Tourism Accreditation**

Officers have supported and enabled the tourism industry to commence their sustainability journey to increase their sustainability credentials through the implementation of the Green Tourism Accreditation Programme. It provides access to the GreenChecktool, enabling tourism businesses including accommodation, hospitality providers, events and attractions to complete assessments and take steps to achieve accreditation. Cultural organisations and festivals also have access to the programme. This has resulted in 75% of hotel rooms in Belfast being accredited, 100 businesses are now members of Green Tourism of which 50 have completed accreditation and we are continuing to work with a range of tourism providers to encourage them to gain their bronze accreditation. Visit Belfast is working towards achieving it's silver accreditation.

Officers are working with key stakeholders to ensure that sustainability is embedded in tourism products, experiences and events across the city. We will be continuing to work with the supply chain to incentivise change programmes and raise awareness of the importance of sustainability.

**3.24 City Events**

At April 2023 Committee, Members agreed the Year 2 Action Plan of Event Delivery against *Make Yourself at Home* - The 6-

month update against these targets and deliverables is as follows:

- 1 large - scale city event (Maritime Festival) delivered attracting local audiences and out of state visitors, with two to follow (Christmas 2023 and St Patrick's Day 2024).
- Maritime Festival successfully delivered in September 2023, including an audience of 80,000, securing TNI funding of £60,000. In lieu of a large-scale creative piece (Council decision), a Maritime village including craft, food and science fair was delivered as part of the wider programme.
- The out of state marcomms reach was 6,764,000 impacts with the overall Visit Belfast campaign being over 9.5 million impacts. Organic social media on Facebook also had 58,811 Impressions.
- Our Corporate Communications team ran an extensive successful local campaign including newspapers. A Translink T-side campaign also targeted 464,030 people.
- 41% of visitors from elsewhere in NI.
- 10% from GB & ROI.
- 14% stayed in accommodation.
- The Estimated Direct Visitor Spend was £1,326,839.
- 74% of visitors gave the festival an overall 8-10, including 25% who rated it as 'Extremely Good'.
- 97% of visitors said that the Maritime Festival improves Belfast's reputation as a host for events like these and improves the reputation of Belfast as a place to visit.
- 97% agreed that there should be more events like this in Belfast.
- Debrief report and Developmental Action plan to follow in coming months for Committee approval.
- Christmas 2023 - after consideration of event health and safety considerations and programming options as brought by Officers, Members have agreed to the traditional format and Officers have continued to research initiatives with local creatives to enhance co-design of creative offering. Event planning and developmental work continues with all relevant stakeholders.
- St Patrick's Day 2024 - Officers continue to progress delivery via tender of the new model and associated commissioning approach to the creative sector to ensure delivery of elements such as parade, music programme and community engagement. Good Relations Unit have advised there will be no budget

enhancement available for the 2024 event. A marketing campaign is currently being scoped.

- Lord Mayor's Day 2023 delivered with engagement of the Lord Mayor's Networks. Debrief report previously brought back to Committee.
- Eurovision - event delivered in May 2023 in 2RA through provider Maywe and Council engaged in a UK wide partnership approach, led by the BBC. Debrief report previously presented to Committee.
- International Events - As part of the international events programme for 2025-2028, Officers continue to participate in the ongoing bidding process for Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann for 2026 and beyond (Members have been provided with regular update reports in-year on this).
- Euro 2028 has been secured as part of a 5 Nation Bid (regular reports have been provided and a further report will be provided before the end of the financial year when the governance and human and financial resourcing has been more clearly mapped). Members will also be aware of the ongoing bid for the Oireachtas na Samhna (report previously presented to Committee in-year).
- A collaborative programming approach continues to be adopted to the Council managed portfolio of events intertwined with bidding and securing international events.
- One Young World - this event was successfully delivered by the Tourism and Events Team with summit partners during October 2023, with 2,200 delegates and corporates in attendance from over 190 countries which profiled Belfast on an international stage through world media and was a memorable week for all involved. Debrief and Evaluation collateral continues to be collated and a full debrief report will be brought to Committee in the second half of the financial year.
- Sports Events Grants continue to support local organisations with 9 organisations funded within - year.
- Belfast 2024 - scoping continues across the Tourism and Events Team to work with colleagues in Belfast 2024 to plan and support the delivery of Belfast 2024.
- The Events Unit continues to scope the governance requirements across the city in relation to both the council managed events portfolio and international events bid programme in conjunction with stakeholders.

**3.25 Financial and Resource Implications**

**There are currently no immediate new financial implications to this report. Further detail on proposals for investment in local tourism will be presented to Committee in due course.**

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

**There are currently no immediate new financial implications to this report. Neighbourhood Tourism is currently progressing through equality screening.”**

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development explained further the stakeholder engagement and media monitoring to ensure there would not be duplication across the Tourism agencies.

In relation to a Member’s concern regarding the need to improve signage in the City, the Director advised he would engage with the Department for Infrastructure to progress the issue.

In response to Members questions in relation to Neighbourhood Tourism consultation, the Director clarified that engagement was on-going to target existing groups and organisations which might have the potential to launch or enhance their tourism offerings. He advised that he would distribute information on the proposed Neighbourhood Tourism engagement, together with gaps and opportunities which had been identified.

In relation to Green Tourism, the Director of Economic Development advised that officers provided support and guidance on the issues and described the Green Tourism Accreditation scheme which encouraged and educated providers.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the contents of this mid-year update report on Tourism and Events Year 2 Action Plan 2023/2024;
- Noted that officers would engage with the Department for Infrastructure in relation to visitor signage; and
- Noted that the Director would disseminate information on the proposed Neighbourhood Tourism engagement, together with gaps and opportunities which had been identified.

**Strategic and Operational Issues**

**City Growth and Regeneration  
Committee Plan 2023/24 (6-Month Update)**

The Committee was reminded that the 2023-24 Committee Plan was developed in the context of the Council’s Corporate Plan and the refreshed Belfast Agenda and contained the commitments within the Corporate Delivery Plan under the remit of the



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Committee, plus additional deliverables that had been agreed by the Committee. It established the main priorities and programmes of work that the Committee was overseeing to maximise the Council's contribution to the Belfast Agenda and delivering the previous corporate priorities of inclusive economic recovery and community recovery.

It was reported that work was ongoing to develop a new Corporate Plan (and Committee Plans) for the 2024-2038 period.

It was reported that, while the work of the Committee would contribute towards a number of the priorities identified within the refreshed Belfast Agenda, work had also continued to deliver on longer term plans for the city. Therefore the 2023-24 Committee Plan included key priorities that would help the people and businesses of Belfast continue to respond to, and recover from, the economic impact of the pandemic while also shaping the future regeneration, development and sustainability of the city.

The Committee was informed that, while the Committee received regular updates on progress with the delivery of specific programmes and initiatives, the report provided a composite overview and [Appendix 1](#) outlined the progress with the main commitments in the Committee Plan for the six month period, April- September 2023. It was highlighted that many of the commitments would continue to be delivered over the course of the year and the Committee would be kept informed of the progress.

The Committee noted the contents of the mid-year report and progress against the agreed actions within the 2023-24 City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the  
Belfast Stories Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Belfast Stories Working Group of 26th October.

**Approval for a Market at Titanic Belfast**

The Director of Economic Development advised that the Markets Unit had received an application from Titanic Belfast for Tedberry Market scheduled to take place at the Titanic Exhibition Centre (TEC) on Saturday, 25th November 2023 from 10am-5pm.

He stated that it would be a one-off Christmas themed event/exhibition which supported local entrepreneurs and small businesses in Northern Ireland, all showcased under one roof for one day only.

He advised that there would be approximately 180-200 Christmas themed stalls for shopping, crafts and food and visitors would be able to purchase goods on the day and also pre order goods with crafts people showcased. This highlighted that it would be a paid entry event with Ticket prices of £8 per Adult and £3 per Child (aged 0-16).

During discussion, concerns were raised in relation to the late application and a number of Members questioned the market licence charges.

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After discussion, the Committee approved the external market to take place in the TEC Titanic Belfast and noted that the license requirement would be highlighted to the TEC for future events. The Committee also noted that market licence charges would be reviewed by the Director and circulated to the Committee.

Chairperson

# **City Growth and Regeneration Committee**

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## **SPECIAL HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE**

Members present: Councillor Nic Bhranair (Chairperson);  
Alderman Lawlor;  
Councillors Bunting, Canavan, Douglas,  
Duffy, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Lyons,  
Maskey, McCabe, McCormick, McDowell,  
I. McLaughlin, McMullan, Murray, and Walsh.

Also in attendance: Councillor de Faoite.

In attendance: Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager; and  
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors McAteer and McDonough-Brown.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

### **Presentations**

#### **Translink - Late Night Services**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in October, it had agreed to invite Translink to attend a future Committee to discuss its night-time provision of services, in regard to a Motion previously raised in relation to the need for late night public transport services, and also write to Translink to outline its concerns in relation to the potential for night-time services to be cut over the Christmas period for 2023 and to clarify Translink's plans for the Winter months.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. D. Bannon, Belfast Area Manager, representing Translink to the meeting.

Mr. Bannon presented a video on the launch of the late-night service in the run up to Christmas and outlined the positive consultation which had taken place with stakeholders of the city.

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He provided an overview of the planned routes which included:

- ***NI Railways Midnight Mover*** - Trains would be in operation from 1st- 22nd December 2023 inclusive;
- ***Metro Nightmovers*** – Metro buses would be in operation from Friday 24th Nov until Friday 22nd December inclusive (earlier start date to coincide with the Purple Flag event) and highlighted the promotional single fare of £6 to be offered for all Metro special departures; and
- ***Ulsterbus Nightmovers (Goldline/Urby)*** - several additional late departures from Europa Buscentre on Friday and Saturday nights from Friday 1st December until Friday 22nd December.

He highlighted that this would be a commercial service to cover the costs of running the additional service and, due to financial pressures, Translink would be unable to run the same service as last year. He also pointed out that, to make the additional service viable, Translink Smartcards and concessions would not be applicable.

During Members questions, Mr. Bannon explained further that the Christmas Late Night service was a starting point which Translink would like to grow, develop and support in the future. He advised that longer-term late-night services and funding options were being considered.

In response to a Member's question regarding the potential for anti-social behaviour on the late-night service, he advised that the Trade Unions and Safety Representatives had been consulted and highlighted the driver protection safety measures that were in place.

Mr. Bannon described that if required to meet demand that contingency plans were in place if additional buses were required for the late-night service.

In response to Members suggestions for additional routes to be added to the late-night service, Mr. Bannon advised that this could not be considered for this year but additional routes would be explored for the future.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked Mr. Bannon for his attendance and they retired from the meeting.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Department for Infrastructure Roads - Autumn Report**

The Chairperson introduced Mr. D. McFarlane, Divisional Roads Manager, Mr. G. Salmon, Network Traffic Manager, Mr. P. Thompson and Mr. D. Williams, Section Engineers, to the Committee and they were admitted to the meeting to present their Annual Report.

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Mr. McFarlane provided an overview of works completed across the Council area during the year 2022/23 and outlined the initial proposals for schemes to be undertaken in the year 2023/24.

He advised that the Secretary of State provided all NI Departments with budgets for 2023/24 and the Department was managing a 14 per cent reduction in its 2023/24 Resource budget allocation when compared to 2022/23 on a like for like basis. Despite every effort to reduce spend across the Department and its Arms Length Bodies, it was still faced with a significant funding gap.

He highlighted that the opening Capital budget for structural maintenance of the road network in 2023/24 was £85m, which was welcomed but still fell well short of the £143 million (£192m at today's prices) required annually to maintain the road network in a reasonable condition.

He informed the Committee that the Department's ability to spend its budget allocation was dependent on having sufficient contracting resource to hand to deliver the work. Following the legal challenges to the award of asphalt resurfacing contracts in 2021, the Department had successfully procured a new term contract for the Council area in March 2023. Regrettably, it had meant that limited planned work took place during 2022/23 but progress was now being made to deliver much needed resurfacing across the Council area. The Department was developing a Procurement Enhancement Programme to further improve the procurement and delivery of contracts.

He stated that Capital funding had continued to be provided for Active Travel schemes given the requirement of the Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 to invest into walking, wheeling and cycling. The Department had put in place a range of measures to increase delivery of high-quality active travel infrastructure throughout Northern Ireland.

He advised that the Department was working closely with Councils to better understand their five-year active travel programme and developing an appropriate grant and support framework for the delivery of greenways. He pointed out that DfI had commissioned a Northern Ireland wide Active Travel Network Delivery plan which was due for consultation in 2024. When completed, this Plan would provide a firm basis for the prioritisation of delivery of active travel infrastructure within and connecting our towns and cities. Mr. McFarlane reported that the Plan would complement and take account of the greenways network and advised that DfI were also implementing changes in the procurement of their active travel supply chain to ensure sufficient design resources are available to deal with increased demand in the coming years.

He stated that, due to the acute budgetary pressure, the Department was currently continuing with a Limited Service policy for routine maintenance activities such as defect repair, grass cutting and gully emptying. The Limited Service policy allowed the Department to repair defects greater than 50mm on all roads including low trafficked rural roads and on high trafficked roads, defects greater than 20mm would also be repaired. The Department would aim to cut all roadside verges and sightline grass at least twice between April and October on the on more heavily trafficked roads and once a year on other roads. This aimed to balance the need for road safety while protecting our

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environment and encouraging biodiversity. However, sightlines at bends and junctions would be cut as frequently as required to ensure public safety.

Mr. McFarlane informed the Committee that, at present, a full street lighting repair service continued during 2023/24. However, with the uncertainty around budgets it was important for DfI to monitor all maintenance activities within the constrained funding available going forward and difficult decisions might need to be made to re-align activities within funding levels as the year progressed.

He highlighted that the Division was currently facing significant staffing pressures which was impacting on its ability to deliver key services and public safety responsibilities. Therefore, in an effort to maximise their effectiveness, he would strongly encourage Councillors who had access to the internet to please report road defects using the DfI online reporting facility provided by NIDirect. He pointed out that operational staff would be available to assist with any emergency and public safety related queries.

He provided the Committee with updates on the main strategic transportation schemes for the city, together with an overview of the DfI Roads Programme of Works for 2023/24 for those projects and schemes that had been completed and were in progress, which included updates on minor works, maintenance of structures and inspections.

He also provided a summary of the York Street Interchange, Belfast Cycling Network, network traffic and street lighting, collision remedial schemes, traffic schemes and pedestrian measures and resident's parking schemes.

He highlighted that DfI Roads were involved and consulted on a number of schemes that required input such as the Eastern Transport Plan, BRT2, Department of Communities 5 C's and the Bolder Vision. Mr McFarlane informed the Committee that DfI would present the results of the Eastern Transport Plan consultation in the new year.

He advised that, in response to the Council's recent correspondence in relation to the implementation of Quietways, the Department did not have the capacity to consider this request at present.

In advance of the meeting, the representatives had been provided with issues which the Committee had previously raised. Mr. McFarlane provided an update on a range of matters including: an update on the traffic management survey at Orpen; legislation in the erection and removal of flags; Belfast Cycle Network update and delivery; Active Travel budgets and planned projects; Active Schools Travel programme budget; progression of the BRT2; and updates to Highway Code. He advised that written response would also be provided to the Committee for information.

During discussion, the representatives answered a range of questions in relation to the following issues raised by the Committee:

- Network Development at Ravenhill Park and Onslow Parade;
- The pedestrian crossing on Knockbreda Road;
- A55 residents crossing timeline and lessons learned;
- McKinsty Cuts proposed works timeframe;

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- Gray's Park resurfacing;
- The impact of the ETP on the Belfast Cycle Network;
- Site specific solutions rather than 20mph zones roll out;
- Winter Preparedness work undertaken; and
- Traffic Calming and Assessment process re Lawn Brook Avenue.

In response to Members questions in relation to the need for stakeholder engagement for the progression of the mural project on the Finaghy Bridge and need for remedial works, the Senior Development Manager advised that, as the community group were unable to gain permission for the installation of a mural at the Bridge, they had proceeded to another site. Members stated that this was a temporary scheme but that the longer-term objective of addressing the visual appearance of the bridge remained. Mr. McFarlane stated that the barriers had to perform a high standard of vehicle protection given the railway underneath and that any proposal would need to be taken forward in conjunction with NI Railways and DfI.

In relation to the suggestion for managing biodiversity and the unmanicured look of grass verges with more manageable planting, Mr. McFarlane welcomed the idea and highlighted the need for potential partnerships to implement such initiatives.

The Members drew the attention of the officers from DfI Roads to a number of additional matters, which Mr. McFarlane advised would be investigated and a further update submitted to the Committee in due course:

- A request to meet with the relevant officer in relation to the Belfast Cycle Network at Ardenlee Avenue (Councillor de Faoite);
- A request to meet with stakeholders in relation to a residents parking scheme in Iveagh/Royal Victoria Hospital area (Councillor Walsh);
- Resurfacing of Balmoral Avenue clean-up (Councillor Bunting);
- Unadopted Alleyways - work with stakeholders to clean up (Councillor Bunting);
- Road Safety and signage at the Bunscoil Phobal Feirste, Shaws Road (Councillor Garrett);
- M1/Black's Road Pedestrian Barrier and resurfacing – alternative options as further accidents raises concern (Councillor Garrett);
- Residents parking scheme at Rugby Road/Clonard Park (Councillor Gormley);
- Potential for pedestrian crossing on Upper Dunmurry Lane for new housing estate (Councillor Nic Bhranair);
- Status of road surfacing issues at Buttermilk Loney (Councillor McDowell);

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- Update on the delay of DfC Public Realm schemes impacting the Greater Shankill Area (Councillor McLaughlin); and
- Traffic Flow/Yellow box request (Councillor Lyons).

Mr. McFarlane advised that, where relevant, action would be taken on these issues if it was deemed necessary after inspection.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance and they retired from the meeting.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and that, where relevant, DfI Roads would provide further information on the issues raised.

Chairperson



## Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 15th November, 2023

### MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND  
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

- Members present: Councillor McKeown (Chairperson);  
Aldermen McCullough and Rodgers;  
Councillors Bradley, P. Donnelly, Doran,  
D. Douglas, Gormley, Murray, McCann,  
McMullan, Ó Néill and Smyth.
- In attendance: Mr. S. Hewitt, Building Control Manager;  
Mr. K. Bloomfield, HMO Manager;  
Mr. C. McLaughlin, Solicitor (Regulatory and Planning); and  
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

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

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 18th October were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 1st November, 2023, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were recorded.

### **Schedule of Meetings 2024**

The Committee noted the following dates of the meetings of the Licensing Committee between January and December, 2024, with all meetings commencing at 5.15pm:

- Wednesday, 17th January
- Wednesday, 21st February
- Wednesday, 20th March
- Wednesday, 17th April
- Wednesday, 15th May

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- Wednesday, 19th June
- Wednesday, 21st August
- Wednesday, 18th September
- Wednesday, 16th October
- Wednesday, 20th November; and
- Wednesday, 11th December.

**Delegated Matters**

**THE COMMITTEE DEALT WITH THE FOLLOWING THREE ITEMS IN  
PURSUANCE OF THE POWERS DELEGATED TO IT UNDER  
STANDING ORDER 37(d)**

**Licences Issued Under Delegated Authority**

The Committee noted a list of applications for licences which had, since its last meeting, been approved under the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

**HMO Licences Issued Under Delegated Authority**

The Committee noted a list of applications which had been approved under the Council's Scheme of Delegation during October 2023.

**Application for a New Licence to operate a House  
of Multiple Occupation for 6 Collingwood Avenue**

The Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Manager provided the Committee with the details of the application which had been received for a new licence to operate an HMO at the above address by Mr and Mrs Daly.

He outlined that the property had the benefit of an HMO licence having been issued by the NI Housing Executive (NIHE) in the name of the joint applicants, which had expired on 12th November, 2022. The Committee was advised that, due to an administrative oversight, a reminder letter was not issued to the applicants informing them that their licence was about to expire. On 10th July 2023 an application for a new licence application was received from Mr. D. Daly, which was subsequently rejected on 9th August, 2023, as the Council could not be satisfied that the occupation of the living accommodation as an HMO would not constitute a breach of planning control. On 29th August, 2023, an HMO licence application was received from the joint owners of the accommodation.

The Houses in Multiple Occupation Manager outlined that, pursuant to the 2016 Act, the Council could only grant a licence if it was satisfied that:

- a) the occupation of the living accommodation as an HMO would not constitute a breach of planning control;

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- b) the owner, and any managing agent of it, were fit and proper persons;
- c) the proposed management arrangements were satisfactory;
- d) the granting of the licence would not result in overprovision of HMOs in the locality;
- e) the living accommodation was fit for human habitation and -
  - i. was suitable for occupation as an HMO by the number of persons to be specified in the licence, or
  - ii. could be made so suitable by including conditions in the licence.

The Committee was advised that, as it was a new application, the Council's Planning Service was consulted. It had confirmed that a Certificate of Lawful Existing Use or Development ("CLEUD") was granted on 24 August, 2023.

It was reported that the NIHMO Unit had consulted with Environmental Protection Unit in relation to nighttime and daytime noise; Public Health and Housing Unit in relation to rubbish accumulation/filthy premises; and the Enforcement Unit in relation to litter and waste and all had confirmed that there had been no relevant enforcement action required in respect of any of the issues in the HMO in the last 5 years. It was also confirmed that officers were not aware of any other issues relevant to the Applicants' fitness.

No objections were received in relation to the application.

The Committee was advised that, with regards to Section 12(2) of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act 2016, the Council had determined the locality of the accommodation as being Housing Management Area (HMA) "HMA 2/22 Botanic, Holylands, Rugby", as defined in the Council's Local Development Plan Strategy, which had been formally adopted on 2nd May, 2023. Legal Services had advised that there was a clear requirement in section 8 of the Act for the Council to be satisfied that the granting of a licence would not result in overprovision.

The officers had had regard to:

- a) the number and capacity of licensed HMOs in the locality; and
- b) the need for housing accommodation in the locality and the extent to which HMO accommodation was required to meet that need.

To inform the Council in its consideration of the above provisions, the Council had taken account of the 2023 Strategy given that "Nurturing sustainable and balanced communities was a fundamental aim of the LDP's housing policies." In particular, the Council had considered Policy HOU10, which stated:

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“Within designated HMAs, planning permission will only be granted for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and/or flats/apartments where the total number of HMOs and flats/apartments combined would not as a result exceed 20% of all dwelling units within an HMA.”

The HMO Manager explained that, on the date of assessment, 17th October, 2023, 90% of all dwelling units in policy area “HMA 2/22 Botanic, Holylands, Rugby” were made up of HMOs and flats/apartments, which exceeded the 20% development limit as set out at Policy HOU10. There were 1095 (45%) licensed HMOs, with a capacity of 4808 persons, in HMA 2/22.

It was reported that the total number of dwelling units in an HMA was measured by Ordnance Survey’s Pointer database and there were a total of 2409 dwelling units in HMA 2/22. The Committee was advised that the fact that the use of the property as an HMO was permitted for planning purposes was a relevant consideration in determining whether the granting of the licence would result in overprovision.

The Committee was advised that there was a need for intensive forms of housing and that HMOs were an important component of meeting that demand. HMOs, alongside other accommodation options within the private rented sector, played an important role in meeting the housing needs of people who were single, who had temporary employment, students, low income households and, more recently, migrant workers.

On 17th October, 2023, out of 29 premises available for rent within the BT7 area on PropertyNews.com, there were 2 licensed HMOs which represented 9 bed spaces. It was reported that anecdotal evidence from previous conversations with HMO managing agents had suggested that there was currently a lack of HMO accommodation available in the locality.

The Committee was advised that, with the continued expansion of the Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) sector and students transitioning from private rentals to PBMSAs, it was too early to tell whether the increased competition from nonstudents for HMOs was a temporary problem, which could be managed by the reduction in students residing in existing HMO accommodation within the locality, or evidence of an emerging long-term supply issue.

In assessing the number and capacity of licensed HMOs, as well as the need for HMO accommodation in the locality, the Members were advised that officers could not be satisfied that the granting of the HMO licence would not result in overprovision of HMO accommodation in the locality of the accommodation for the purpose of section 8(2)(d) of the 2016 Act.

Therefore, on 27th October, 2023, pursuant to Paragraph 9 of Schedule 2 of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, officers had issued a Notice of Proposed Decision to the Applicant, stating that the Council proposed to refuse the licence on the grounds of overprovision.

The HMO Manager explained that, on 6th November, 2023, officers had received a response to the notice of proposed decision, in which the Applicant had provided

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background information regarding the initial purchase of the property and the considerable financial impact it has had on their family. The applicant highlighted their previous compliance with the requirements of the NIHE registration scheme and that they had forgotten to renew the licence on time. The applicant also referred to the overprovision limit and how they felt that the Council's aim to reduce the number of HMO properties in the area was unrealistic.

The Chairperson welcomed Mrs. C. Daly, applicant, to the meeting. She advised the Committee that it was a joint application, from herself and her husband, and that there had been an error by the HMO Teams in relation to the names on the application. She stated that the application should be dealt with as a renewal of an existing licence. She outlined that, together with her husband, they had invested a significant amount of money into the property, ensuring it was always up to HMO standard, and that they had been responsible landlords to young professionals for over 20 years. She stated that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and other factors, they had simply forgotten to renew the licence. She advised that a decision not to renew her licence would be devastating. She explained that they had one HMO and not a number of them, unlike other landlords. She emphasized that the HMO officer had commented on how well the property had been maintained.

She added that HMOs were not just for students. She asked that the Committee would take into consideration that the Council had not notified them of the renewal date of their HMO licence. She stated that she did not think that the Members understood the issues which persisted in the Holylands and Botanic area. She added that the Council had made up its own rule and that, by suddenly imposing a 20% limit of HMOs in any one area, the repercussions for HMO owners were very unfair. She stated that the landlords who owned multiple properties would not give up their licences and that it was unrealistic that the area would ever get down to 20% HMOs.

She advised the Committee that the safety standards within HMOs, particularly in relation to fire precautions, were much higher than regular houses and that the Council should not be seeking to reduce those standards.

She added that her own children, who were young professionals, could not live in the HMO property with their friends.

A number of Members stated that they represented the Holylands and Botanic area and that they were very familiar with the day-to-day issues in the area.

The HMO Manager clarified to the Committee that the original HMO licence, transferred from the NIHE, had been in the joint names of Mr. and Mrs. Daly. He explained that the application which had been submitted and refused on 10th July, 2023, had solely been in the name of Mr. Daly and that the subsequent application, of 29th August, 2023, was in both names.

He also advised the Committee that a family member of the applicant, such as their daughter or son, could, in fact, live in the property with their friends. He confirmed that, as defined under Schedule 1 of the HMO Act 2016, if a family member of the owner

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lived in the property, it therefore fell outside the definition of a House in Multiple Occupation.

In response to a Member's question, the Solicitor (Regulatory and Planning) clarified to the Committee that there was no statutory legal obligation for the Council to notify licensees of their licence renewal date and, when they were issued it was out of courtesy. The Member stated that, going forward, the Council should continue to extend that courtesy to licensees.

In response to further comments from the applicant, the Chairperson advised Mrs. Daly that the Committee was considering the information in front of it in good faith and that it would reach a decision based on the evidence and within the legal parameters surrounding the process.

Moved by Councillor McCann,  
Seconded by Councillor Doran and

Resolved – that the Committee agrees to refuse the application as, in accordance with Section 12 of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, it was satisfied that the granting of the HMO licence would result in overprovision of HMO accommodation in the locality of the accommodation, as determined under section 8(2)(d) of the Act.

In response to further comments from the applicant, the Solicitor advised the applicant that she did have a Right of Appeal to the County Court within 28 days of the determination being issued.

Chairperson

## Planning Committee

Tuesday, 14th November, 2023

### HYBRID MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor Garrett (Chairperson);  
Aldermen Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers;  
Councillors Anglin, Bell, Bradley, Brooks,  
Carson, Doherty, P. Donnelly, S. Douglas  
Doran, Ferguson, Groogan, Hanvey, Maskey,  
McCann, Nic Bhranair and Whyte.
- In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;  
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor;  
Mr. K. McDonnell, Solicitor (Regulatory and Planning)  
Mr. E. Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management);  
Mr. D. O'Kane, Principal Planning Officer;  
Ms. C. Reville, Principal Planning Officer;  
Ms. L. Walshe, Senior Planning Officer;  
Mr. N. Hasson, Senior Planning Officer; and  
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

### Apologies

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 17th October, 2023 were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 1st November, 2023, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

### Declarations of Interest

Alderman McCullough declared an interest in relation to item 8a on the agenda, LA04/2020/1858/F - Proposed residential development of 18 no. social housing units, comprising two terraces. Development includes associated car parking, gardens, landscaping, site access and all other site works. (amended plans that revise the proposed access and road layout, including the introduction of a traffic island). Hillview Retail Park, Crumlin Road, in that he was an objector to the application and stated that he would leave the meeting while the item was being considered.

Councillor T. Brooks declared an interest in relation to item 9c on the agenda, LA04/2023/292/F - Redevelopment of existing surface car park for the erection of new purpose built, managed student accommodation scheme comprising of 354no. units with shared amenity spaces, ancillary accommodation, on street car parking and landscaping, site bounded by Glenalpin Street, Wellwood Street and Norwood Street, in that she owned a

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property adjacent to the application site and stated that she would leave the meeting while the item was being considered.

**Schedule of Meetings**

The Committee noted the schedule of meetings for 2024.

**Withdrawn Items**

The Committee noted that item 9a on the agenda, under the heading, LA04/2022/1219/F - Demolition of existing building and erection of 11 storey building (May Street/Victoria Street) and 4 storey building (Gloucester Street) comprising 77 apartments with communal areas, ground floor retail services (A2) unit, cycle and car parking, and vehicular access via Gloucester Street, 177-183 Victoria Street 66-72 May Street and 4-8 Gloucester Street, had been withdrawn.

**Committee Site Visits**

The Committee noted the Committee site visits and agreed to defer the undernoted applications in order that the Committee could undertake a site visit:

- LA04/2022/1203/F - Relocation of 5 No. allotments approved under LA04/2020/0042/F. Introduction of an additional No. 8 allotments, a sensory garden and support hub building for day care of young adults (Amended application site boundary, proposal description and drawings), Glenriver Lands adjacent to 78 Cloona Park;
- LA04/2023/292/F - Redevelopment of existing surface car park for the erection of new purpose built, managed student accommodation scheme comprising of 354no. units with shared amenity spaces, ancillary accommodation, on street car parking and landscaping, site bounded by Glenalpin Street, Wellwood Street and Norwood Street; and
- LA04/2020/2285/O - Two Storey detached dwelling with garden and associated parking, Land adjacent to 39 and 40 Stirling Road

**Notifications from Statutory Bodies,  
Abandonment and Extinguishment**

**Abandonment of 29 University Road**

The Committee noted the notice of abandonment.



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**Provision/Removal of Accessible Parking Bays**

The Committee noted the provision of accessible parking bays at the following locations:

- 18 Heath Lodge Avenue;
- 60 Nevis Avenue;
- 63 Mount Vernon Park; and
- Apt 2.3, 100 Cliftonville Road.

**Appeals**

The Committee noted the appeals decisions.

**Planning Decisions Issued**

The Committee noted the planning decisions issued in October, 2023.

**Miscellaneous Reports**

**Local Development Plan Monitoring Report**

The Principal Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the Council's Housing Land Availability Summary Report and the Employment Land Monitor for the 2022/23 monitoring period.

The Committee noted the outcomes of the Housing Land Availability Summary Report and the Employment Land Monitor for 2022/23 and the intention to publish the summary documents and accompanying online map portals on the Council's website.

**NIPSO Report on Tree Protection**

The Principal Planning Officer explained that the Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman (NIPSO) had written to the local Councils and the Department for Infrastructure in July, 2023 to advise that concerns had been raised with regard to how public bodies fulfil their duties to protect trees within the planning system.

He reported that NIPSO had carried out an 'own initiative' investigation which had invited public bodies to submit comments in response to a number of set questions and subsequently published a report that included observations and a number of recommendations under the following key headings:

- Strategies, Policies and Procedures;
- Tree Preservation Orders;
- Applications for Works to Protected Trees;
- Protected Trees on Council Owned Land;
- Statutory Undertakers; and
- Enforcement Activity.

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The Committee noted the publication of the NIPSO report on tree protection matters and the comments on relevant NIPSO recommendations.

**Planning Issues when considering  
Applications for 3G Pitches**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues**

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with an overview of the typical planning issues and policy considerations relevant to the assessment of planning applications for 3G pitches.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the report.**

**3.0 Main Report**

**Background**

- 3.1 At the August 2023 Planning Committee meeting, Members sought information on the typical planning issues relevant to consideration of planning applications for 3G pitches.**
- 3.2 This report sets out the legislative context for decision making, the main planning issues relevant to applications and their associated planning policies. These considerations will often equally apply to planning applications for other forms of play pitches.**

**Legislative context**

- 3.3 As the Committee is aware, NI operates a plan-led system whereby planning applications must by law be decided in accordance with the Local Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.**
- 3.4 The Local Development Plan (LDP) for Belfast will be in two parts. Firstly, the Belfast LDP Plan Strategy 2035 (PS), which was adopted in May 2023. Secondly, the Belfast Local Policies Plan (LPP), which is yet to be published. Until such time as the LPP is adopted, the Council must have regard to the proposals maps and zonings in the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 (the ‘Departmental Development Plan’ under the transitional arrangements), draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (v2004 and v2014) and other relevant Development Plans.**

**Belfast Local Development Plan: Plan Strategy 2035**

- 3.5 The operational policies in the PS are the principal consideration when the Council assesses planning applications for 3G pitches.
- 3.6 A range of different policies in the PS might be engaged when considering such applications depending on the location of the site and site constraints. The most common planning policy considerations are summarised in the table, below.

<b>Policy issue</b>	<b>Plan Strategy Policy</b>	<b>Associated SPG</b>
<b>Provision of new open space</b>	Policy OS2	No specific SPG
<b>Community infrastructure</b>	Policy CI1	No specific SPG
<b>Health and wellbeing</b>	Policies SP3 and HC1	No specific SPG
<b>Impact on the character and appearance of the area</b>	Policies DES1, LC1 and TRE1	Placemaking and Urban Design
<b>Impact on residential amenity</b>	Policies DES1 and ENV1	Placemaking and Urban Design
<b>Access and parking</b>	Policies TRAN2, TRAN6 and TRAN8	Parking Standards (DfI)
<b>Drainage and flood risk</b>	Policies ENV4 and ENV5	TBC Planning and Flood Risk Sustainable Drainage Systems
<b>Natural environment</b>	Policy NH1	Trees and Development

- 3.7 A link to the PS policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance is provided below.

[https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Planning-and-building-control/Planning/Local-development-plan-\(1\)/Local-development-plan/Adoption-of-Plan-Strategy-documents](https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Planning-and-building-control/Planning/Local-development-plan-(1)/Local-development-plan/Adoption-of-Plan-Strategy-documents)

**Provision of new open space with settlements**

- 3.8 The Council recognises the need to make provision for new open space, including sport and outdoor recreation facilities, within the city. Policy OS2 states that *‘Planning permission will be granted for [such uses] at appropriate locations within the defined settlement limits, subject to consideration of the nature and location of any proposals.’* Policy OS2 goes on to require proposal to satisfy a range of criteria relating to landscaping; impact on visual and residential amenity; natural and built heritage; design of ancillary buildings; traffic; accessibility; parking, drainage and waste disposal. In these regards, there is cross over with other policies in the Plan Strategy, as discussed below.

**Community infrastructure**

- 3.9 3G pitches are a form of community infrastructure and can act as an important community hub for people, bringing people and communities together – important material considerations. Policy CI1 supports the provision of new community infrastructure. It states that: *‘The council will seek to protect and provide development opportunities for community, health, leisure, nurseries and educational facilities based on local need in line with the projected population growth over the plan period. Planning permission will be granted for the provision of new and improved community infrastructure at appropriate and accessible locations within the urban area, subject to consideration of the nature and location of any proposals. All proposals shall ensure that there is no unacceptable impact on residential amenity or natural/built heritage and satisfactory arrangements are provided for access for all, including for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport...’.*
- 3.10 As can be seen, accessibility, residential amenity, natural and built heritage impacts are also important considerations within the policy. These issues are also addressed through other planning policies as set out below.

**Health and wellbeing**

- 3.11 3G pitches can provide excellent opportunities for people to exercise and join in team sports, helping their physical and mental

wellbeing. Policy SP3 supports development that maximises opportunities to improve health and wellbeing.

- 3.12 Policy HC1 states that *'The council will seek to ensure that all new developments maximise opportunities to promote healthy and active lifestyles. New developments should be designed, constructed and managed in ways that improve health and promote healthy lifestyles. This will include supporting active travel options, improving accessibility to local service centres, reducing the use of private car travel, adequate provision of public open space, leisure and recreation facilities, high quality design and promoting balanced communities and sustainable neighbourhoods.'*

Impact on the character and appearance of the area

- 3.13 Due to their size and scale, and depending on their location, 3G pitches can have a significant impact on the character and appearance of the area and/or landscape. The Planning Service will undertake a visual assessment of the impact of the proposals and applications will need to be supported by sufficient visual material including plans, drawings, sections and sometimes imagery.
- 3.14 Policy DES1 relates to the principles of urban design. It states that *'Planning permission will be granted for new development that is of a high quality, sustainable design that makes a positive contribution to placemaking...'* and goes on to list a series of criteria that proposals will need to satisfy.
- 3.15 In relation to landscape impact, Policy LC1 states that *'New development should seek to protect and, where appropriate, restore or improve the quality and amenity of the landscape. The council will adopt the precautionary approach in assessing development proposals in any designated landscape...'*
- 3.16 Policy ENV1 states that development must not result in unacceptable impact on the environment, including light pollution. Floodlighting may therefore also be an important consideration, both in terms of the visual impact of the stanchions but also the luminance levels of the actual lighting.
- 3.17 The luminance from the floodlighting could impact on the character of the area. The Council's Environmental Health team will typically be consulted and proposals are assessed having regard to industry standards such as guidance from the Institute of Lighting Professionals.

**Impact on residential amenity**

- 3.18 3G pitches generate noise and will sometimes be proposed close to housing. In such cases, noise impact on neighbours' enjoyment of their property, otherwise known as 'amenity', can be an important consideration. The Planning Service will typically consult the Council's Environmental Health team in such circumstances. Applications should be accompanied by necessary supporting documentation such as a Noise Impact Assessment and a Lighting Assessment where floodlighting is proposed.
- 3.19 Policy ENV1 states that planning permission will be granted for development that will maintain and, where possible, enhance environmental quality, and protects communities from materially harmful development. Development must not result in an unacceptable adverse impact on the environment, including, amongst others, noise and light pollution.
- 3.20 In some cases, depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary to mitigate the impacts on amenity by means of planning conditions, such as:
- Restricting the hours that the 3G pitch can operate
  - Restricting the hours that any floodlighting can be operated
  - Controlling the design and levels of luminance of the floodlighting
  - Requirement for construction of an acoustic fence.

**Access and parking**

- 3.21 Accessibility is an important consideration. Policy SP7 supports connectivity to and within the city by sustainable transport modes, such as public transport, walking and cycling. There is cross over with Policy CI1 which requires that *'...satisfactory arrangements are provided for access for all, including for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.'* Furthermore, Policy TRAN 2 states that *'Planning permission will be granted for development proposals open to the public or to be used for employment or education purposes where it is designed to provide suitable access for all.'*
- 3.21 3G pitches have the potential to generate significant traffic. Policy TRAN 6 states that *'Planning permission will be granted for a development proposal involving direct access, or the intensification of the use of an existing access, onto a public road where... such access will not prejudice road safety or significantly inconvenience the flow of road users.'*

- 3.22 With traffic comes the demand for parking. Policy TRAN 8 relates to parking and servicing requirements. It states that *'Development proposals will be required to provide adequate provision for car parking and appropriate servicing arrangements, however, the emphasis will be to allow parking provision that will assist in reducing reliance on the private car in particular for commuting into the city, help tackle growing congestion and bring about a change in travel behaviour. The precise amount of car parking for development proposals will be determined according to the specific characteristics of the development and its location having regard to the DfI's published standards... Proposals should not prejudice road safety, significantly inconvenience the movement of road users or be detrimental to local environmental quality.'*
- 3.23 The Planning Service will consult DfI Roads as a statutory consultee in relation to traffic and parking impacts.

Drainage and flood risk

- 3.24 The impact of proposals on drainage will often be an important consideration with 3G pitches often introducing semi-hard surfacing on existing grassed areas. Policy ENV5 states that *'All built development should include, where appropriate, SuDS measures to manage surface water effectively on site, to reduce surface water runoff and to ensure flooding is not increased elsewhere.'*
- 3.25 Depending on their location, sites may also be at risk of flooding. Policy ENV4 states that *'Planning applications in flood risk areas must be accompanied by an assessment of the flood risk in the form of a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). The council will have regard to guidance publications produced by other authorities and prospective developers/applicants are advised to liaise early in the formulation of their proposals with DfI Rivers to clarify flooding or flood plain issues that may affect particular sites. In all circumstances, the council will adopt a precautionary approach in assessing development proposals in areas that may be subject to flood risk presently or in the future as a result of environmental change predictions.'*
- 3.26 Certain select types of development may be approved in a flood risk area under the exceptions test. The SPG allows for the provision of areas for amenity open space, sports, outdoor recreation and nature conservation purposes on the basis that such areas are not generally occupied and are unlikely to incur major damage as a result of flooding.

- 3.27 The Planning Service will consult DfI Roads as a statutory consultee in relation to drainage impacts and flood risk. It may also consult DAERA in relation to groundwater impacts.

**Natural heritage**

- 3.28 Depending on their location, 3G pitches may have ecological and other natural heritage impacts. Policy NH1 states that *‘The council will adopt the precautionary principle when considering the impacts of a proposed development on local, national or international natural heritage resources, including designated sites, protected species and the other important interests of biodiversity and geodiversity. In assessing new development proposals, the council will seek to ensure the protection of the district’s natural heritage and biodiversity. New development will not have an unacceptable effect, either directly, indirectly, or cumulatively, on sites, habitats, species or ecosystems and networks that are important for their nature conservation, biodiversity or geodiversity value. This includes designated sites, habitats and species protected by law, priority habitats & species and other important nature conservation and biodiversity interests and ecological networks.’*
- 3.29 Planning applications may be required to be accompanied by a Biodiversity Checklist and other ecological reports.
- 3.30 The Planning Service will consult DAERA Natural Environment Division (NED) as a statutory consultee in relation to natural heritage impacts.
- 3.31 Sites for 3G pitches may also be hydrologically linked to Belfast Lough – a Special Protected Area, RAMSAR and Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI). Policy NH1 goes on to state that: *‘The council will have due regard to the relative importance and levels of protection afforded to the hierarchy of international, national and local designated sites and to habitats and species in considering development proposals. In this regard, proposals that have, or could have, a significant effect on an international site will not be supported by the council. Proposals that have an adverse effect on a national site or a significant adverse effect on a local site will not be supported.’*
- 3.32 Where a site has the potential to be hydrologically linked to Belfast Lough, the Planning Service will consult Shared Environmental Services (SES). SES provides specialist advice to NI councils in relation to the Habitats Regulations. Depending on their location, proposals will need to be accompanied by a Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to ascertain whether the proposals will likely have a significant environmental effect on



the lough. SES will then carry out their own HRA on behalf of the Council.

- 3.33 Officers recently wrote to SES seeking confirmation as to whether SES routinely considers the impact of microplastics (a common design feature of 3G pitches) when carrying out its HRA. In its response, SES advised that in September 2023. *'...the EU Commission adopted the EU REACH restriction on intentionally added microplastics. Once entered into force, the restriction will apply in the EU and Northern Ireland.'*
- 3.34 SES goes onto to advise that *'According to the EU, the granular infill material used on artificial sport surfaces is the largest source of intentional microplastics in the environment. A sales ban on granular infill materials will apply after eight years so that affected stakeholders have time to develop and switch to alternative materials.'*
- 3.35 *In the interim and in light of the science underpinning the restriction, SES will require robust evidence of appropriate mitigation for artificial surfaces with linkages to designated sites. The most effective control is avoidance of infill materials entering the aquatic environment and all applicants must be able to demonstrate effective mitigation in this respect.'*
- 3.37 Where this issue arises, applicants will be required to mitigate the impacts either through specific control measures or to explore alternative materials. These options would be explored with SES as part of the PAD/application process. It is understood that use of alternative materials would have economic implications and the market is responding by developing alternative products following the EU ban on microplastics.
- 3.38 According to the European Commission website, for infill material for sport pitches, the ban applies after 8 years to give pitch owners and managers the time to switch to alternatives and allow for most existing sport pitches to reach their end of life.

#### Other material considerations

- 3.39 A range of other material considerations may be relevant to consideration of the application, depending on its location and circumstances. Examples of other material considerations include:
- Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (2015)
  - Planning history of the site and/or surrounding area
  - Views of local people

**Planning balance**

- 3.40 Sometimes, policy issues and/or material considerations will be in conflict with one another. For example, a proposed 3G pitch may have an adverse landscape impact in contravention with Policies DES1 and LC1, but could result in significant community and health benefits, supported by Policies SP3 and HC1. In such cases, the Council will need to exercise the 'planning balance', weighing conflicting issues against one another and drawing a conclusion as to what is best for the site, area and city in the round. Indeed, the PS states that its policies should be read holistically and in the round.

4.0 **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 4.1 No specific impacts identified.

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

- 5.1 No adverse impacts identified."

Noted.

**Planning Applications previously considered**

(Alderman McCullough left the meeting while the following item was being considered.)

**LA04/2020/1858/F - Proposed residential development of 18 no. social housing units, comprising two terraces. Development includes associated car parking, gardens, landscaping, site access and all other site works. (amended plans that revise the proposed access and road layout, including the introduction of a traffic island). Hillview Retail Park, Crumlin Road**

The Planning Manager provided the Committee with an overview of the application and pointed out that, whilst the officer recommendation had been to refuse planning permission, the committee had previously approved the application at its meeting in August 2021, subject to the outstanding assessments on roads, drainage, contamination, air quality and noise being submitted and considered acceptable by the Committee at a future meeting.

He reported that, following the submission of additional reports, those matters had been addressed to the satisfaction of officers, save for the road issues which remained. The application was subsequently reported to the Committee at its meeting in December, 2022, and the application was deferred to allow time for the applicant to submit an amended site location plan and further revised proposals which sought to address DfI Roads' objection and to alleviate the safety concerns that had been raised, and following further information DfI

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Roads had advised that it had no objection to the application and that the application had been reassessed following the adoption of the Plan Strategy.

He explained that additional information had been provided by the applicant which had addressed DfI Roads' previous objection. He further explained that the application had been re-assessed in the light of the adoption of the Belfast LDP Plan Strategy 2035. Whilst concerns remained with regard to placemaking and the quality of environment provided for occupants of the proposed development, it would not be considered unreasonable for the Committee to maintain its previous view, that planning permission should be granted in the planning balance having regard to the desirability of providing social housing in an area of significant need. Should this be the case, the Committee would require a Section 76 planning agreement to secure the development as social housing.

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Maskey,  
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson,

That the Committee agrees to uphold the Council's previous decision of 17th August, 2021, to approve the application, having reassessed the application in the light of the Belfast LDP Plan Strategy 2035 and been satisfied that DfI Roads had offered no objection and that reports had been submitted which resolved the other technical issues, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement to secure the development as social housing, and to delegate authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and Section 76 planning agreement.

On a vote, fourteen Members voted for the proposal and five against and it was declared carried.

(Alderman McCullough returned to the meeting.)

**LA04/2022/1861/F, LA04/2022/1867/DCA,  
LA04/2022/1860/A - LED signage Replacement  
facade to active facade to facilitate the display  
of internally illuminated moving images  
(Temporary Permission for 5 years), 1-3 Arthur  
Street**

The Planning Manager explained that the Committee had approved the applications at its previous meeting in October, 2023 for a temporary five-year permission with a review to take place after three years.

He reported that following legal advice officers had concerns about the review mechanism as there was no clear means to require removal of the signage after three years, should the signage be found to be unacceptable.

He stated that the normal approach would be to grant a temporary three-year permission with the review taking place during that period. He added that the applicant had

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reported there would be a lead in time for designing, costing, tendering and carrying out the works and therefore was seeking a 3.5 year permission.

The Planning Manager explained that the Committee was being asked to confirm the duration of the temporary permission and conditions, to include a 3.5 year permission.

The City Solicitor further advised that, as the Committee had previously made its decision to approve the application, it was limited to consideration of whether a three-year or five-year permission were appropriate, and that a 3.5 year permission was not a feasible option.

**Proposal**

Moved by Alderman McCullough,  
Seconded by Councillor Carson,

That the duration of the permissions and review period, as approved at its meeting of 17th October 2023, be for three years.

On a vote, fourteen Members voted for the proposal, three against and two no votes and it was declared carried.

**LA04/2022/1831/F - Change of use from  
residential to short term holiday let  
accommodation, 258 Limestone Road**

The Senior Planning Officer explained that the application had previously been deferred by the Committee at its meeting in April, 2023 to allow officers to explore the availability of additional evidence with regard to the environmental impacts of short-term holiday lets.

He reported that the Council's Environmental Health and Local Development Plan Housing Team had been consulted as well as the Police Service of Northern Ireland and had been asked to provide any evidence with regard to the environmental impacts of short term holiday lights such as noise or antisocial behaviour complaints.

He reported that the Police Service of Northern Ireland had stated that an evidence base for complaints from Airbnb's could not be provided as it did not record this is a residential type. He added that Environmental Health had run a report for short term lets services for the BT15 post code area since 2018 and, whilst there had been no complaints related to the Limestone Road, there had been complaints recorded within the post code area at Glandore Avenue, Fortwilliam Crescent and Duncairn Gardens.

He stated that, in consideration of the adoption of the new Plan Strategy, the recommendation to the Committee was that planning permission should be refused for the following draft reasons:

- The proposal was contrary to Policy HOU13, criterion (c), as was not sited within an existing tourism cluster or in close proximity to a visitor attraction;

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- The proposal was contrary to Policy HOU3, in that the proposal would fail to protect existing residential stock for permanent occupation and was contrary to criterion (a) as the proposed use was not considered complimentary to the surrounding residential uses and would likely result in adverse effects on residential amenity within this established residential area; and
- The proposal was contrary to Policy HOU3, in that the proposal would fail to protect existing residential stock for permanent occupation and was contrary to criteria (c) and (d) in that the short term let use would not be considered subordinate to the residential use and did not provide a separate user entrance as public access will be required.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. J. Young, the applicant, to the meeting. Mr. Young stated that he had made several enquires as to the correct procedure for listing consultation responses including timeframes and that the case officer had confirmed that planning had received the Environmental response on the 1st and 7th of June 2023 but had only published it on the planning portal 24th October. He stated that the consultation responses had been received outside the 21-day consultation reply rule.

He explained that he had requested the date on which the application had been referred to the Committee by a Member and the material planning considerations, but that he was still awaiting confirmation.

Mr. Young stated that, comments made by a Member at a previous meeting of the Committee with regard to constituents having contacted his office to report that the property had been operating as a holiday let had been untrue and that he had confirmed this, with supporting evidence to the Planning Service.

Mr. Young outlined his application timeline in relation the adoption of the Plan Strategy and stated that he believed that his application had been submitted before its adoption and therefore should not have been subject to its policies.

He concluded by stating that he believed that his proposed use is a mixed residential use and therefore Policy HOU3 did not apply and that, contrary to the case officer's opinion, the site was not located in an existing tourism cluster or in close proximity to a visitor attraction, its location on the Limestone Road placed in within the Castle Ward that included The Cathedral Quarter.

The City Solicitor responded to some of the issues which Mr. Young had raised. She stated that, whilst the consultation responses were requested within 21 days, the Committee was obliged to consider any representations received up to and including the date of its decision. She also stated that the process, in which the application had been referred to the Committee by a Member, was in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation and that she was satisfied that the decision making process was both lawful and appropriate.

**Proposal**

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Moved by Councillor Maskey,  
Seconded by Alderman McCullough, and

Resolved – That the Committee refuses the application and delegates authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the refusal reasons.

**New Planning Applications**

**LA04/2023/2709F - Demolition of existing  
buildings and erection of social housing  
development comprising 30 no. apartments  
across 3 buildings with amenity space,  
landscaping, car parking and associated site  
works, Lands at Apartment Blocks 1-3,  
Clonaver Drive**

The Principal Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the application and highlighted the following key issues:

- Principle of development;
- Design, scale, layout and impact upon the character and appearance of the area;
- Impact on amenity;
- Affordable housing and housing mix;
- Accessible and adaptable accommodation;
- Climate change;
- Drainage;
- Traffic, movement and parking;
- Waste-water infrastructure; and
- Noise, odour and other environmental impacts including contamination.

She stated that, having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal was considered, on balance, acceptable, and that it was recommended that planning permission was granted, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement.

The Committee agreed to grant planning permission, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and Section 76 planning agreement and to deal with any other matters that may arise prior to the decision being issued, provided that they were not substantive.

**LA04/2023/3491/F - proposed Retail Warehouse  
Unit with Associated Car Parking and Site  
Works, 47 Boucher Road**

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The Senior Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee and explained the following key issues that were relevant to consideration of the application:

- Principle of retail warehousing at the location;
- Impact on the character and appearance of the area;
- Provision of car and cycle parking; and
- Access.

He reported that there had been six objections from three planning consultants that acted for the operators and owner of the neighbouring premises that had raised concerns with regard to character, context, building line, parking, principal of retail development and loss of landscaped area. He added that there had been no objections received from any consultees.

He stated that, having regard to the development plan, relevant planning policies and other material considerations, it was recommended that the proposal would be approved.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. M. Kelly, Planning Consultant, Gravis Planning, to the Committee who was speaking in objection to the application, on behalf of a neighbouring business. He stated that the principal concern with regard to the proposal were related to design, parking and servicing.

He reported that the proposed unit was located to the front of the site with the majority of parking located at the rear and that it was considered the siting of the proposal was unacceptable in its current form and outlined how it was contrary to Policy DES1 of the Plan Strategy which outlined planning policy related to the principal of urban design and required that any new development would respond positively to local context and character.

He stated that it was also considered that exceeding the existing building lines would also have a detrimental effect on his client's lands by obscuring the view of the site and unit when approached from the south along the Boucher Road which would likely affect his client's existing business and its ability to attract potential customers.

He explained how the proposals to locate parking at the rear of the premises and servicing arrangements were contrary to the Plan Strategy and clear evidence that the proposal was too large for the site.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Kelly for his representation and welcomed Mr. E. Loughry, speaking on behalf of the applicant, to the meeting. Mr. Loughry explained that the proposal had been found to comply with the Council's Plan Strategy and that the Boucher Road was one of the largest retail warehouse locations in Northern Ireland.

He stated that the proposal would not cause any significant retail impact to any centres protected under planning policy and that there was a clear need for the proposal which had been designed to comply with the Council's policies of design, traffic, and environment.

He reported that the proposal had been assessed in terms of contaminated lands, sustainable urban drainage, climate change resilience and water treatment and infrastructure capacity and that it had been shown to be acceptable.

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He explained that the traffic and parking requirements of the proposal had been assessed three times by DfI Roads, which found the reduced car parking provided and layout acceptable and consistent with the Council's approach to reduce car reliance.

Mr. Loughry stated that the objectors did not take any issue with the principal of retail warehousing at the location and that their principal concern was the position of the building sitting close to the road frontage. He added that the applicant agreed with the case officer, that there was a need to provide active frontages on Boucher Road and to ensure vibrancy throughout the day, and that by locating most of the car parking behind the building, screens large car parking areas makes an important urban design improvement to the area.

He concluded by stating that the proposal would not have a significant negative impact on the surrounding context or character of the area and would remove a derelict brownfield site and provide a contemporary designed flagship store. He requested that the Committee approved the application.

The Committee agreed to approve the application, subject to conditions, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions.

**LA04/2022/2216/F - Change of use from offices to hotel (146 bedrooms) over five floors (2nd to 6th floor) including extension to 5th floor (17 bedrooms), goods hoist from ground to 2nd floor and elevational alterations to an existing building, Centre House, 69 -87 Chichester Street**

The Principal Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee and highlighted the following key issues:

- Principle of development;
- Design;
- Impact on the character and appearance of the area;
- Built heritage;
- Climate change;
- Access and parking;
- Drainage and Waste-Water Infrastructure; and
- Noise, odour and other environmental impacts.

She reported that the consultees had been satisfied, subject to conditions and that no representations had been received.

She stated that, having regard to the Development Plan and other material considerations, that the proposal was considered acceptable.

The Committee agreed to approve the application, subject to conditions, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other matters that may arise prior to the decision being issued, provided that they were not substantive.



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**LA04/2023/3442/F- Erection of Hotel/Aparthotel comprising 135 hotel beds and 93 aparthotel beds, restaurant / cafe/bar uses, gym, landscaped public realm, car parking, cycle parking and associated site and road work, Lands directly south of Titanic Belfast and north-west of Hamilton Dock located off Queens Road**

The Senior Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the application and its substantial planning history, that included three extant approvals. She outlined the following main issues to be considered:

- The principle of a hotel at the site location;
- Scale, massing and design;
- Impact on built and archaeological heritage;
- The impact on natural heritage;
- Landscaping/boundary treatments;
- Traffic and road safety;
- Human health/environmental considerations;
- Flooding and drainage;
- Economic considerations;
- Environment and community;
- Pre-application community consultation; and
- The consideration of developer contributions.

She brought to the Committee's attention that there had been an error in the wording of condition 31 contained within the report which restricted occupancy to prevent residential use. She explained that the report should have stated that the maximum stay by the same occupant should be no more than 90 days within any 12-month period, in line with Section 54 application approved for the same site under reference LA04/2023/2688/F.

She stated that the final substantive response had been received from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA): Natural Environment Division, which had offered no objection to the application.

The Senior Planning Officer reported that, having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposed development was considered acceptable and that it was recommended that planning permission would be granted, subject to conditions.

The Committee agreed to approve the application, subject to conditions, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other matters that may arise prior to the decision being issued, provided that they were not substantive.

**LA04/2023/4101/F - Change of use of the ground floor from A1 Retail to mixed-use community recreational and cultural space for multi-**

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**disciplinary uses, including small scale retail and café. Also change of use of the first floor from office use to a mix of office, community, recreational and cultural space to facilitate multi-disciplinary uses, 2 Royal Avenue**

The Senior Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee and explained that there were no physical alterations or works proposed to the listed building as all proposed installations were temporary and reversible and therefore, no Listed Building Consent or conservation comments were required.

She reported that consultee advice had been sought regarding transport, environmental and Listed Building issues, and that all consultees had indicated no objection to the proposal.

She stated that, having regard to the Development Plan and other material considerations, the proposed development was considered acceptable and that it was recommended that planning permission was granted, subject to conditions.

The Committee agreed to approve the application, subject to conditions, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other matters that may arise prior to the decision being issued, provided that they were not substantive.

(The Committee agreed to consider the following two items together.)

**LA04/2023/3889/LBC -Installation of a new wall hung water bottle refill station, 12-20 St Georges Market East Bridge Street; and**

**LA04/2023/3842/LBC - Installation of a new water bottle refill station on the grounds of Belfast City Hall, 2 Donegal Square North.**

The Principal Planning Officer provided the Committee with a summary of the applications and stated that, having regard to the Development Plan and other material considerations, the proposals were considered acceptable and that it was recommended that listed building consent was granted, subject to conditions.

The Committee agreed to grant listed building consent in respect of both applications, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other matters which may arise, to include any representations which may occur during the statutory advertising period.

Chairperson

## **Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee**

Monday, 13th November, 2023

### **MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE BELFAST WATERFRONT AND ULSTER HALL LTD. SHAREHOLDERS' COMMITTEE HELD IN HYBRID FORMAT**

Members present: Councillor Bower (Chairperson); and  
Councillors Brooks, Canavan, Cobain, Duffy,  
Flynn, Ferguson, Gormley, Maghie, McAteer,  
McDowell, Nelson, Ó Néill and Verner.

In attendance: Ms. J. Corkey, Chief Executive, ICC Belfast  
(Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.);  
Mr. I. Bell, Director of Finance, Risk and Corporate  
Services, ICC Belfast (Belfast Waterfront and Ulster  
Hall Ltd.);  
Mr. F. Grant, Operations Development Manager;  
Mrs. C. O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and  
Risk Services; and  
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

Apologies for inability to attend were recorded from Alderman Copeland and Councillor McCabe.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 19th June 2023 were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd July.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were reported.

### **Schedule of Meetings 2024**

The Committee approved the schedule of its meetings for 2024, as outlined below, and agreed that all meetings would commence at 5.15 pm:

- Monday 22nd January;
- Monday 11th March;
- Monday 17th June;
- Monday 16th September; and
- Monday 18th November.

### **Capital and Maintenance Report**

The Operations Development Manager advised the Committee that the smoke curtains in the main auditorium and the replacement of the chiller units were now part of the Capital Programme and that the tender for consultancy to support the delivery of both items had been undertaken. He outlined, however, that there was no capital financing associated with the project and that it would therefore also be subject to the Council's capital governance processes, including going before the Oversight Group and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to secure the necessary finance.

In respect of the escalators at the Waterfront Hall, he outlined that all issues had been resolved and that the recommissioning and certification had taken place on 14th July, 2023. The Members were advised that the escalators were on a three-year comprehensive maintenance agreement and that all maintenance required during that period would be covered at no additional cost to the Waterfront Hall, subject to fair usage and excluding damage such as vandalism.

The Operations Development Manager advised that 85% of the Solar Film had been installed, with the Terrace Restaurant and Bar 1 having been completed. He outlined that the vertical glazing and roof panels in bar 2 were almost completed, with installation dates and times to be agreed with the Waterfront Hall Facilities Team.

In respect of the refurbishment of the toilets, the Committee was advised that the designs had been agreed with the Waterfront Hall Facilities Team, the Building Control approvals had been received and the design package for the tender was being finalised that week. It was reported that there had been delays in progressing the project due to staff absence. However, it was anticipated that the tender process to appoint a contractor would be initiated the following week and that the process could likely take up to 16 weeks. The Members were advised that a revised programme for the installation work was to be agreed with the Waterfront Hall Facilities Team following the successful appointment of a contractor.

The Committee noted the updates which had been provided.

### **Restricted Items**

**The information contained in the reports associated with the following 3 items is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.**

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the Press and public from the meeting during discussion of the item as, due to the nature of the item, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

### **Internal Audit Update**

The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services provided the Committee with an update on the outcome of an internal audit undertaken at the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall (BWUH) Ltd. between December 2022 and February 2023.

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She reminded the Committee that a three-year Internal Audit Plan for 2021/2022–2023/2024 had been agreed by the BWUH Ltd. Audit and Risk Committee in December 2021. The update related to the second year of the three-year plan and it had been agreed with the BWUH management to complete the planned audit for 2022/2023 in two parts.

The Members were advised that the update related to the first of the two audits for 2022/2023 and that it comprised sales and marketing, performance and risk management. She reported that the audit report had been agreed with the BWUH Ltd. Chief Executive and Director of Finance & Systems, and the Executive Summary had been presented to the BWUH Ltd. Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee on 5th September, 2023. The Members noted that the report would be presented to the Council's Audit Assurance Board in November 2023 and the Council's Audit and Risk Panel in December 2023.

In respect of the second audit for 2022/2023, she explained that the draft report on cyber security, data protection and finance had been issued to the BWUH management for its response. She explained that the Council's Audit, Governance and Risk Service was currently agreeing the timing of the 2023/2024 audits with management in BWUH Ltd. It was also reported that it would be liaising with management regarding the development of the next three year audit plan and the associated service level agreement.

She provided the Committee with a summary of the Internal Audit on Sales and Marketing, Performance and Risk Management, which had found that there was "some improvement required". The Committee was advised that BWUH Management had agreed an action plan to address the issues identified.

In response to a Member's question, the Chief Executive of the ICC Belfast confirmed the measures which were now being implemented in terms of secondary checks.

After discussion, the Committee noted the update which had been provided.

**Performance Report for Quarter 1 YTD 2023/24**

The Chief Executive of the ICC Belfast provided the Committee with an update on Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.'s (BWUH Ltd.) business performance for Quarter 1 Year to Date, covering the period 1st April, 2023, to 30th June, 2023.

The Members were advised that the company had recently welcomed a new cohort of placement students, working within the Sales and Marketing and Event Operations Departments. She explained that the higher-level apprentices had successfully completed year one of their Lead Customer Operations course. She highlighted that one of their apprentices had also recently been nominated for the Apprentice of the Year.

She informed the Committee that BWUH Ltd. was working alongside Queen's University on the development of a Technical Services Graduate Programme.

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The Committee was advised that the ICC Belfast, together with the Waterfront Hall, had been awarded the "Green Meetings Gold Award" by Green Tourism. The Committee was advised that the award recognised the commitment of tourism businesses that were actively working to become more sustainable and that the Gold Award was acknowledged worldwide as the industry standard for exceptional environmental and sustainability practices. She highlighted that it was the first purpose-built conference venue on the island of Ireland to receive the accolade.

The Director of Finance, Risk and Corporate Services, ICC Belfast, provided the Committee with an overview of the company's performance against the budget for the first quarter. He advised the Committee that the first quarter had been reasonably busy but, as expected, it had been much quieter than quarter one the previous year.

The Committee was advised of the risks and the opportunities for the business in the coming year.

In response to a Member's comment regarding the fact that the venues were now "cashless", the Chief Executive of the ICC Belfast advised the Committee that 95% of ticket sales were made online, with just less than 5% made over the telephone, and that very few people attended the venue to buy tickets with cash. She added that the hospitality team was also now "cashless" and that the Automated Teller Machine (ATM) had been removed from the premises due to low usage. She reported that the customer experience had improved since removing cash, as transactions were made more quickly.

In response to a further Member's question, she outlined that, post Covid-19, confidence was returning to the industry and that people still saw the value in a good night's entertainment.

After further discussion, the Committee noted the update which had been provided.

**Financial Statement and Annual Report for the year ended 31st March 2023**

The Committee was provided with the BWUH Ltd. Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March, 2023.

The Chief Executive of the ICC Belfast reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 19th June, 2023, it had been presented with the Quarter 4 Year to Date performance overview. She outlined that the full audited accounts were now available and had been included for notation by the Shareholders' Committee.

The Members were advised that the BWUH Ltd. Annual Report and Financial Statements had been presented to the BWUH Ltd.'s Audit Risk and Compliance Committee on 27th June, 2023. They were agreed as final by the Committee and were electronically signed on the 28th June, 2023. Those were then adopted by the Board on 5th July, 2023.

**Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee**  
**Monday, 13th November, 2023**

The Committee noted that the report included the Independent Auditors Report, which was unqualified.

The Committee noted the contents of the BWUH Ltd. Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March, 2023.

Chairperson

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## Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 9th November, 2023

### MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND  
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor R-M Donnelly (Chairperson);  
Alderman Copeland; and  
Councillors Anglin, Bell, Bower, R. Brooks, T. Brooks,  
Collins, Doherty, M. Donnelly, D. Douglas, S. Douglas,  
Kelly, Long, McAteer, McCabe, McKeown, Smyth  
and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;  
Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;  
Ms. C. Shortt, Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer;  
Ms. B. Roddy, Project Support Officer – Climate;  
Ms. M. Quigley, Adaptation and Resilience Advisor; and  
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

### **Apologies**

An apology for inability to attend was reported on behalf of Councillor McCabe.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 12th October, 2023 were taken as read and signed as correct.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of Interest were reported.

### **Schedule of Meetings 2024**

The Committee agreed its schedule of meetings for the period commencing 1st January 2024 to 31st December 2024.

### **Kerbside EV proposal from BT (Presentation BT Openreach)**

Mr. P. Fyfe, Mr. P. Wade, Mr. D. Lunney and Mr. A. Irwin, BT Openreach, attended in connection with this item and were welcomed by the Chairperson.

The Climate Commissioner provided an overview on the proposal to provide the Council with the opportunity for Belfast to take part in a U.K. trial, by BT Openreach, to make use of DSLAM cabinets, distributed throughout the city, in order to provide on street charging

**Climate and City Resilience Committee,  
Thursday, 9th November, 2023**

for electric vehicles. She stated that given twenty percent of emissions in Belfast were attributed to transport, this would assist in helping the province meet its carbon reduction targets and make the city a much healthier place to live and work.

Mr. Wade reported that 90,000 DSLAM cabinets had been provided throughout the UK, of which 60,000 were suitable for EV charging. He stated that the provision of the charging ports would assist in meeting the government's target to provide 30,000 charging ports by 2030 and would assist those residents who had no access to off street parking. The Committee was informed that BT would be undertaking a trial, at its own cost, and would remove any associated hardware after the trial was completed, again at its own cost.

The Members were provided with a map showing the distribution of the various DSLAM cabinets distributed throughout the city, including the exchange locations. Mr. Fyfe confirmed that six initial EV charging sites had been identified as part of the technical trial, including details of the proposed DSLAM cabinets and charger ports which would be subject to planning permission.

In response to a question from a Member regarding any potential cost for users should the technical trial be successful, Mr. Wade confirmed that BT had not worked up a costing profile as yet which would be subject to market conditions and a commercial decision and stated that he would endeavour to come back with a response on the differential pricing mechanism between on street and off street EV charging.

A Member raised concerns in regard to BT by virtue of owning the EV infrastructure and the risk associated with monopoly supply. Mr. Wade stated that there were other potential suppliers within the marketplace, including Virgin, and that there were no commercial barriers restricting other potential suppliers from entering the marketplace and competition would be a factor in comparative pricing.

The Committee raised further issues in regard to restricted access for disabled pedestrians and cyclists given the infrastructure requirements and was assured that BT was required to comply with Public Realm and relevant planning legislation and that it was anticipated that a significant layout of cabling would be delivered underground.

The Climate Commissioner reported that many of the Committee's concerns would be addressed in the EV Strategy which would be used to coordinate the Council's interventions in terms of equitable access to charging ports, including disabled groups and dedicated EV parking bays. She stated that it would be her intention to report back to a future meeting of the Committee on the EV Strategy.

The Committee noted the information provided and thanked the representatives from BT Openreach for their detailed and informative presentation.

**Update - Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership  
(Presentation - Beth Bell, Co- Chair of the  
Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership/ Mura Quigley-  
Adaptation and Resilience Advisor)**

Ms. Quigley informed the Committee that food production had a significant impact on greenhouse gas emissions and equated to 35% from the food and drink industry. She stated that the demand for food was increasing, including the global impact of food scarcity. The Members were informed that the issue of food nutrition and obesity had been identified as a major problem for many European nations and that access to good quality food was not distributed equally in the UK. Ms. Quigley reported that access to cheap fast food was more readily available in socially deprived areas.

The Committee was informed the work surrounding sustainability and food was one of the actions contained within the Resilience Strategy and that, in 2021, the Council had signed up to the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration. The Declaration provided a commitment by local authorities and regional governments to tackle the climate emergency, through integrated food policies, with a call on national governments to take affirmative action.

The Members were informed of the work undertaken by the Belfast Food Network with support from Belfast City Council and with the remit to improve access to healthy, local fresh food in the city and to build community wealth in a way that addressed the climate emergency. To that end, she reported that the Council had been asked to establish a new community food partnership.

Ms. Quigley explained that the Sustainable Food Partnership was people focussed with an ethos based on the notion that people had the right to gain access to good nutritional food. She highlighted the need to empower people to access food systems, including a vision to transform food systems that protect national resources for future generations, and which was both economically and environmentally sustainable. To that end, she referred also to the importance attached to the provision of good food options.

She highlighted the work undertaken, as part of the sustainable food economy, manifesting itself with such initiatives as food cooperatives, enabling lower income households to access climate and nature friendly food. In terms of catering and procurement food policy, she highlighted the important work undertaken by the Council in that regard and the need to offer plant-based food alternatives, including sourcing food with a short supply chain. The Committee was informed that food insecurity was an increasing challenge and provided the Members with an overview of the governance structure associated with the food partnership.

Ms. Quigley referred to several successes associated with the food partnership, including, amongst other things, the establishment of an open food network for sharing ideas, learning and creating opportunities, including a public event which had been held in June 2023.

The Committee was requested to allocate £30,000, from within existing budgets, to develop a food strategy and vision, including a city-wide and communication plan.

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Thursday, 9th November, 2023**

After discussion it was

Proposed by Councillor Smyth,  
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved – that the Committee agrees to the allocation of £30,000, from within the City and Neighbourhood Services budget, to develop a food strategy, including a comprehensive city-wide and communication plan as part of the Council's food strategy and vision.

The Committee recognised also the need to support local communities in the creation of social supermarkets and to engage with both schools and young people as part of a food strategy for the city and to address those areas which lead to the elimination of food poverty.

Noted.

**Local Development Plan - Presentation - Kate Bentley**

Owing to the inability of Ms. K. Bentley to attend, the Committee agreed to defer this item to a future meeting of the Committee.

**Update - Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub –  
Brenda Roddy, Project Support Officer (Climate)**

The Committee considered the undernoted report outlining the progress made in regard to delivery of the Belfast Retro-fit Delivery Hub.

**1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

**i) note the contents of the report.**

**3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 Background**

**Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub was established in November 2022 following publication of the Belfast Net Zero Carbon Roadmap which identified that emissions from domestic, public and commercial buildings account for 63% of the city's greenhouse gas emissions. The Hub recognises that the majority of buildings in Belfast in 2035 already exist, and as a result, there is a need to focus resources on improving energy efficiency and**

decarbonising the heat supply to these buildings in order to achieve emission reduction targets and reduce energy costs.

The Hub takes a consortium approach to catalyse retrofit activity across the public, commercial and private building sectors in Belfast, engaging stakeholders from across the construction supply chain, funders, academics, public bodies, housing providers and consumer bodies. Belfast City Council's Climate Team convenes and supports the Hub's activities as part of the wider support the team provides for the Belfast Community Planning Partnership. The Hub's work is informed by the National Retrofit Strategy produced by the Construction Leadership Council and is Chaired by Peter Roberts (previously chair of NIHE) with technical advisory support provided by Professor Alice Owen from Leeds University.

**3.2 The Hub's principal duties are:**

- To identify opportunities for retrofit across the city and bring together the partners who can realise those opportunities.
- To identify and endorse the required standards of building performance that retrofit in Belfast needs to achieve.
- To identify ways of supporting the economic activity, skills and jobs that achieving those standards requires
- To draw together partners to source and release funding, using a funding-ready rather than a funding-led approach.
- To promote a collaborative, solutions approach sharing knowledge across ownership and tenure.
- To ensure engagement with stakeholders across the city, and to support and promote complementary initiatives.
- To ensure that retrofit work considers climate resilience.
- To report on progress, initially to the Community Planning Partnership's Resilience and Sustainability Board

**3.3 Achievements and process to date**

Participants in the Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub meetings over the past 12 months have confirmed the city's aspiration to transform the city's buildings in line with its carbon reduction commitments and discussions have generated a rich range of insights and potential interventions.

Belfast's approach so far has had some distinctive features compared to how other cities are tackling the retrofit challenge:

- Stakeholders from all aspects of retrofit delivery have been involved – including installers, customers, housing providers, property owners, policymakers, researchers. The benefits of

getting the ‘whole system in a room’ have been evident in the information that has been shared and the depth and breadth of ideas produced.

- Using the UK National Retrofit Strategy as a reference point has enabled discussions to reflect on how delivering retrofit, at scale, is a complex problem where many different elements all need to move at once. Skills, technical standards, funding, policy/regulation, market demand, supply chain capacity have to be progressed in parallel.
- Political constraints – whilst there is frustration at the constraints imposed whilst the NI Assembly is not functioning, there is also the recognition that the city stakeholders need to do what they can rather than waiting for restoration of the Assembly’s functioning.
- Aiming to be funding ready rather than funding led i.e. developing the projects that the city needs and then finding ways to fund those projects.
- Thinking through how to work across tenures – most retrofit programmes focus on one tenure only.

Discussions have focussed mainly on the residential sector to date, in part because improving homes is an important social priority as well as being essential for carbon emissions reduction. This discussion has gone further than many other cities by including consideration of the private rented sector alongside social housing and owner-occupied homes. Hub participants have also identified a need to retrofit commercial and public buildings in parallel with upgrading the housing stock.

### 3.4 Next steps

Based on discussions to date, ten ‘work packages’ – clusters of actions – are proposed, to run in parallel:

Foundation Work Packages – cross-cutting activities that underpin all the actions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Data and information</li><li>2. Co-ordination, learning and knowledge exchange.</li><li>3. Ensuring the just transition – checking for equality of opportunity</li></ol>
Themed Work Packages – clusters of actions identified:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4. Pipeline development &amp; funding options</li><li>5. Creating customer demand – Improving understanding, creating the market</li><li>6. Building energy performance assessment and monitoring</li><li>7. Supply chain development</li></ol>

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<b>New work packages – filling important gaps:</b>	<b>8. Commercial sector 9. Local Area Energy Plan integration 10. Resilience assessment</b>
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A series of 43 actions was identified by Hub members, clustered into three work packages and ranked by a combination of potential level of impact, ease/difficulty of implementation, timescale to deliver and dependency on factors outwith the Hub. A full list of actions is included in Appendix A.

Task and finish groups are being set up for each work package with Hub members invited to lead and participate in those relating to their experience and expertise. The groups will examine the actions in detail, exploring if/how they can be taken forward and commencing work as appropriate. Workshops are scheduled to take place in late November 2023 with progress reported to the Hub consortium at its next quarterly meeting in January 2024.

Outputs of the task and finish groups will be integrated into and will serve as a delivery plan for the Draft Retrofit Strategy which will be a Hub consortium document. Plans are under development for a launch event of the strategy in February 2024.

**4.0 Financial and Resource Implications**

**4.1 None.**

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

**Corporate policies will be followed, and appropriate screening and mitigating actions for individual work packages delivered where necessary.**

The Committee was informed that, in response to a question from a Member, due to the lack of governance in Northern Ireland by way of the Northern Ireland Executive, it was not in a position to legislate and provide grant funding for retro-fit schemes, which created an impediment to progress in that particular area.

Noted.

**Date of Next Meeting**

The Committee agreed that its next meeting be held on Thursday, 7th December at 5.15 p.m.

Chairperson

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## Standards and Business Committee

Tuesday, 28th November, 2023

### MEETING OF THE STANDARDS AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND  
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Groogan);  
Aldermen Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers; and  
Councillors Bradley, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly,  
D. Douglas, Duffy, Kelly, Lyons, Magee,  
G. McAteer, McCormick, McDowell and McMullan.

In attendance: Mr. C. Campbell, Divisional Solicitor;  
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and  
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

(Alderman Rodgers, Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

### **Apologies**

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillor McDonough-Brown (Chairperson) and Councillors F. McAteer and R. McLaughlin.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 24th October were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st November.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were recorded.

### **Schedule of Meetings 2024**

The Committee agreed the following meeting dates for 2024, with all meetings to commence at 5.30 p.m.:

- Thursday, 4th January;
- Tuesday, 23rd January;
- Thursday, 22nd February;
- Thursday, 28th March;
- Tuesday, 23rd April;
- Thursday, 23rd May;
- Tuesday, 25th June;
- Thursday, 22nd August;

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Tuesday, 28th November, 2023**

- Tuesday, 24th September;
- Thursday, 24th October; and
- Thursday, 21st November.

**Motions**

The Committee considered the following six motions which had been received in advance of the Council meeting on 4th December:

**Cost of School Uniforms and P.E. Kits**

The Committee agreed that the motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Bunting and seconded by Councillor Kelly, be referred to the Council for debate, with no restriction to be placed on the number of speakers.

**Feasibility Study into a Blackstaff Greenway**

The Committee agreed that the motion, which had been proposed by Councillor T. Brooks and seconded by Councillor Murray, be referred, in the first instance, to the People and Communities Committee.

**Regional Jobs and Investment Bill**

The Committee agreed that the motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Doherty and seconded by Councillor Whyte, be referred, in the first instance, to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

**Removal of the Maximum Capital Value  
Cap on Domestic Rates**

The Committee agreed that the motion, which had been proposed by Councillor McDowell and seconded by Councillor Flynn, be referred, in the first instance, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

**Right to Grow on Council owned land**

The Committee agreed that the motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Bell and seconded by Councillor Flynn, be referred, in the first instance, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

**Tiny Urban Forests**

The Committee agreed that the motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Smyth and seconded by Councillor D. Douglas, be referred, in the first instance, to the People and Communities Committee.

Deputy Chairperson

## **Cost of School Uniforms and PE Kits**

"That this Council recognises that the uncapped cost of school uniforms and PE kits is causing financial hardship for many families across the borough. A recent poll from Save the Children NI revealed that a third of parents in Northern Ireland have had to borrow money to pay for their child's uniform and PE items, while 6 in 10 parents were financially challenged trying to cover the cost. In recognition of this ongoing hardship, this Council will write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education expressing concern for children and their parents and request that his department take action as a matter of urgency to address the long-standing problem."

Proposer: Councillor Sarah Bunting

Seconder: Councillor Tracey Kelly

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