

Public Document Pack

BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

SUMMONS TO ATTEND THE MONTHLY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

- COMBINED PACK

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 both online and in person, in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Belfast on Monday, 4th March, 2024 at 6.00 pm, for the transaction of the following business:

1. Summons
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes of Council Meetings (Pages 1 - 10)
5. Official Announcements
6. Change of Membership on Committees/Outside Bodies/Position of Responsibility
7. Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Pages 11 - 70)
8. Minutes of People and Communities Committee (Pages 71 - 102)
9. Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Pages 103 - 112)
10. Minutes of Licensing Committee (Pages 113 - 122)
11. Minutes of Planning Committee (Pages 123 - 140)
12. Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee (Pages 141 - 146)
13. Minutes of Standards and Business Committee (Pages 147 - 150)

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

John Walsh

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 Thursday, 1st February, 2024 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);
The High Sheriff (Councillor S. Douglas); and
Aldermen 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, 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

An apology was reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Groogan declared an interest in relation to the minute of the People and Communities Committee of 9th January, under the heading “Crescent Park Gates”, in that her employer, the Forward South Partnership, had made a submission regarding the matter and she left the meeting whilst the matter was being considered.

Councillor McDowell declared an interest in relation to the minutes of the Planning Committee of 16th January, in that he owned a property in one of the applications. As the item did not become the subject of discussion, the Member was not required to leave the Chamber.

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in relation to the minute of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th January, under the heading “Overdose Prevention Facility”, in that his employer, the Public Health Agency, might be involved in discussions around this facility. The Member left the Chamber during discussion on the matter.

**Meeting of Council,
Thursday, 1st February, 2024**

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murphy),
Seconded by Councillor Beattie and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly meeting of the Council of 8th January, be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

The Lord Mayor informed the Council that Mr. Jackie Casement, Property and Maintenance, had left the Council recently, having completed 50 years' service, and wished him well in his retirement.

The Lord Mayor, along with a number of other Members, welcomed the restoration of devolved government in Northern Ireland and shared their optimism for a constructive functioning assembly at Stormont. At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the Lord Mayor agreed to write to the Departmental Ministers seeking their assistance and engagement work with Belfast City Council to progress key Council projects that had been outstanding for some time, for example, the Glider and Belfast Cycle Network and reversing cuts to Happy Healthy Minds and holiday hunger payments.

Councillor Dornan highlighted that Children's Mental Health Week, a mental health awareness week that 'empowers, equips and gives a voice to all children and young people in the UK', was being held from 5th – 11th February and he encouraged the Members to support the event to help promote a positive impact on young people's wellbeing.

Alderman Lawlor congratulated the organisers, nominees and award recipients on the recent Annual Eastside Awards. He stated that this event was an exciting initiative aimed at highlighting and celebrating all that was good about East Belfast, whilst showcasing the contributions made to the economic, social and community development of the area. Specifically, he recorded congratulations to Men's Minds Matter who were presented with an award in excellence in Health and Well-being and Mr. Aiden Campbell for his Outstanding Contribution Award. Councillor F. McAteer echoed his sentiments and congratulated the Glentoran Social Partnership for its Community Impact Award, Boundary Brewing Running Club for its Sports Initiative of the Year Award and Templemore Baths for the Heritage Experience Award.

Councillor Bunting congratulated Councillor S. Douglas on becoming the new High Sheriff of Belfast and wished him well during his term.

Councillor McCormick welcomed the work of East Belfast Survivors Suicide and commended the excellent work they did with local east Belfast community who had been affected by suicide and wished them well for the forthcoming year following their recent Annual General Meeting.

**Meeting of Council,
Thursday, 1st February, 2024**

Request to Address the Council

The Chief Executive reported that a request to address the Council had been received from Mr. B. Mulgrew and Ms. S. Hayles. They wished to address the Council in relation to proposed erection of gates at Crescent Park, as discussed at the meeting of the People and Communities Committee held on 9th January.

The Council acceded to the request and, accordingly, they were welcomed to the meeting by the Lord Mayor.

Together, Mr. Mulgrew and Ms. Hayles provided a detailed explanation of why they opposed the erection of gates at Crescent Park. Mr. Mulgrew highlighted that he was not privy to the discussion that had taken place at the January meeting of the People and Communities Committee as the matter had been considered as a restricted item. He advised that, whilst he appreciated that there were issues with anti-social behaviour (ASB), he did not feel that simply 'locking' the park with the use of gates would resolve all the problems. He also queried if the gating of parks fitted with the Council's strategy and whether Crescent Park had been considered as part of a feasibility study into lighting requirements at parks throughout the city. He queried the status of the Park and whether there was a possible right of way through the public space, making the space an Open Space and also sought clarity as to whether an Equality Impact Assessment had been undertaken into the proposal.

Ms. Hayles advised that the Park was a muster point for the Crescent Arts Centre in the event of an evacuation being necessary. She advised also that evenings were the busiest time for the Centre, the facility was open until 10.00 p.m. Monday – Saturday, with up to 200 people using it daily. She stated that, given that park currently formed a huge part of any evacuation procedures, she asked the Council to ensure that this was factored into any decision taken from a health and safety perspective.

The Lord Mayor thanked them for their presentation and they left the meeting.

Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Black,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th and 26th January, 2024, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Statues- City Hall Grounds

At the request of Councillor McLaughlin, the Council agreed to grant delegated authority to the Director of Property and Projects, in consultation with the Party Group Leaders, to agree the final wording for the two new statues in the City Hall Grounds of Mary Ann McCracken and Winifred Carney.

**Meeting of Council,
Thursday, 1st February, 2024**

Extended Cultural Support Programme

Amendment

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Flynn

That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 26th January, under the heading “Extended Cultural Support”, in relation to the decision to defer consideration of the report be rejected and the Council agree to the allocation of £200,000 to support the proposed programme of activity, with support up to a maximum of £50,000 for individual direct awards in relation to Orangefest, Ulster Scots Week and Pride. The remainder to be used for events which would support Belfast’s bid for the Fleadh Cheoil as outlined in the report.

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

**Revenue Estimates 2024/25 and
Medium-Term Financial Plan**

At the request of Councillor Lyons, the Council agreed to write to the incoming Minister of Finance seeking the Department to look at adopting the model used by the Scottish Government of setting its own business rates, to help pay for local services.

At the request of Councillor Beattie, the Council agreed that all Political Parties should submit in writing to the Chief Executive, in advance of the Special meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to agree the setting of the rate, any proposals to be considered which might help reduce the rates increase.

Council’s Powers of Vesting – Tribeca

At the request of Councillor Whyte, the Chief Executive agreed to write to the relevant Permanent Secretaries and incoming Ministers to highlight the Council’s concerns regarding the lack of progress in delivering the Tribeca scheme and to advise that the Council will consider all options for acquiring the site, including the possibility of vesting.

At the request of Councillor Nelson, it was agreed that Council officers would liaise with the current owners regarding the safety of some of the buildings, seeking them to address any dangerous structural issues.

**Meeting of Council,
Thursday, 1st February, 2024**

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 9th and 24th January, be approved and adopted.

Crescent Park Gates

Amendment

Moved by Councillor McKeown,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

That the decision of the People and Communities Committee of 9th January, under the heading "Crescent Park Gates", in relation to the erection of gates at Crescent Park, be referred back to the Committee to enable further consideration in open session and for the stakeholders to make deputations to the meeting.

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

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth,

That the Committee agrees to allocate up to £20,000 of the Council element of the funding for a feasibility study and the delivery of a swift tower in Crescent Park as part of animation of the site and the Council's commitment to conservation of a red listed species.

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

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 9th and 24th January were approved and adopted.

Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Nic Bhranair,
Seconded by Councillor Walsh,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 10th and 23rd January, be approved and adopted.

**Meeting of Council,
Thursday, 1st February, 2024**

Major Events Update

At the request of Councillor Maskey, the Council agreed to ask the Committee to further consider the Council's approach to St Patrick's Day, with consideration to be given to the event review commencing in April and an invitation being extended to participate in the review to those groups who had decided not to participate in this year's event to enable them to discuss their experience in order to ensure more ambitious events in the future.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing addition, the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 10th and 23rd January were thereupon 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 17th January, 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 Ferguson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 16th and 23rd January, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd Shareholders Committee

Moved by Councillor Bower,
Seconded by Councillor R. Brooks and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 16th and 23rd January, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee

Moved by Councillor Róis-Máire Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor Walsh and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 11th January, be approved and adopted, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Long in the attendances.

**Meeting of Council,
Thursday, 1st February, 2024**

Minutes of Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Councillor McDonough-Brown,
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 4th and 23rd January, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

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Council

SPECIAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall and remotely, via Microsoft Teams, on Monday, 12th February, 2024 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);
The High Sheriff (Councillor S. Douglas); and
Aldermen Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers; and
Councillors Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower, Bradley, R. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Collins, de Faoite, Doherty, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R. M. Donnelly, D. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Hanvey, Kelly, Long, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, Maskey, F. McAteer, G. McAteer, McCabe, McCann, McCormick, McCusker, 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 were reported on behalf of Aldermen Copeland and McCoubrey, and Councillor T. Brooks.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Official Announcements

The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Council, offered his condolences to the family and friends of Aileen Graham, former DUP Councillor, who had died recently.

Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Black,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 9th February, 2024, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**Meeting of Council,
Monday, 12th February, 2024**

Extended Cultural Support Programme

At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the Council agreed to amend the minutes to reflect the detail of the proposals which had been set out by Councillors de Faoite and Long which had led to the decision at the Committee meeting.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 9th February were thereupon approved and adopted.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 23rd February, 2024

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Black (Chairperson);
Alderman McCoubrey; 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.

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. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City Operations;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 19th and 26th January 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 February, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Beattie, RM Donnelly, Ferguson, Garrett and Nic Bhranair declared an interest in respect of Item 2(l) Discretionary Payments in that they worked for or were associated with one of the applicants and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councillor Nic Bhranair declared an interest in respect of Item 2(n) Oireachtas Festival Update in that she was associated with the organisers and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councillor Smyth declared an interest in respect of Item 5(g) Response by NILGA in that his wife worked for the organisation and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Several members sought clarification in relation to the items on Discretionary Payments and the Appointment of Members to the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners and were advised that, as Council appointees to those organisations, they would not be required to declare an interest and leave the meeting.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following 14 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 Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

The Members were also reminded that the content of ‘restricted’ reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as ‘confidential information’ and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

Financial Reporting - Quarter 3 2023/24

The Director of Finance submitted for the Committee’s consideration a report providing information on the financial position for Quarter 3 2023/24.

He reported that, at the end of Quarter 3, the financial position for the Council had shown an underspend of £2.6m, representing 2% of the net expenditure budget, which could be attributed to employee underspends and savings from retendered contracts. The Quarter 3 Departmental forecast was an underspend of £2m, representing 1.2% of the net expenditure budget. He pointed out that this forecast had fallen short of the

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd February, 2024**

targeted £3m of in-year savings required as part of the Finance Strategy to deliver a balanced budget.

The Director went on to provide an update on the commitments to be funded, rate setting 2024/25, the medium-term financial planning, forecast reserves balance, rates finalisation and capital projects.

The Committee:

- noted the report and the continued adoption of the Finance Strategy throughout 2023/24.
- agreed to set aside £1.6m from any in-year underspends and/or reallocation of reserves to fund the non-consolidated element of the pay and grading review if not agreed by TU's before end of March.
- agreed that reallocations of year end underspends will be considered as part of year end reporting.

Organisational Reviews and Change Programme

The Committee noted the progress on the work programme for the Organisational Reviews and Change portfolio and timescales going forward.

Community and Neighbourhood Services Establishment Update – Resources and Fleet

The Committee considered a report providing recommendations to support the stabilisation of general operative resources in waste collection and to request authority to increase the driver and general operative establishment to implement a pilot solution for the difficult to access streets using smaller vehicles.

The Members were advised that the report formed part of a wider piece of work, focused on stabilising resources in Waste Collection and planning for the future. The first activity undertaken in March 2023 was to stabilise the driver numbers. The Committee had agreed to regularise temporary posts that had been in the structure for a number of years. Following that decision, work had continued to establish the issues impacting driver and operative resourcing requirements. This included confirming establishment numbers, recruitment, managing planned and unplanned absence, and longer-term workforce planning.

The Committee noted the content of the report and agreed to increase the Resources and Fleet Establishment as follows:

- 14 permanent posts General Operatives for Waste Collection operations
- 1 permanent post Waste Transfer Station Operative
- 4 permanent posts General Operatives and 2 permanent HGV drivers for the pilot on difficult to access streets using smaller vehicles.

**Regeneration (Place Based Growth Proposition)
Advocacy and Lobbying Report and Regeneration
Framework Update**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on work underway in relation to a Regeneration (Place Based Growth Proposition) Advocacy and Lobbying Report and a Regeneration Framework and to seek approval to advance a Lobbying and Engagement exercise.

During discussion, several Members expressed the view that a special meeting was required to consider issues such as the regeneration frameworks, city centre development and heritage assets. A Member also requested that the issue of the Tribeca site, which had been considered by the Committee at its previous meeting, should be included on the agenda as a standing item. In response to this the Chief Executive suggested that it might be more appropriate to include a broader city centre development update report as a regular item. A further Member also requested that an update report on the possible purchase of the Assembly Rooms, which had previously been agreed by the Committee, be submitted to a future meeting.

The Committee:

- i Noted the update on the Regeneration (Place Based Growth Proposition) Advocacy and Lobbying Report, including the Briefing Summary Paper as attached and as reported to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 7th February 2024 and presented to Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum on 11th January 2024;
- ii Agreed to advance the Advocacy and Lobby proposition, to include a direct advocacy with both the UK Government in Westminster, the Northern Ireland Executive and Irish Government and informed by a detailed stakeholder mapping, engagement plan and proposed lobbying strategy as referenced in the report;
- iii Noted the update on the Regeneration Framework and its interdependencies with the Regeneration (Place Based Growth Proposition) Advocacy and Lobby work and that further Member engagement will be undertaken on the Regeneration Framework over the coming weeks;
- iv Noted the decision of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 7th February to write to the new Minister for Communities to welcome him to his position and call on him to work with all relevant stakeholders to achieve the conferring of regeneration powers to councils with the appropriate budgets within this Assembly mandate;
- v Agreed that a special meeting be held to consider the regeneration frameworks, city centre development and heritage assets;
- vi Agreed that an update report on the purchase of the Assembly Rooms be submitted to a future meeting; and
- vii Agreed that a regular update on city centre developments be included as an item on the agenda.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd February, 2024**

Update on 2 Royal Avenue

The Committee considered a report which provide Members with an update in respect of 2 Royal Avenue, including an overview of activity of the current Meanwhile Use; the outworking of the Operator and Feasibility Study into future sustainable use; LGBTQIA+ Hub and PEACEPLUS Funding for space on the upper floor; and Department for Communities funded capital works to the rear of the building, including a new entrance and activation onto Bank Square.

The report provided details also of the pending Expression of Interest exercise to be undertaken in respect of the future use of the ground floor of the building and alignment to previously agreed Council objectives and the need for diversification of uses in the city centre and to ensure consideration was given to the sustainable future long term use of the building and, in light of the financial implications for the Council, details of that would be brought back to Members for consideration.

In response to a question from a Member, the Director undertook to work with the Rainbow Project to discuss the development of a governance model.

The Committee:

- Noted the update on 2 Royal Avenue, including:
 - the background on principles for acquisition,
 - update on the current meanwhile use and the options and work undertaken to consider future uses including the need to consider the longer-term sustainability of the building and financial implications for Council,
 - update on the LGBTQIA+ hub application to PEACEPLUS for space on the First Floor (under Investment Area 1.1: Co-design Community Peace Action Plan);
- Agreed to commence a without prejudice market wide Expressions of Interest (EOI) exercise for the ground floor at 2 Royal Avenue for both small occupiers to support and complement the current meanwhile use (until Dec 2024) and a ground floor occupier(s) for longer term post 2024, cognisant of the proposed first floor PEACEPLUS Funding application.
- Noted the outcomes of the EOI on the longer-term use will be reported to a future meeting of Committee.
- Noted the ongoing DfC funded capital works to the rear of the building including opening up of the space at the rear with a new entrance and activation onto Bank Square, improving the connectivity to and from Royal Avenue to Bank Square.

Belfast Agenda Refresh (2024-2028)

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the final draft of the Belfast Agenda strategic framework and supporting action plans for the period 2024-2028 and:

- i. endorsed the refreshed Belfast Agenda and supporting Action Plans (2024-2028);
- ii. noted that community planning partners have been asked to consider and confirm their organisational endorsement no later than 3 March 2024;

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd February, 2024**

- iii. agreed that Party Group briefings on the Belfast Agenda will be offered to Members;
- iv. agreed that the key priorities emerging from the Belfast Agenda be discussed with relevant Northern Ireland Executive Ministers as part of the proposed all-party meetings to be sought (NB. separate report on the Committee agenda);
- v. noted the planned formal launch of the Belfast Agenda on 20 March 2024 and
- vi. agreed to provide organisational support in promoting the launch; and
- vii. noted the work underway to refresh the governance and programme management arrangements to align with new refreshed Belfast Agenda.

Outstanding Accounts

The Committee authorised that the outstanding account of £3,701.61 (net of VAT) be written off, in accordance with Section M12 of the Council's Financial Regulations.

**Update on Cost-of-Living
Hardship Programme 23/24**

The Committee noted a report which provided an update on the implementation of the Hardship Programme for 2023/24, which sought to help alleviate the impact of the cost of living on vulnerable people across the city.

**City Centre Byelaws Consultation –
Update on process**

The Interim City Solicitor advised the Members that, at its meeting on 26th June 2023, the Committee had agreed to authorise officers to begin the formal public consultation process on the draft Amenity Bye Laws. The consultation was launched on 27 November 2023 on the Council's online engagement platform for a period of 14 weeks and was scheduled to end on 4 March 2024.

At the Council meeting on 4 December 2023 a Member had requested that the City Solicitor bring an update to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the process for submitting responses using the Council's online engagement platform.

The Interim City Solicitor advised that the Council used an online digital engagement platform "Engagement HQ" (which was branded "Your Say Belfast") to carry out a range of public consultations.

This online engagement platform provided the Council with a number of tools to support early, transparent and ongoing dialogue when undertaking consultation and engagement exercises and for reporting back on evidence received both in terms of quantitative and qualitative information.

A number of queries have been raised in relation to the process around the submission of responses and the potential for respondents to submit multiple or duplicate responses to the same survey and these were addressed in the report.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd February, 2024**

Minutes of the Shared City Partnership Meeting

The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approved and adopted the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 5th February 2024 including:

Shared City Partnership Membership (Verbal Update)

- That members note the verbal update and agree the approach provided by the Good Relations Manager.

Good Relations Shared Learning Forum (Verbal Update)

- The Partnership recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it note the verbal update.

The Executive Office Asylum Dispersal Funding Update

- The Partnership recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the contents of this report and the risk to services to asylum seekers, if further Executive Office / Dispersal Funding is not provided and if there is a continued reduction in the Good Relations District Council Fund provided by TEO.

Peace IV - Secretariat Update

- The Partnership recommend to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee that it notes the contents of the report and appendices.

PEACEPLUS – Theme 1.1 - Local Action Plan Update

- The Partnership recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it note the contents of the report and appendices.

Draft Irish Language Policy

The Committee considered a report which provided an update in to developing a corporate Irish Language Policy and seeking Members views on the current draft.

During discussion, a Member submitted a number of additional comments which she requested to be included within the draft policy. A further Member indicated that her Party would require a briefing on the draft before the final Policy was submitted. The Committee acceded to both requests and accordingly it:

- Noted the informal consultation responses which have been received;
- Approved the suggested amendments to the draft Policy;
- Agreed that the further amendments circulated by a Member at the meeting be included in the draft;
- Noted that a final draft would be presented to a subsequent meeting of the Committee for the purposes of public consultation once the Section 75 screening has been undertaken; and
- Agreed that briefings be held on the draft policy for those Parties who so wished.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd February, 2024**

Discretionary Payments

The Director of Finance submitted a report providing details of the assessment of Discretionary payment applications received during January and February 2024, which sought agreement in relation to the award of the grant.

The Committee:

- 1) Noted the number of applications received and the total funding requested;
- 2) Agreed the payment of grant to those who scored 50% and over; and
- 3) Agreed that a further open call for funding take place in June and that groups which have already been awarded funding would not be eligible to submit an application for a further payment.

**Waste Management – Purpose Built
Managed Student Accommodation**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 19th January, it had agreed that the Council would begin charging for collection of waste from Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation commencing on 1st April 2024; and noted that a further report would be brought to this month's meeting setting out the charging details.

Accordingly, the Committee considered a report in this regard and agreed to the charging mechanism as detailed in the report to be effective from 1st April 2024.

Oireachtas Festival Update

The Members were reminded that the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, at its meetings in August 2023 and October 2023, had approved proceeding with the BID for Belfast to host the Oireachtas Festival and consideration of any subsequent financial commitments.

The Oireachtas na Samhna festival had advised officers that, subject to final committee and council approval, the BID to host the event in 2025 has been reviewed and considered by its organising committee and board with a positive outcome to appoint Belfast as host city.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and approved the proposed budget requirements as set out in section 3.8 of the report.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

**Motion Transparency by Default
Belfast City Council**

The Members were informed that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 23rd January, had considered the following motion which had been received for submission to the Council on 1st February:

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“This council believes that maintaining public trust in the democratic process is essential. A key part of this is ensuring that decisions are made openly and can be subject to public scrutiny. Council recognises the concern that there is about the degree to which council, committee and working group discussions and decisions are being conducted in restricted session, and the wholesale redaction of documentation that accompanies these matters.

To help maintain public trust and ensure that the people of this city can be fully informed about how decisions that affect them have been reached, this council is committed to a policy of 'transparency by default' by which all meetings and documentation will be placed in the public domain as standard, with information or discussions only being redacted or restricted very specifically in relation to those issues which fall within the exemptions in the Local Government Act (NI) 2014. To that end, committee reports will, in addition to identifying the relevant exemption in the 2014 Act, also set out a rationale as to why information or discussions are to be restricted, when this is the case.

Officers will also bring forward guidelines in relation to all council, committee and working group discussions and decisions which will enable this approach, to ensure maximum transparency while adhering to legislative requirements, ultimately making this organisation an exemplar public body in terms of transparency and openness.”

The motion had been proposed by Councillor McKeown and seconded by Councillor Lyons.

The Committee noted, in accordance with Standing Order 13(i), that Notices of Motion which commit the Council to expenditure must be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and report.

The Committee noted also that the Notice of Motion had been received and agreed that a subsequent report would be brought to the Committee outlining a detailed consideration of the Motion and the potential costs implications.

Motion Rights-based Ethical Procurement Policy

The Members were informed that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 23rd January, had considered the following motion which had been received for submission to the Council on 1st February:

“This Council deplores those corporations that profit from protracted armed conflict and systematic violations of human rights, particularly in the context of Israel’s continuing brutal assault on the people of Gaza and escalating settler terrorism in the West Bank, Russia’s ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, and other conflicts around the world. With this motion, the Council encourages companies to meet their obligations to avoid contributing to adverse

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human rights impacts through their own activities, and to prevent or mitigate human rights abuses linked to their operations.

The Council is aware of the crucial role of local authorities and their public procurement procedures in ensuring respect for human rights by companies, as well as their obligations under widely accepted business and human rights norms – as laid down in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, and the Global Sullivan Principles (1999) – to promote respect for human rights by companies with which they do business.

The Council affirms that every endeavour is made to ensure that councils tender processes are consistent with the above principles, including under the Fourth Geneva convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and under customary international humanitarian law, prohibiting the importation or sale of goods or services originating in occupied territories.

This Council resolves to adopt a rights-based Ethical Procurement Policy (EPP) that takes fully into account existing obligations and standards. The EPP will incorporate widely accepted and precisely formulated international standards and explain clearly how the policy will be implemented. The primary aim of the EPP is to ensure that human rights obligations are properly acknowledged, observed and respected at all stages of the procurement process.”

The motion had been proposed by Councillor Anglin and seconded by Councillor McCabe.

The Committee noted, in accordance with Standing Order 13(i), that Notices of Motion which commit the Council to expenditure must be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and report.

The Committee also noted that the Notice of Motion had been received and agreed that a subsequent report would be brought to the Committee outlining a detailed consideration of the Motion and the potential costs implications.

Quarterly Update on Notices of Motion

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Committee on the progress of all Notices of Motion for which SP&R Committee is responsible for.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that SP&R Committee:

- **Note the updates to all Notices of Motion that SP&R Committee is responsible for and**

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- **Agree to the closure of Notice of Motion 266, 269, 302, 320, 327, 331, 332, 336, 346 and 350 as referenced in Appendix 1 and paragraph 3.4 below.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 Background

At SP&R Committee on 25th October 2019, the following Notice of Motion was agreed:

‘That this Council notes that other Councils produce a monthly status report in relation to Notices of Motion; and agrees Belfast City Council adopts a similar practice and produces a monthly Notice of Motion Update which will be brought to each full Council Meeting, detailing the following:

- 1. Date received**
- 2. Notice of motion title**
- 3. Submitted by which Councillor**
- 4. Council meeting date**
- 5. Committee motion is referred to**
- 6. Outcome of committee where Notice of Motion will be debated**
- 7. Month it will be reported back to committee**
- 8. Other action to be taken.’**

3.2 Following a review exercise, a new database containing all Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance at Committee was created and quarterly reporting to Committee commenced in March 2021. Appendix 1 is the latest quarterly update showing all active Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance which SP&R Committee is responsible for.

3.3 Closure of Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance

At SP&R Committee on 20th November 2020, it was agreed that Notices of Motion could be closed for one of two reasons:

- **Notices of Motion which contained an action(s) that has been completed; and**
- **Notices of Motion have become Council policy.**

3.4 SP&R Committee are asked to agree that the following 10 Notices of Motion are now closed:

Category 1 Recommended Closures:

- **Support for Striking Communication Workers Union (Ref 269) – This NOM called on the Council to support**

the decision by communication workers to engage in strike action to lift pay. It asked the Council to write to senior management of Royal Mail, BT and Openreach encouraging them to present a fair, above inflation pay offer to workers and host an all-party meeting of Councillors, officers and representatives from CWU engaging in strike action. A response was received on 15th September 2023 and an all-party meeting is being arranged. Therefore it is recommended that this NOM is now closed.

- **Department for Infrastructure – Standards of Repairs to Roads and Footpaths (Ref 320)** – This NOM called on the Council to write to DfI to raise the issue regarding the standard of repairs to roads and footpaths. A response has now been received and is being taken forward as part of ongoing engagement with the Department for Infrastructure. Therefore it is recommended that this NOM is now closed.
- **Save West Wellbeing Suicide Awareness (Ref 331)** – This NOM called on the Council to explore all options to fund the West Well Being Suicide Prevention Centre, including using reserve funds, if necessary, to source up to £50,000 so the organisation could continue to deliver its full range of services for the remainder of 2023. Following discussion it was agreed that all requests for funding would be dealt with via the revised discretionary payments policy. Further information was provided to the organisation but no application has been made. Therefore it is recommended that this NOM is now closed.
- **Future Management Structures of Lough Neagh (Ref 332)** – This NOM calls for the public acquisition of Lough Neagh from Lord Shaftesbury, an exploration of a right of nature for Lough Neagh and the future participation of communities in any future decision making. This call was passed at Committee. Therefore it is recommended that this NOM is now closed.
- **National Famine Memorial Day (Ref 336)** – This NOM called on the Council to write to the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media to request that Belfast host, in 2024, the National Famine Memorial Day, which takes place every May. A response was received and reported to SP&R in January 2024. Therefore it is recommended that this NOM is now closed.

- **Request for Update on Motion on Overdose Prevention Facility in Belfast (Ref 346)** – This Issue Raised in Advance called for a report to be submitted 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. An update was provided to SP&R in Jan 2024. Therefore it is recommended that this NOM is now closed.
- **Removal of the Maximum Value Cap on Domestic Rates (Ref 350)** – This NOM called for a fully restored Executive so that collective decisions could be made on important devolved matters. In addition, it asked that in light of consultation that will take place on this issue, the Council would also make this motion a collective submission to the consultation. The consultation response was agreed at SP&R in January 24 and ratified at Council in Feb 24 and has been submitted. Therefore it is recommended that this NOM is now closed.

Category 2 Recommended Closures:

- **GLL and Trade Unions (Ref 266)** – This NOM called on GLL to officially recognise trade unions in Belfast City Council leisure centres and for the Chief Executive of the Council to convene a meeting with the relevant trade unions to hear directly about the issues facing workers. The Chief Executive convened a meeting with the Trade Unions on 5th April 2023 and GLL now formally recognise the Trade Unions. Therefore it is recommended that this NOM is now closed.
- **Winter Outdoor Preparedness Strategy (Ref 302)** – This NOM called on the Council to work with key stakeholders to develop a funded winter outdoor preparedness strategy and action plan for the city, to be operational by Quarter 3 of the 2023/2024 financial year. An update report on Winter Preparedness was presented to the People and Communities Committee in November 2023. Therefore it is recommended that this NOM is now closed.
- **Corporate Communications – Language Policy (Ref 327)** – This Issue Raised in Advance called on the Council to issue a social media tweet in Irish marking the 130th anniversary of the founding of Conradh na Gaelige and grant approval, in advance of the Language Strategy Action Plan being approved, for social media

tweets marking similar illuminations to be issued in both English and the minority language. The social media tweet was issued on 18 August 23 and the draft Language Policy Action Plan was issued for public consultation in Oct 2023 and contain actions about social media tweets in all languages. Therefore it is recommended that this Issue Raised in Advance is now closed.

3.5 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no additional financial implications required to implement these recommendations.

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

There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications contained in this report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Governance

Change of Date Council Meeting in May

The Committee was reminded that the Council had previously approved the visit of the Lord Mayor and the Chief Executive to Sejong, South Korea in connection with joint innovation initiatives with Belfast.

The visit was set to take place from 25th April to 2nd May and would therefore clash with the May meeting of the Council.

In order to accommodate the attendance of the Lord Mayor and the Chief Executive at both events, the Committee was being asked to consider the change of date of the Council meeting in May from Wednesday 1st May to Tuesday 7th May.

This would in turn have a knock-on effect of the meeting of the People and Communities Committee and it was suggested that meeting be brought forward from Tuesday 7th to Thursday 2nd May.

The Committee agreed that:

- I. The Council meeting in May be moved from Wednesday 1st to Tuesday 7th May; and
- II. The meeting of the People and Communities Committee be brought forward from Tuesday 7th to Thursday 2nd May.

Consultation on Standing Orders Regulations

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The Department for Communities are seeking the views of Councils on the future contents of any proposed legislation dealing with Standing Orders, and in particular on the operation of call-in and what if any mandatory Standing Orders should be included in future legislation.

The purpose of this report is to seek SP&R approval on the Council position which will then be issued to the Department for Communities pending ratification by Council.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i. note the background in relation to Standing Order Regulations
- ii. agree the Council position outlined at paragraph 3.5
- iii. note the list of decisions called-in since April 2015 and the status of each (Appendix 3)

3.0 Main Report

Background

The Department for Communities issued a letter on 31 October seeking the views of Councils on the future contents of any proposed legislation dealing with Standing Orders (Appendix 1). The Department is, in particular, seeking information related to the operation of the ‘call-in’ procedure, which provides a mechanism by which councils may reconsider decisions already taken. The Council have been asked to identify and provide details of:

- any issues with the current ‘call-in’ process;
- how many decisions have been called-in since 1 April 2015;
- what type of decisions were called-in;
- on what grounds were they called-in; and
- what the outcome was – decision upheld or overturned.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer has collated the information on the numbers and status of all decisions called in since April 2015 which is presented at Appendix 3.

An extension to the deadline has been provided until February 2024.

3.2 Background to Standing Order Regulations

It was always the intention of the Department that they would introduce Standing Order Regulations in the Assembly which would include 'mandatory' standing orders which must be included in the standing orders of each of the 11 Councils.

In the interim period before the establishment of the new Councils, the Department issued a set of Model Standing Orders which were adopted by all of the new Councils and remain the basis for the existing standing orders within each of the 11 Councils.

The Department previously tried in 2015 and again in 2016 to bring forward Local Government (Standing Orders) Regulations (NI) but both sets of draft regulations were negated by the Assembly. This was mainly due to a disagreement on the 'merit principle' in relation to decisions called in on 'community impact' grounds.

3.3 Current arrangements in relation to Call In and Qualified Majority Voting

The procedures in relation to the 'reconsideration of a decision' (also referred to as 'call-in') are provided for by Section 41 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 and are outlined in more detail in the Councils Standing Orders (see Standing Order 48).

2014 Act

Section 41(1) of the 2014 Act indicates that the Council must make provision requiring reconsideration (or 'call-in') of a decision if 15 per cent of members of the council (which for Belfast City Council means at least 9 Members) present to the clerk of the council a requisition on either or both of the following grounds –

- a) that the decision was not arrived at after a proper consideration of the relevant facts and issues (i.e. 'procedural' grounds);
- b) that the decision would disproportionately affect adversely any section of the inhabitants of the district (i.e. 'community impact' grounds).

With regards to a decision called in on 'community impact' grounds, our current Standing Orders indicate that if the legal opinion deems the 'call in' to have merit, then the decision must be tabled at the next available meeting of the Council where it will be taken by a Qualified Majority Vote (i.e. where 80% of Members present and voting must be in favour of the decision).

If the legal opinion deems the 'call in' on community impact grounds not to have merit, then the original decision stands and should be implemented at the next available opportunity.

3.4 Proposals under Standing Order Regulations

The most recent Draft Standing Order Regulations 2016 were presented to the Assembly in 2016 but no agreement could be reached. (Appendix 2)

These would have made important changes to the Model Standing Orders adopted by each of the Councils, not least in relation to the operation of call-in and the list of those decisions which must be taken by a Qualified Majority Vote.

The Department received legal advice which indicated that the 'opinion' of the solicitor or barrister can only be on 'a point of law' and cannot be on the 'merit' principle as originally proposed – as this power was not provided by the primary legislation. According to the Department's legal advice, to assume this power would be 'ultra vires'.

The draft regulations provided that a call in made under 'community impact' grounds would only be taken by a qualified majority vote where a barrister has found that the decision is outside the powers of the council, is incompatible with EU law or convention rights, or is not in compliance with the council's equality scheme. In all other cases the decision would be implemented or tabled for ratification by the council.

3.5 The following proposed response is provided for Members consideration:

- **Belfast City Council have operated the call-in process consistently since April 2015. Details on the number of decisions called in, including the types of decisions, the grounds and the outcomes are included in Appendix 3.**
- **The Council would be broadly supportive of the proposals set out in the draft Standing Order Regulations 2016 which included a revision to the**

decisions which would be subject to Qualified Majority Vote.

- The Council supports the proposal that decisions called in under Section 41(1)(b) (i.e. on 'community impact' grounds) would only be subject to a Qualified Majority Vote where a solicitor or barrister has *opined under section 41(2) of that Act that there is a risk that the decision is:*
 - outside the powers of the council,
 - or is incompatible with EU law or Convention Rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998),
 - or is not in compliance with the council's equality scheme in so far as it relates to equality of opportunity (within the meaning of section 75(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998).
- The Council would also take this opportunity to raise a further related issue which arises out of Section 41 of the 2014 Act (Power to require decisions to be reconsidered).
- Section 41(1) requires Council's to make provision for reconsideration of decisions. Section 41(4) states that a 'decision' means a decision of the council or a committee of the council (and includes a decision to make a recommendation).
- In practice, this means that a decision taken by a Committee and which is not called, may nevertheless be called in following ratification at full Council (being a decision of the Council). This has the effect of prolonging the period following Council ratification before a decision can be implemented. In most cases any issue which arises as a result of a Committee decision before it reaches Council can either be resolved informally or the decision referred back to Committee for reconsideration. If that does not resolve the issue then the ultimate decision at Council could be subject to call-in.
- The Council would respectfully suggest that only one opportunity to avail of call-in is sufficient to address the issue which the legislation sought to address and avoids adding unnecessary bureaucracy to the decision-making process.

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.”

In response to a question from a Member in relation to the call-in of quasi-judicial decisions taken by the Planning and Licensing Committees which was now a requirement following the Harlands ruling, the Committee was advised that it was not the opinion of officers that this be reversed to the position outlined previously in The Local Government (Standing Orders) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 where these decisions were not subject to call-in but were of the view that such Committee decisions should remain as current following the legal ruling and be subject to the call-in process.

The Committee:

- i noted the background in relation to Standing Order Regulations;
- ii agreed the Council position outlined at paragraph 3.5 of the report; and
- iii noted the list of decisions called-in since April 2015 and the status of each as set out in Appendix 3 to the report.

Appointment of Members to the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners

The Committee considered correspondence dated 30 January which had been received from the Public Appointments Unit regarding the submission of Council nominees to be considered by the Permanent Secretary for the Department for appointment to the Board of the Belfast Harbor Commissioners.

The letter indicated that there was currently three Councillors in post with one vacancy. One Councillor had served two terms of appointment and could not be reappointed after 31 March 2024. The remaining two Councillors were due to complete their first term on 31 March 2024 and the DfI Permanent Secretary had decided that he was minded reappointing them for a further term to ensure continuity on the Board. If both eligible Councillors accepted the reappointments, then the DfI would be recruiting for two vacancies with the terms due to commence from 1 April 2024.

Accordingly, the Council had been asked to nominate at least six Councillors for appointment for the remaining two places.

In discussing the matter, a Member expressed the view that this was a step change from previous years when Councillors currently serving on the Board had to submit an application and be subject to an open and transparent recruitment process and this should apply to all nominees for the current term.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the matter on the appointment of Members to the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners and requested that a letter be forwarded to the Minister for Infrastructure stating that it was the Council's view that all 4 positions on the Board should be subject to an open recruitment/selection process as in previous years.

Governance update – restricted reports

The Interim City Solicitor submitted for the Committee's consideration the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 Following a number of recent issues which have arisen in relation to restricted reports and uncertainty about when information can be discussed publicly, it was considered that a report setting out the following be brought to Committee:

- **The grounds under which information may be exempt from disclosure under The Local Government Act 2014; and**
- **When information provided as part of a restricted report and discussion may be made public after a decision by a Working Group, Committee and Council.**

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **note the contents of this report; and**
- **agree that a reminder is issued to councillors and senior management in relation to the contents of this report.**

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 Members will be aware that a Notice of Motion has been received in relation to transparency and a subsequent report will be brought to Committee in respect of same. This paper is intended to provide clarity for members and officers in relation to the present processes in relation to restricted reports and information.

3.2 The Local Government Act 2014 ('the 2014 Act') introduced provisions aimed at ensuring local government is more accessible, transparent and accountable. The 2014 Act formalises the grounds upon which information can be restricted and the basis upon which press and public can be excluded during its consideration.

- 3.3 There is always a public interest in transparency and accountability, to promote public understanding of certain Belfast City Council matters. However the public interest is not necessarily the same as what interests the public.
- 3.4 Whilst the categories of information that may be restricted under the 2014 Act appear broad, an assessment of whether the public interest in disclosure outweighs the reason for restricting the information may need to be made in individual cases. This assessment is undertaken by the senior manager, usually a Director, who is responsible for authorising the reports being sent to Democratic Services for publication. Reports will also be screened by officers from Democratic Services to ascertain if a report or associated documents should be restricted.

The following points list the information and personal data that may be exempt from disclosure and provide examples covered by each.

1. Information relating to any individual

This includes information that will identify and will obviously be about a person. Data which identifies an individual, even without a name associated with it, may be personal data where it is processed to learn or record something about that individual, or where the processing of that information has an impact upon that individual in a personal, family, business or professional capacity.

2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual

Information on its own may not reveal an individual's personal data; however, when linked to other information, it may reveal details about an individual. In most cases an individual's name together with some other information will be sufficient to identify them. Simply because the name of an individual is not known does not mean that individual cannot be identified.

3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)

This can be information that will firstly identify an individual at points 1 & 2 above and can contain

information such as income, cashflow and details about business transactions. Financial or business affairs includes contemplated, as well as past or current activities. However financial information is not exempt from release if it has to be registered with the certain organisations such as Credit Unions, Companies House etc.

4. Information relating to any labour relations matter

This can involve the information gathered by the Council including personal data and includes information in relation to departmental restructuring; movement of staff to address particular council need; planned redundancies; Union balloted strikes etc.

5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings

This includes information that protects confidential communications (and evidence of those communications) between a lawyer and client provided that the communications are for the purpose of seeking and receiving legal advice in a relevant legal context. The client can include Councillors who are specifically seeking and obtaining legal advice from Legal Services.

6. Information which reveals that the council proposes to serve a notice or make an order under any statutory provision

This can include information surrounding and relating to notices issued pursuant to enforcement powers and this will include the details of the individuals and / or organisations involved.

7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

This involves information gathered and used by for the investigation of criminal behaviour.

3.7 Disclosure of information post Committee/Working Group

The rules in relation to the discussion of restricted reports are set out below:

The information which is contained within a restricted report remains restricted until it is formally unrestricted post decision. This is determined by the relevant Director in consultation with Democratic Services. Therefore the contents of the report and any detail about the discussion which took place on foot of the report remains confidential.

- 3.8 Some of the information which is contained within a restricted report may become publicly available as part of the minutes which are presented to Council for ratification. This will depend upon the type of restricted information which is contained within the report and must still comply with the Council's obligations under the 2014 Act and under GDPR.
- 3.9 The minute must however be sufficiently clear for the public to understand the decision which has been taken. The minute book is usually published 3 days prior to the Council meeting and is publicly available in its entirety. If members wish to discuss those items at Council, it may be necessary to move into restricted session so as to ensure that the Council complies with its legal obligations as set out above. The Chief Executive will provide advice to the Council in this regard.
- 3.10 Should a member have a concern about a report being restricted they should contact the reporting officer to discuss this prior to Committee. In the event that agreement cannot be reached the City Solicitor will provide advice on how to proceed.

Members are reminded about the report which was presented to Committee at its November meeting setting out internal measures which could be taken in respect of Members posting restricted information on social media - [Agenda for Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on Friday, 24th November, 2023, 9.30 am - Belfast City Council \(www.internalminutes\)](#). This set out the general duty of confidence and reminds members that disclosure of confidential information is a breach of paragraph 4.15 of the Councillor's Code of Conduct.

Financial and Resource Implications

None

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None.”

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The Committee:

- noted the contents of the report; and
- agreed that a reminder be issued to Councillors and senior management in relation to the contents of this report.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Belfast Agenda Statement of Progress

The Committee was advised that The Local Government Act (NI) 2014 required the Council and its community planning partners to make arrangements to monitor progress against meeting the objectives of the Belfast Agenda and the effectiveness of the actions taken in aiming to achieve those objectives. The legislation also required the Council to publish a report (Statement of Progress) assessing progress towards the outcomes and actions taken every two years.

The third statement of progress was due to be published covering the period end of 2021-2023. In recognition of the significant pressures which local Councils, and community planning partners, had faced over recent months in recovering from a worldwide pandemic, responding to the cost-of-living crisis and managing significant fiscal and budgetary pressures, a light touch approach had been adopted to producing the statement of progress. It was also important to recognise the intensive focus over the past 16 months to co-designing the refreshed Belfast Agenda and underpinning actions plans for the period 2024-2028.

Nevertheless, the statement of progress provided an opportunity for partners to update the public on the actions that had been undertaken or are ongoing through the community planning process. In addition, it demonstrated the impact of such actions on communities and local people as well as their contribution to the achievement of the ambitions and outcomes outlined in the Belfast Agenda.

The draft statement of progress had been developed in association with and input from community planning partners and highlighted a number of case studies and noteworthy achievements showcasing the work of partners over the last 24 months. The final draft statement of progress had been shared with community planning partners for final consideration and endorsement with feedback sought by 16 February 2024.

The Committee:

- i noted the statutory requirement for the Community Planning Partnership to publish a Statement of Progress (SoP) for the period 2021-2023;
- ii noted the engagement undertaken with and input from community planning partners in developing the draft SoP; and
- iii agreed that the final SoP be submitted to the Department for Communities.

Northern Ireland Executive Ministerial Meetings

The Committee was advised that, following the recent restoration of the NI Executive and appointments made to the respective ministerial portfolios, there were a number of key issues which it was hoped would now be taken forward by the NI Executive and NICS Departments which would impact, and possibly benefit, Belfast (for example, Poverty Strategy, Childcare Strategy, Climate Action Plan, infrastructure investment plans etc).

It was important that urgent engagement takes place with the incoming new Ministers on the key priorities, challenges and opportunities facing Belfast as well as encouraging greater collaboration with the Council in designing and delivering key programmes and informing future investment decisions. Real opportunity for Belfast to be seen as a test bed to accelerate delivery of key NI Executive ambitions around, for example creating jobs, supporting vulnerable people, creating shared communities, supporting children and families, maximising the potential of innovation to support growth and helping mitigate the impact of climate change whilst supporting green growth.

It was therefore proposed that a series of Ministerial meetings be sought with an All-Party delegation from the Council to discuss the strategic issues for the city. It was proposed that the All-Party delegation would consist of Party Group Leaders (or their nominees) as well as the Chief Executive / Deputy Chief Executive and relevant Chief Officers. Officers would develop supporting briefings which would set out the strategic issues, opportunities and considerations for these meetings.

The Committee agreed that:

- i. meetings be sought with the incoming new NI Executive Ministers; and
- ii. Party Group Leaders (or their nominees) and appropriate officers would attend such meetings.

Correspondence from Invest NI

The Members were reminded that, at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 23 November, it was requested that officers write to Invest NI seeking clarification on its future plans for the former Mackie's site within the context of housing led regeneration.

A response had been received from Invest NI which advised:

“The lands that comprise Invest NI’s Forthriver Business Park were acquired and developed with the intent they would be used for industrial purposes. The land has been developed as a business park and is held in support of economic growth. Invest NI continues to actively promote it to investors for this purpose. The consideration, development and/or promotion of housing sits outside our remit, and we would oppose the release of current industrial zoned land given the shortage of the same in

the immediate vicinity. Invest NI has consistently reiterated this position and will continue to do so.”

The Committee noted receipt of the correspondence.

Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The Director of Human Resources submitted the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To present the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and 3 year Action Plan to elected members.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the contents of this report.

3.0 Main report

A cross departmental Health and Wellbeing Working Group which included trade union representation was established to refresh the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and develop a 3-year action plan. The strategy has been fully consulted on through the Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee (JNCC).

3.2 Health and Wellbeing Strategy Goals

The Strategy defines the type of organisation that the Council wants to be to support the health and wellbeing of our employees. That is, an organisation:

- Where individuals feel valued and recognised for their contribution
- With increased employee engagement/motivation
- Where employees feel that they have the opportunity to develop
- With reduced absenteeism
- With good employee retention
- Where employees are clear about their role
- Where employees feel supported by their line manager
- Where employees improve their physical and mental health

3.3 It is based on the four strands of Business in the Community’s Workwell Model. These are:

- **Better Work – Create good work and working conditions that enhance employee wellbeing.**
- **Better Health & Wellbeing – Take a whole-person approach to wellbeing. The four pillars of wellbeing are physical, mental, financial and social health and wellbeing. All of which are inextricably linked.**
- **Better Management – Make employee mental health ‘business as usual’ for all leaders and people managers.**
- **Better Specialist Support – Take an inclusive and employee-led approach to providing support.**

3.4 Implementation and communication

Whilst the refresh of the strategy was ongoing, a programme of health and wellbeing activity was delivered and covered a range of topics including active travel, positive mental health, stress management, suicide awareness, finance, caring for carers and nutrition.

The revised strategy builds on our existing policies and initiatives and provides a series of actions aimed at producing a more cohesive, structured and corporate approach to health and wellbeing across the council with activity meets the needs of the organisation and our employees. Corporate HR will work closely with Marcomms and departments to ensure that employees are made fully aware of the health & wellbeing initiatives that are available and provided with the opportunity to attend/engage in planned activities where possible.

3.5 A Health and Wellbeing Champions Network

To help influence, drive and champion the programme of work, a network of health and wellbeing champions will be established. While the number of champions and role may vary across departments, roles and responsibilities will include:

- acting as a role model for promoting positive health and wellbeing practice within your organisation, team and department
- linking in with the health and wellbeing leads or the person responsible for delivering the health and wellbeing strategy in the organisation
- engaging with colleagues on health and wellbeing ideas/initiatives
- signposting staff to the wellbeing support that is available providing support to health and wellbeing leads

- encouraging colleagues to take breaks and to look after themselves, for example: drinking plenty of fluids, lunchtime walks, taking up hobbies
- making sure that colleagues are taking time to reflect and be aware of their physical and mental health.

3.6 A programme of training and support including Mental Health First Aid, will be put in place for the champions. It should be noted that champions are not expected to provide advice to colleagues. Wellbeing champions are there to listen and signpost colleagues to further support and information, including if they require mental health support.

3.7 Governance, measurement and reporting.

Progress on delivery of the actions will be reported to CMT on a six-monthly basis. These reports will measure progress on actual delivery against proposed timeframes. To measure the impact of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy the following qualitative and quantitative people performance indicators will be used:

- % staff agree that that they have opportunities to discuss their personal development
- % staff agree that there are opportunities for career growth
- % staff agree that they receive feedback and that their contribution is valued and recognised
- Continued retention of and improvement in external diversity accreditations and benchmarks
- Attendance at and evaluation of events and training; both office based and frontline staff
- Number of health checks carried out
- Attendance management statistics and reasons for absence
- Staff turnover
- Demand for counselling service
- Active travel surveys

3.8 Progress reports will also be included in quarterly absence reports to the Audit and Risk Panel.

3.9 Financial and Resource Implications

Costs associated with delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy will be met from the existing Corporate OD budget. Indicative costs for Years 1, 2 and 3 of the Strategy are £9770, £8000, and £7000 respectively. Any specific departmental requirements will be met from departmental learning and development budgets.

A full communication and awareness raising exercise for staff and managers will be implemented and directors will be required to ensure that the Strategy is fully communicated within their departments.

3.10 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

The draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy has undergone equality and rural needs screening and has been screened out.”

Noted.

Employability Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To provide the Committee with an update on the employability activity to promote inclusive growth through our role as an employer.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to

- note the contents of this report

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 The Inclusive Growth Strategy recognises that as a civic leader and large employer in Belfast we can and should set a strong example for others in driving best practice around employment and that the Council can make real progress towards the achievement of the council’s inclusive growth ambitions by looking at our own employment practices and the job opportunities we create. This report provides a summary of activity this year to date aimed at delivering on these ambitions.

Ring fencing and programme of support for the long term unemployed.

3.2 In the Inclusive Growth Strategy, the council has committed to ring fencing entry level posts, where there is a high volume of

posts to be filled, and support this through the provision of appropriate pre recruitment training programmes to benefit those furthest removed from the labour market.

3.3 As part of the current recruitment campaign to fill a number of General Operative vacancies and create a list of reserve candidates, 9 posts (25% of the permanent vacancies) have been ring fenced to candidates eligible to complete a pre recruitment training programme. Corporate HR has worked with the Employability and Skills team in the Place and Economy Department to deliver the programme to participants nominated by the Council's employability partner, Workforce.

3.4 The eligibility criteria of the programme are as follows:

- must live in Belfast (except the four nominations ringfenced to disability organisations)
- must meet the employee specification for the job they'll be applying for:
- must have been unemployed or economically inactive for at least 6 months or work less than 16 hours a week.

3.5 The programme ran from 19 January to 24 January, comprised of classroom-based learning which included guidance on how to complete the application form and two days of work experience on the job. Nine out of 19 nominated participants completed the programme. All 9 participants were invited to mock interviews on 13 February, but only 7 attended. All 9 participants were interviewed on 14 February and 5 have been recommended for appointment.

Support for agency workers

3.6 In addition, job application and interview skills training has been offered to all agency workers currently engaged in the General Operative role. A total of 73 attended the full training course with 2 attending the mock interview element only.

Participation in the JobStart Scheme

3.7 Following the success of the JobStart Scheme delivered in 2021/22, funding has been made available to the DfC through the Northern Ireland Office's New Deal Funding Initiative for a new JobStart Scheme.

3.8 To engage in the programme, the Council must ensure that:

- opportunities offered must not replace existing or planned vacancies or cause existing employees, apprentices or contractors to lose or reduce their employment
- job opportunities must last for six months, with a possible extension to 9 months for those who meet certain criteria
- job opportunities must offer at least 25 hours of employment per week
- jobs offered must pay at least the National Minimum Wage through PAYE
- Employers must develop a training plan to assist participants to gain new occupational and employability skills.

3.9 To participate in the programme the young person must be:

- 16-24 years old and on benefits
- be at risk of long-term unemployment or struggling to obtain employment
- be currently unemployed
- have been allocated a National Insurance number providing them with 'the right to work in NI'

3.10 The 9 JobStart vacancies were advertised the week commencing 12 February 2024 with a view to making appointments to the scheme to successful candidates in April.

Other employability support and outreach since 1 April 2023.

3.11 Job fairs and schools/universities support

- Attendance at 10 careers fairs (one targeted at people with disabilities),
- Delivery of 5 mock interview events at schools
- Delivery of an employability talk for a disability organisation,

3.12 Attendance at a further 3 careers fairs is scheduled for February and March 2024.

3.13 The Employability and Skills unit, Place and Economy Department organised a job fair in City Hall on 17 January to promote current vacancies across City & Neighbourhood Services and Property & Projects and promote the benefits of working for the Council. Corporate HR and departmental

operational staff were also in attendance. This event was very well attended, and it is hoped that it will have an impact on the number of applications received for difficult to fill posts.

Placements

- 3.14 Corporate HR is facilitating placements across the council on an ongoing basis in conjunction with disability organisations, Belfast Metropolitan College, schools and both universities.

Employability outreach for driver recruitment.

- 3.15 Over May/June 2023, as part of Combined HGV/LGV Driver recruitment, we delivered 2 information sessions at Duncrue for potential applicants which included the opportunity to register for mock interviews. In addition, in September 2023, Corporate HR engaged with participants at a Place and Economy Transport Academy information session regarding the Council's recruitment process and the benefits of working for Belfast City Council.

- 3.16 It should be noted that Marketing and Communications have played a key role in assisting with the promotion and advertising of recruitment opportunities and employability outreach opportunities using a variety of communication channels.

Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.17 There are no financial implications to this report.

Equality or Good Relations Implications

- 3.18 The Council's employability outreach activity is aimed at assisting those people who are furthest removed from the labour market and those who face most barriers to employment.
- 3.19 All recruitment is undertaken in accordance with the Local Government Staff Commission Code of Procedures for Recruitment and Selection and in accordance with Fair Employment legislation."

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

Apprenticeship Programme

The Director of Human Resources 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 outline options for a Belfast City Council apprenticeship programme including indicative costs.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the content of this report and determine next steps.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 The Inclusive Growth Strategy sets out the Council's commitment to addressing current and future recruitment needs through apprenticeships from entry-level through to higher-level technical and professional qualifications. Apprenticeships provide a sustainable route into employment across all levels of the workforce and as a council we are committed to embedding apprenticeships within our workforce planning strategy.

3.2 The Council has not undertaken an apprenticeship programme in recent years and in line with our commitment as set out in the Inclusive Growth Strategy, SP&R Committee at its meeting of 20 October 2023, requested that a paper be brought to a future meeting on introducing a Belfast City Council apprenticeship programme and the potential cost implications.

Previous apprenticeship programmes

3.3 When the Council previously recruited apprenticeships, these were in traditional roles such as Electricians, Joiners, Fleet Technicians, Plumbers, Gardeners and Painters. Our records indicate that since 2005, 38 apprentices were appointed into apprenticeship roles, 26 of whom went on to secure permanent posts in the Council with 2 currently engaged in Fixed Term Contract posts.

3.4 At the end of an apprenticeship programme, if permanent vacancies existed and the number of qualified apprentices was equal to the number of permanent jobs, apprentices were appointed automatically to those posts. Where the number of vacancies was less than the number of qualified apprentices,

the posts were ringfenced to the qualified apprentices, a selection process undertaken, and appointments made in order of merit.

Current funding arrangements

- 3.5 Belfast City Council does not have a central budget to fund apprenticeship programmes and previous apprenticeships have been funded by departments through realigning existing staffing budgets. There is a desire across all departments to explore apprenticeships and address strategic workforce planning challenges. However, the absence of a corporate budget or funding to create new apprenticeship opportunities continues to be a barrier. Elected Members will be aware that as a public authority, the Council is not able to access government funding for associated apprenticeship training costs, and while this presents an additional challenge, the main issue to be addressed going forward is the direct salary costs.

Potential areas to consider for a future apprenticeship programme

- 3.6 Elected Members asked officers to identify potential areas for apprenticeship programmes. Like many organisations, the Council has experienced difficulties in recent years in attracting applicants to certain roles and in particular, within technical areas where the current supply is not meeting employer demand. Two potential areas identified are:
- CNS, Fleet & Resources ; auto electricians and technicians
 - Digital Services; cyber security, support and systems development.

3.7 Financial and Resource Implications

The indicative salary costs for an apprenticeship programme in the Fleet & Resources and Digital Services are set out below. Apprenticeship programmes can take between 1 and 4 years to complete and the average time to complete is usually 3 years.

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Skill area	Level required	Approximate BCC Salary Grade	Approximate Annual Salary Costs per apprentice	Approximate Annual Training costs per apprentice
Auto Electrician / Auto Technician	Apprentice level 2 or 3	Scale 2	£30 000	£2000
Digital services	Higher level apprenticeship level 4 to 7	Scale 6	£40 000	£5000

In addition to the recurring salary costs for the period of the apprenticeships, there will be training costs which will vary depending on the specific course, approximate costs are set out in the table above,

3.8 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

Recruitment for an apprenticeship programme will be carried out in accordance with the Local Government Staff Commission’s Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection.”

The Committee noted the content of the report and agreed that a further report be submitted on how such a programme could be financed.

Response by NILGA to the Consultation on Non-domestic and Domestic rating measures to support budget sustainability by raising additional revenue

The Committee noted the correspondence received by the Council from NILGA in relation to the recent Department of Finance consultations on general revenue raising opportunities and the specific consultation on the revenue raising opportunities from the NI rates system.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Physical Programme Update

The Director of Property and Projects submitted for the Committee’s consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The Council’s Physical Programme currently includes over 400 capital projects via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on

behalf of external agencies. The Council's Capital Programme forms part of the overall Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. This report includes a review of recently completed and underway physical projects, requests for approvals relating to the Capital Programme, and for approval to procure as required for the Physical Programme.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Physical Programme Half Year Update - note the overall update on projects that have been completed recently and projects currently under construction at 3.1 to 3.5 below and in Appendix 1; and that the Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange a site visit to any projects that have been completed or are underway.
- Capital Programme Movements - to agree the following movements under the Capital Programme:
 - IT Programme – F5 Access Policy Manager / Web Application Firewall project – note that a satisfactory tender return has now been achieved and that it is recommended that a maximum £30,200 is now allocated to this project.
 - City Hall External Christmas Tree project – move the project to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to enable development of an outline business case.
 - Dual Language Street Signs - Gaeltacht Quarter project – add the project to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.
- Fleet Programme 2024/2025 – note the agreed Fleet Programme for 2024/25
- City Hall Statues – note the update on the programme of events to mark the installation of the two new statues in City Hall grounds of Winifred Carney and Mary Ann McCracken on Friday 8th March – International Women's Day as outlined in 3.11 below.
- Procurement process for 2024/25 Non-Recurrent Programme, Fleet Programme and Externally Funded Projects - agree that any necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated for any Physical Programme projects in 2024/25 including Fleet Replacement Programme, non-recurrent programme and

externally funded projects as required with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Physical Programme

Members will be aware that the Council runs a substantial Physical Programme. This includes the rolling Capital Programme – a multimillion regeneration programme of investment across the city which improves existing Council assets or provides new council facilities. The Council also delivers externally focused funding streams such as Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Local Investment Fund (LIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF), as well as numerous physical programmes and standalone projects that we deliver for central government. Our funding partners include National Lottery Heritage Fund, SEUPB Peace IV, the Executive Office, DfC, DfI including the Living with Water Programme, DAERA, Ulster Garden Villages, Levelling Up Fund (LUF) and others. When appropriate, the Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange site visits to any projects that have been completed.

3.2 Physical Programme Half Year Update

Members are aware of the scale of the Council's Physical Programme via a range of internal and external funding streams. Below is a brief summary of projects completed over the last six months, as well as a sample of projects currently underway.

3.3 Recently completed projects:

- **Templemore Baths** – launch of the major £17m restoration of Templemore Baths with a focus on heritage and spa provision. The centre is open to the public and membership targets have been surpassed. This is the sixth of seven outstanding new leisure facilities to be launched in the last seven years as part of the £105 million Leisure Transformation Programme.
- **Marrowbone Millennium Park** – a significant £4.3m partnership project with DfC, Urban Villages, and NIHE. New facilities include an IFA intermediate standard 3G pitch; a pavilion with 128 spectator seats, a multi-use community space and accessible changing facilities; a new play park; a multi-use games area; an outdoor gym and a community events space.

- **Forth Meadow Community Greenway** - an ambitious and transformational £6.2m EU PEACE IV-funded scheme to connect existing open spaces in north and west Belfast along a 12km route from Clarendon Playing Fields to the new Transport Hub in the city centre. The signage package to be installed includes feature panels, narrative panels and beacon lights along all sections, subject to Council approval.
- **Belfast Zoo - Large Cats Enclosure and Sea Lion Pool** – the project eradicated immediate health and safety issues at Belfast Zoo in particular the lion enclosure and the water treatment plant at the Sea Lion pool. It also included a new viewing area and enhancement of zoo trails with greening and art.
- **Brown's Bridge** – bridge replacement works have been completed and the bridge is open to the public. The bridge in Lagan Meadows had been closed due to structural defects and associated health and safety risks to the public.
- **Frederick Douglass Statue** – installation of a figurative sculpture celebrating the abolitionist, social reformer and early champion of women's rights in Rosemary Street.
- **IT Security Log Manager Replacement** - replacement of the Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) log collector which is critical to protect the Council's IT infrastructure against cyber-attack.
- **Other projects completed in the last six months include –**
 - Strangford Avenue Playing Fields path and gate improvements
 - Loughside Park Trim Trail
 - New covered cycle stands at Avoniel and Lisnasharragh Leisure Centres
 - Boundary wall at Shankill Graveyard
 - Household Waste & Recycling Centres new skips and compactors
 - Cavehill Country Park playground embankment slide
 - Whiterock Leisure Centre pitch floodlight upgrade
- **Planned Maintenance** – repair and maintenance work at Belfast Zoo, Grove Wellbeing Centre, Shankill Leisure Centre, Victoria Park, Thomas Patton Memorial Park, and also enhancements to metering and installation of Solar Film to the Waterfront Hall as part of the Climate Programme.
- **BIF Programme: Midland Boxing Club** – completion of the boxing facility extension at Cultra Street.

- **SOF Programme: Roddy McCorley Heritage Centre** – development of a modern interpretative museum and works on the existing grounds now complete.
- **LIF Programme: Cregagh Sports Club** – phase 2 of works completed including ball-catch nets, car parking and hot water system; Lagan Village Youth & Community Association – community garden and outdoor urban space completed; and refurbishment of Star Neighbourhood Centre including outdoor improvements recently completed.
- **ABC Trust Health and Leisure Hub** – this £5.9m partnership project via DfC, DfI, Flax Trust, Urban Villages and LIF involves the transformation of a derelict building formerly St Gemma’s High School into a modern, purpose built health and leisure community facility. Phase 1 of the project has been completed which provides a modern, purpose-built sports hall, support space and accommodation for Building Change Trust (BCT NI).
- **Colin Healthy Living Centre** – this new community sports facility provides greater access to health and fitness facilities, supports mental health and wellbeing and promotes good relations for local residents. Delivered by the Council on behalf of the Executive Office as part of the Urban Villages Initiative.
- **Social Investment Fund** – over the last number of years, the Property & Projects Department has been assisting the Executive Office to deliver their SIF Programme across Belfast. All Council delivered projects are now complete and the programme is drawing to a close. A summary of the work the Council has delivered for the Executive Office under this fund is at Appendix 2.

3.4 **Physical projects underway:**

- **Ballysillan Playing Fields** - this is a £7.5m partnership project with DfI’s Living with Water Programme, DfC and Urban Villages. Design and engagement stages have been carried out and a Planning decision is awaited. It is anticipated that the contractor will be on site in Spring 2024 subject to planning approval.
- **Pitt Park** – the £1.7 million redevelopment of Dr Pitt Memorial Park is well underway on site, funded by Urban Villages. Its aim is to create an attractive, safe and accessible area where families, children, and people of all ages can get active, have fun and enjoy the rich heritage of the area.
- **City Hall Statues** – Winifred Carney and Mary Ann McCracken – sculptures of both women will be installed in the grounds of Belfast City Hall. Mary Ann McCracken was

an abolitionist, social reformer and activist who fought for the rights of women and championed Belfast's poor, and Winifred Carney was a suffragist, trade unionist and Irish independence activist. Work is underway at the foundry and the aim is to hold the unveilings on International Women's Day on Friday 8 March 2024 (see 3.11 below).

- **Lagan Gateway Greenway Phase 2** – work continues on the next stages of this major investment of £5m in a new navigation lock, iconic foot and cycle bridge and new path connections.
- **Shankill Shared Women's Centre (Peace IV)** – this significant new building is nearing completion with an official opening anticipated in June 2024.
- **Black Mountain Shared Space Centre (Peace IV)** – Works due for completion. For the next phase, the design team has been appointed, a Planning submission has been submitted and procurement of the main contractor is underway.
- **The Lockhouse** - this £2.7m partnership project will reimagine a historic and culturally important residential building along the Lagan towpath into a community focal point for good relations activity and cross-community partnership working including minority ethnic communities. Funded by LIF, DfC, DfI and Urban Villages. Works underway on site.
- **ABC Trust Health and Leisure Hub** – Phase 2 of the project has commenced which comprises a community café, boxing club, minor halls, community gym and office space.
- **Playground Improvement Programme** – Loughside Park, North Link and New Lodge playgrounds.
- **Corporate projects** – range of IT projects to ensure business continuity and ongoing delivery of Fleet replacement programme.
- **LIF and BIF** - a total of 3 projects on site under the BIF Programme, 16 completed to date; and a total of 5 projects are on the ground under the LIF Programme, 126 projects completed to date.

3.5 **Physical projects in development:**

The remainder of the Physical Programme includes projects in the development stage (*Stage 2 – Uncommitted, Stage 1 – Emerging* or equivalent) including:

- **Capital Programme:** Cathedral Gardens, New Crematorium, Belfast Stories, Reservoir Safety Programme, Alleygates Phase 5, LTP Girdwood Indoor Sports Facility, Waste Plan, HWRCs & CAS Containers, Relocation of Dunbar Link Cleansing Depot, New Cemetery, Access to the Hills – connections from Cavehill to Black Mountain, Sydenham

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Greenway, Glencairn Park/Ligoniel Park Greenway, Black Mountain / Upper Whiterock Greenway, Colin Greenway, City Hall – Installation of 2 Stained Glass Windows.

- **Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund – 16 projects have recently moved to *Stage 3 – Delivery* and 7 projects are at *Stage 2 – Development* stage.**
- **A range of other schemes including the remaining LIF, BIF and SOF projects plus other externally funded projects such as Paisley Park.**
- **Peace Plus – Reconnected Belfast – the Waterworks and Alexandra Park upgrades and projects under the Local Action Plan.**

Capital Programme - Proposed Movements

3.6 Members agreed that all capital projects must go through a three stage process where decisions on which capital projects progress are taken by the Committee. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project. Members are asked to note the following activity on the Capital Programme:

Project	Overview	Stage movement
IT Programme – F5 Access Policy Manager Project / Web Application Firewall	Procurement and commissioning of the F5 security suite consisting of Web Application Firewall and VPN modules. Maximum of £30,200 to be allocated	Stage 3 – Committed
City Hall Christmas Tree Provision	Consideration of options for replacement of the current Christmas Tree provision in front of the City Hall with an alternate solution.	Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted
Dual Language Street Signs - Gaeltacht Quarter	The erection of dual language street signs en bloc with the Gaeltacht Quarter.	Add to Stage 1- Emerging

3.7 IT Programme – F5 Access Policy Manager Project

In October 2023, Members agreed to move the *IT programme - F5 Access Policy Manager/ Web Application Firewall project* to *Stage 3 – Committed* pending a satisfactory tender return. The tender return has now been received. The Director of Finance

has confirmed that it is within the affordability limits of the Council. Members are now asked to agree a budget for the F5 Access Policy Manager/ Web Application Firewall project of a maximum of £30,200.

3.8 City Hall Christmas Tree Provision

In June 2023, the City Hall Christmas Tree Provision project was added to *Stage 1- Emerging* under the Capital Programme. The City Hall Christmas tree is a major focal point within the City Centre and can set the tone for the city's Christmas celebrations, both for visitors and the local economy. Issues with tree quality and supply are expected to increase in future years and Members may wish to consider exploring a suitable alternative. Options are now being explored in detail to replace the tree with an alternative sustainable option. As per the three stage approvals process, a Strategic Outline Case has been completed and the team can now progress to Outline Business Case stage.

Members are asked to agree that 'Christmas Tree Provision' be moved to the Capital Programme *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* project to allow the options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.

3.9 Dual Language Street Signs - Gaeltacht Quarter

In November 2023, the Council agreed that Dual Language Street signs in the Gaeltacht Quarter would be taken forward en bloc and that the project would be delivered as a capital project. Members are asked to note that the scheme is being progressed at pace, working closely with Building Control as client and that further stage movements are anticipated to come forward shortly.

Members are asked to agree that the Dual Language Street Signs - Gaeltacht Quarter project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.

3.10 Capital Programme - Fleet Programme 2024/25

Members will know that the Council needs to run and maintain a substantial fleet in order to deliver its services. There is a rolling allocation of £2.2m towards the Fleet Programme for 2024/25 with an additional budget allocation of £2m in year under the Capital Programme at Stage 3. The Fleet Programme has been developed in conjunction with Council departments and reflects the service needs of the organisation, and there

are ongoing issues caused by the high age profile and condition of the fleet operating well beyond its recommended operational life cycle. The purchase of these vehicles will also assist in the harmonisation of vehicle types as recommended in the AECOM report of 2021. It will also result in the replacement of Euro 5 engines with Euro 6 equivalents which have an improved emissions standard. The agreed Fleet Programme for 2024/25 is attached at Appendix 3.

Members are asked to note the agreed Fleet Programme for 2024/25.

- 3.11 **City Hall Statues** - Members will be aware that the installation of two new statues in City Hall Grounds of Mary Ann McCracken and Winifred Carney has been agreed. Committee was advised last month that these would be formally revealed on Friday 8th March which is fitting as it is International Women's Day. The inclusion of two women, whose contribution to the City, their values, beliefs, what they strived to achieved throughout their lives still very much resonates with today's society. The two new pieces in City Hall grounds will bring to the fore the issues still faced by our diverse society within the City, stimulating debate and discussion.

The proposed programme for the 8th March includes –

- Event to mark the installation – 2pm in the City Hall Grounds. Speakers to include the Lord Mayor, the artist and a representative from ICTU.
- Panel discussion/debate, to include some drama, poetry and music – evening event in the City Hall.

Plans include the publication of a booklet which will be given out at both events and available after, a shortened version of which will be published on Council's website and accessed through a QR code on the statue.

Members will note that there is likely to be significant media attention in the new statues and a full comms plan is being developed around this. Given the level of media interest and coverage generated by the Frederick Douglass statue it is anticipated that City Hall statues will supercede that. The last additions to City Hall grounds were the Titanic Memorial Gardens opened 15 April 2012 and Operation Banner Memorial in 2013. Members will be kept up to date and will receive invitations to both events.

3.12 Approval to Procure 2024/25

Members are asked to agree that any necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated for any Physical Programme projects in 2024/25 including Fleet Replacement Programme, non-recurrent programme and externally funded projects as required with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.

3.13 Financial and Resource Implications

Financial Implications:

- IT Programme – F5 Access Policy Manager Project - Up to a maximum of £30,200.
- Fleet Programme - There is a rolling allocation of £2.2m towards the Fleet Programme for 2024/25 with an additional budget allocation of £2m in year under the Capital Programme.

The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

Resource Implications – Officer time to deliver as required.

3.14 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Asset Management

The Committee:

- I. **Woodbourne Environmental Improvement Scheme – Asset Transfer** - approved the transfer of 5 no. green spaces from the Department for Communities (DfC) to the Council upon completion of the scheme. The asset would transfer at nil value and the Council would receive revenue funding from DfC for maintenance of the asset for the initial three years.

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- II. **River Terrace – Deed of Dedication** - approved the completion of a Deed of Dedication to Urban Villages in respect of the works carried out as part of the redevelopment of the Lockhouse at River Terrace.
- III. **Boodles Dam, Ligoniel Park – Land acquisition and disposal** - approved the land acquisition and disposal of plots at Boodles Dam to facilitate the Ligoniel Park Environmental Improvement Scheme. Land and Property Services had assessed the transfer values and the result was a net consideration of £4,105 payable from the Council to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive,

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Contracts

The Committee:

- approved the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Table 1 below;
- approved the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Table 2 below;
- approved the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Table 3 below; and
- noted the award of retrospective Single Tender Actions in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Table 4 below:

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Investigation Support for Security Incidents	Up to 3 years	£60,000	P Gribben	Break fix support on security appliances. Specialist support for security related projects.
Daisy Mitel Systems & Support	Up to 2 years	£196,500	S McNicholl	Corporate telephony solution to include Mitel Systems, Redbox Recording and CRM Connector + SMS functionality with ongoing maintenance, support and software assurance
Coach Hire Services	Up to 4 years	£400,000	D Sales	The service shall be used by various Council departments to provide

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				a transport service including for seasonal activities within the Community such as Summer Schemes, Halloween, Christmas and Easter time.
Catering Services at Belfast Zoo.	Up to 5 years	£900,000	D Martin	Catering service provider to manage the catering outlets at Belfast Zoo
Framework for Goods For Resale at Belfast Zoo	Up to 4 years	£520,000	D Martin	Supply of a range of goods (i.e. toys, souvenirs etc) to sell in shops at Belfast Zoo.
Maintenance of Containers and Compactors	Up to 4 years	£330,000	D Sales	This service ensures that skip containers and compactors are maintained and working properly to enable recycling centres to manage the waste received from householders.
Supply of Park and Memorial Benches	Up to 5 years	£200,000	D Sales	Tender required for the supply of park and memorial seats/benches. Majority of seats/benches are re-sold to customers at the Crematorium/Cemeteries.
IT Technical Research and Guidance	Up to 2 years	£45,400	P Gribben	Gartner for IT Leaders provides in-depth technical research and guidance to help Digital Services advance the initiatives/projects that support execution of the IT strategy.
Electric City Centre Power Washer Vehicle	One off purchase	£50,000 (fully funded by DfC)	D Sales	Provision of electric vehicle fitted with hot & cold power washer to be used around the city centre as part of the

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				Cleansing Fleet Enhancement Project.
Christmas Lights	Up to 5 years	£2m	D Martin	The Council wishes to refresh it's Christmas lighting display to animate the city over the festive period and attract additional visitors to the city. A Contractor will be procured to support the delivery.

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason
Maintenance & Support for SAP, SRM & VIM	Up to 1 year	£77,700	P Gribben	Ongoing maintenance & support is required until a replacement Financial System project is complete. Go Live of new system is scheduled in Q1 of FY24/25.	HCL Technologies Ltd	11
City Matters Distribution - Royal Mail	Up to 2 years	£100,000	E McConville	Distribution of City Matters Magazine as required to all residents within the Belfast City Council electoral area. This requirement was recently tendered via	Royal Mail Door to Door	1

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				open competition, but no bids were received.		
NIHE (Support and Maintenance) Licenses	Up to 3 years	£1,100,000	S McNicholl	Continued maintenance & support required for NI Housing Executive's 'NIHE' Housing Benefit system which is hosted by BCC but recharged to NIHE (fully funded). NEC are the only available service provider for maintenance and support services of this system.	NEC Software Solutions	3

Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Original Contract Duration	Modification required	SRO	Description	Supplier
Provision of young tree maintenance, tree planting and minor horticultural works	Up to 5 years	Additional 3 months and £80,000	D Sales	A further 3-month extension is required to facilitate a re-tendering exercise. Tender documents being finalised and should be advertised to	Clive Richardson Ltd.

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				market in Feb 24. Delays experienced due to resourcing issues in the Department and additional work required to review and re-draft tender documents to incorporate new service requirements. Note - a previous a contract modification for a 4-month extension was previously approved by Committee in October 23.	
Collection and Recycling of Scrap Metal	Up to 4 years	Additional 4 months. Income based contract. Projected £65k income over 4 months.	D Sales	A 4-month extension is required to facilitate a re-tendering exercise. Tender documents being finalised and should be advertised to market in March 24. Delays experienced due to heavy workload within the Department at this time.	Avenue Recycling Ltd
Procurement of Public Bike Share Scheme. LOT 1: Design supply maintenance &	Up to 9 years	Additional 9 months and £391,000	J Greer	Extension of current operator contract for a maximum of nine months to allow further work to be undertaken to	NSL Service Group

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operation of the scheme			define specification for tender competition for new operator contract. Given the expansion of the network, the potential to have social enterprise/co-operative involvement in the operation and the potential for the inclusion of e-bikes and accessible bikes a significantly different specification is required. It has been agreed to hold a Members Workshop to inform this. Note - this was submitted to Committee in January 24 but was not approved at the time. Re-submitted for approval.	
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Table 4: Retrospective STAs

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason
Provision of an accurate digital 3D model of the Belfast City	Up to 3 years (Contract award date of	Up to £33,600	P Gribben	There is no other supplier that can offer this solution without significant	VU.CITY	3

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	17th May 23)			<p>duplication of resources, costs and time to build the Belfast data layers.</p> <p>VU.CITY already has a significant portion of city mapped, including 262,835 trees, accurate to height & canopy as well as 55,594 buildings.</p>		
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STA/ Direct Award Reasons

Reason Code	Reasons in line with Public Contact Regulations
1	No response following advertised procurement exercise
2	Creation or acquisition of a unique work of art or artistic performance
3	Competition is absent for technical reasons (no reasonable substitute exists)
4	The protection of exclusive rights, including intellectual property rights
5	Extreme urgency brought about by events unforeseeable by BCC, the time limits for a procurement cannot be complied with.
6	Products manufactured purely for the purpose of research, experimentation, study or development
7	Additional deliveries which are intended either as a partial or extended replacement of supplies or installations where a change of supplier would result in supplies of different technical characteristics causing incompatibility or disproportionate technical difficulties in operation and maintenance
8	Supplies quoted and purchased on a commodity market
9	Supplies or services on particularly time-limited advantageous terms e.g. supplier winding up its business activities
10	New works and services consisting of the repetition of similar works or services, provided that the possibility of a direct award is disclosed during the original tender process
11	Other – Reason not in line with Public Contract Regulations (PCR 2015)

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**Commercial and Procurement Services
Social Value Working Group update**

The Committee noted the contents of report which provided details of the delivery of the social value outcomes via the Council's tender competitions awarded in accordance with the Council's Social Procurement Policy.

Operational Issues

**Minutes 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 15th February.

**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 9th February, as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
2024 EVENTS						
Lagmore Youth Project	21 March 2024	Lagmore Youth Awards to recognise the achievements of local young people through qualifications and development of community in West Belfast Numbers attending – 150C &	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>
Roma Support Hub	9 April 2024	Living Library engagement event to celebrate International Roma Day	D	No charge as charity	No hospitality as Good Relations funding the event	Approve No Charge No hospitality

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
		Numbers attending - 40				
HERE NI	13 May 2024	Launch of LGBT Awareness Week 2024 showcasing events and projects . Numbers attending – 150C &	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>
EALTA – European Association for Language Testing and Assessment	8 June 2024	Reception and dinner for the 2024 EALTA Conference 2024. for guests attending their 6-day conference taking place in Stranmillis University. Numbers attending - 120	A & B	No charge as charity and linked to Visit Belfast	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
Queens University	15 August 2024	EPS Summer School 2024 Finale - Drinks Reception, Awards, Dinner and Entertainment for international students attending a 4-week summer school.	B	Charge £300	No hospitality	Approve Charge £300 No hospitality

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
		Numbers attending - 120				
Swim Ulster / Swim Ireland / British Swimming	27 September 2024	European Aquatics Annual Congress 2024 Gala Dinner for guests attending 3-day seminar. Numbers attending - 300	B	Charge £825	No hospitality	Approve Charge £825 No hospitality
Ulster Journals Ltd	3 October 2024	Ulster Tatler Awards 2024 Drinks Reception, Awards, Dinner and entertainment. Numbers attending - 350 – 400	B	Charge £825	No hospitality	Approve Charge £825 No hospitality
Lanyon Group Event Management	24 October 2024	IFA McDonalds Community Football Awards – Celebrating the volunteers who help deliver their programs – reception, dinner, entertainment and awards. Numbers attending - 200	C	Charge £825	No Hospitality	Approve Charge £825 No Hospitality

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
Children's Kidney Fund NI	30 November 2024	Centenary of 74th Scout Group Anniversary Celebration- Drinks Reception, Dinner, Speeches and entertainment. Numbers attending – 200	C & D	No charge as charity	Yes, Wine Reception as significant anniversary	Approve No Charge Wine Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on arrival</i>
Belfast Bible College	6 December 2024	Graduation and Reception – reception event to mark the graduation and achievements of the students at the college. Numbers attending - 150	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.</i>
2025 EVENTS						
Cancer Fund for Children and Cash for Kids	1 March 2025	Cancer Fund Support Group Recognition event to celebrate volunteer's effort to raise £50,000 for Cancer Fund for Children and Cash for Kids Numbers attending – 300	C	No charge as charity and voluntary	Yes, Wine and Soft drinks reception.	Approve No Charge Wine and Soft drinks reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer.</i>

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
2026 EVENTS						
Royal Belfast Academical Institution 74th Scout Group	28 March 2026	Centenary of 74th Scout Group Anniversary Celebration- Drinks Reception, Dinner, and entertainment. Numbers attending – 200	C & D	No Charge as charity	Yes, Wine and Soft drinks Reception as significant anniversary	Approve No Charge Wine and Soft drinks Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on arrival</i>
Northern Ireland Prison Service	26 October 2026	Welcome Reception for Annual Conference of the International Corrections and Prisons Association for guests attending their 3-day conference taking place at ICC. Numbers attending - 500	A & B	No charge as charity and linked to Visit Belfast	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality

Requests for use of the Council Chamber for Northern Ireland Schools Debating Competition

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from the Belfast Building Trust for the use of the Council Chamber on 3rd May 2024 for the Grand Final of the Northern Ireland Schools Debating Competition.

The Members were reminded that Committee approval was required for the use of the Council Chamber by an outside body. Although such approval was rarely sought, the Committee has previously approved the use of the Council Chamber for similar events.

The Northern Ireland Schools Debating Competition was an annual event which been founded by the Lord Lieutenant, Fionnuala Jay-O'Boyle, in 1993 to encourage mature debate and civic engagement amongst young people. Thousands of students had

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participated in the competition, with over 80 teams from across Northern Ireland entering annually. Topics ranged from foreign affairs to planning. It was organised as part of the civic charitable work of Belfast Buildings Trust.

The Committee approved the application by Belfast Building Trust to:

- use the chamber and function rooms, with no room charge applicable due to charity status; and
- agreed to offer a tea and coffee hospitality reception.

Request for use of City Hall grounds - Belfast Photo Festival Photographic Exhibition in June 2024

The Committee was reminded that requests for the use of City Hall grounds were normally dealt with under the authority delegated by the Committee to the Director of Legal and Civic Services using criteria agreed for this purpose. Occasionally, however, it was necessary to place such requests directly before the Committee and the request set out below falls into this category.

A request has recently received from the organiser of the Belfast Photo Festival (BPF) to have a photographic exhibition in the grounds of the City Hall from 8th – 28th June, 2024. The BPF was the visual arts festival of Northern Ireland and one of the leading photography festivals in the UK. In 2023 the festival had attracted 100,000 visitors across 24 city centre venues and was one of the city's major art events.

The Interim City Solicitor advise that, each year, the City-wide festival included the grounds of the City Hall as a primary location for both photographic exhibitions and other events and she provided details of previous events.

Belfast Photo Festival had provided two exhibition proposals for the 2024 Festival and was seeking Committee approval for both; however, only one proposal would be chosen, and BFF would confirm the proposal they wished to host in the City Hall grounds. The theme for 2024 was 'Divergence' and focused on photography's ability to capture and reflect the world around us. BPF 2024 would explore how contemporary photographers were responding to and offering reimagining to overcome the profound polarity and divisions prevalent in our globalised world.

The proposals were from two contemporary artists: *Photo with a teddy bear* by Polish artists Barbara Caillot and Aleksandra Karkowska; and *Walking Back to Happiness* by British Artist Maisie Cousins.

The exhibition would be installed on the West and East Lawn of City Hall grounds on 8th June and dismantled on 28th June 2024. It would be free for members of the public to view daily in line with the opening times of the grounds.

The Good Relations and Corporate Communications Units would review the exhibition images included in the proposal but presently no negative good relations implications have been identified which should stop the exhibition being hosted at the City Hall.

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The Committee:

1. approved the request by Belfast Photo Festival to use City Hall grounds from 8 to 28 June 2024 to display a photographic exhibition as part of the Belfast Photo Festival; and
2. authorised the exhibition in line with similar events previously approved by Council.

Illumination Request

The Committee considered a report regarding a request from a member of the public to illuminate the City Hall to mark the birthday of the President of Ireland, Michael Higgins.

The Members were reminded that requests for the use of the City Hall LED illumination system were managed by the Functions Management team which reviewed requests in line with criteria approved by the Committee.

This request had been received from a member of the public who had noted that the City Hall was illuminated for HM King Charles' birthday. In recent years the Members had approved previous illuminations received from members of the public which did not meet the criteria, that is, 4 in 2021, 1 in 2022 and 1 in 2023.

The Committee approved a request for the illumination of the City Hall to mark the birthday of the President of Ireland, Michael Higgins on 18 April 2024.

Minutes of the Social Policy Working Group - 13 February

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Social Policy Working Group of 13th February.

Minutes of the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group - 8 and 14 February

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meetings of the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Working Group of 8th and 14th February.

Minutes of the Language Strategy Working Group – 26 January and 9 February

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meetings of the Language Strategy Working Group of 26th January and 9th February.

Minutes of the City Centre Working Group -17 January

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the City Centre Working Group of 17th January.

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Minutes of the Disability Working Group 30 January

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Disability Working Group of 30th January.

Chairperson

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People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 6th February, 2024

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murray (Chairperson);
Councillors Bell, Black, Bower, R. Brooks, Bunting,
Canavan, Cobain, de Faoite, M. Donnelly,
R-M Donnelly, Flynn, Kelly, Magee, Maghie,
McAteer, Ó Néill and Verner.

In attendance: 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

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Doherty.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 9th and 24th January were taken as read and signed as correct.

It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st February.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Canavan and M. Donnelly declared an interest in Agenda Items 3 (a) Presentation – Belfast Advice Group and 3 (b) Funding Request from Belfast Advice Group as they were associated with organisations which were in receipt of funding from the Advice Service and they both left the meeting whilst the agenda items were being considered.

Presentations

Open Botanic - Forward South Partnership

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Ms. Briege Arthurs (Chief Executive, FSP), Maggie McKeever (Urban Regeneration Officer, FSP) and Rachel Murphy (QUB StreetSpace).

Together, the representatives provided an overview of the Open Botanic Festival advising that it was an opportunity for members of the public to see what it was like to "experience the diverse, busy thoroughfare in a totally different way".

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The representative advised that the Forward South Partnership, through the Open Botanic Festival, a community led festival, was leading the discussion around changes to the streets of Belfast with fewer cars in order to give better access to pedestrians and cyclists, reduce pollution and improve health. With the aid of powerpoint they demonstrated how Street Space worked in collaboration with academia, government and local communities to analyse streets and fulfil their potential to be people-centred, accessible and inclusive public places. This included comprehensive international and regional evidence of the benefits, along with the need to challenge perceptions about reducing traffic on streets.

The Members were advised of the various challenges associated around vehicle use and busy streets. These included people experiencing feelings of danger and unsafety from traffic, from anti-social behaviour, unpleasant environments and the loss of public space, parking and access problems and public transport provision challenges forcing people to use vehicles.

The representative drew the Members' attention to the progress made by Street Space on various projects, in particular the Shaftesbury Square and Botanic Avenue Master Plan.

The Committee was then provided with an overview of the successful Open Botanic Festival 2023, as follows:

- Over 2300 participants;
- Over 20 health, community and not for profit organisations involved;
- 6 community groups involved in kiosk co-design;
- 100 adults and children participated in the Art Workshop;
- 30 Vox Pop interviews;
- 22 About Today questionnaires;
- 21 Street Surveys; and
- 22 Partner Event Evaluation Surveys.

The representatives concluded by detailing the positive impact of Open Botanic from the various participants and end users and stated that they looked forward to further enhancing and growing this experience.

Following discussion, during which the Members commended the work done by the various stakeholders, the Chairperson thanked the representatives for their presentation and they left the meeting.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following five 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 five items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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The Members were advised that content of 'restricted' reports and any discussion which takes place during closed session must be treated as 'confidential information' and no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

Presentation - Belfast Advice Group

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. Gerry Tubritt and Ms. Maria Morgan, representing the Belfast Advice Group (BAG), to the meeting.

With the aid of PowerPoint, they provided details on the support that BAG currently provided through funding agreements to the five area consortiums to deliver generalist advice services across all geographies within the city and also through annual Council funding to support the Citywide Tribunal Service (BCTS).

The Committee was reminded that the BAG had written to the Council in December seeking additional funding for generalist advice provision and seeking the Council to annually fund the BCTS, this included seeking the Council to commit to several uplifts to cover additional salary and running/overhead costs, all of which were detailed to the Members.

Following discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives and they left the meeting.

Funding Request from Belfast Advice Group

The Committee agreed to refer the request seeking the Council to fund the Citywide Tribunal Service to the sum of £269,063 per annum and to build in an additional annual cost of living uplift of 3% to the award for generalist advice provision to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for its consideration.

Resources and Fleet Waste Update

The Director of Resources and Fleet drew the Members' attention to a comprehensive report which provided an update on the following matters:

- Waste Performance and Recycling Rates;
- Waste Framework;
- Inner City Recycling Scheme;
- Pre-Loved toys Scheme;
- Kerbside Glass;
- Community Repaint Scheme;
- Recycling Centres Update;
- Connected Circular Economy – Shared Island Project;
- Waste Tourism;
- Tackling Multiple Black (Residual) Bins;
- In-Cab Technology;
- Operational Update – Access Issues and Collaborative Exercise; and
- Consultation and Call for Evidence for Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE).

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Detailed discussed ensued by the Members, during which the following issues were noted:

- that Bryson Recycling was not lifting bins with contaminated waste, but these were often left at the side of the street and it was agreed that officers engage with Bryson on options to address this problem;
- that an analysis of the pre-loved toys scheme was being undertaken and that a report would be submitted to committee in due course;
- that the launch of the smaller collection vehicles pilots forecast to commence in May due to the lead in times for hire of the vehicles and recruitment and a report would be brought back to the Committee prior to commencement of the pilot;
- that possible capital funding might be available via the Collaborative Change Fund that had recently been re-launched and that this might allow for the purchase of capital items such as vehicles but to note it would not extend to the revenue costs of staffing and fuel etc;
- that the introduction of pedestrian access at Alexandra Park Household Recycling Centre was currently being progressed and that Palmerston Road Recycling Centre was the next for consideration;
- that an update on the Litter Bins Tender would be submitted in due course; and
- that technical meetings with DfI, the PSNI and Council officers were ongoing regarding running a pilot in selected streets to address blocked streets and noted that an update report on the proposal would be submitted to Committee prior to any roll out.

The Committee:

- noted that the closing date of 7th March for the DEFRA Consultation and Call for Evidence on reforming the producer responsibility system for Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and that Council officers were compiling a response. The Members were asked to forward any submissions they might have for consideration to stephensj@belfastcity.gov.uk with the draft response to be presented to Committee in advance of submission;
- agreed that an update would be submitted to a future meeting detailing the disposal policy for Council WEEE; and
- agreed to write to the DAERA Minister seeking an update on the Waste Strategy and Common Collection Guidelines;

Update on Macmillan 'Move More' Programme

The Committee was provided with an update on the status of the Macmillan Cancer Support patient referral programme, along with plans for funding to ensure continuation of a cancer prehabilitation intervention service beyond 1st April 2024.

The Committee noted:

- that Macmillan Cancer Support had confirmed that funding for its cancer prehabilitation programme would end on 31st March 2024; and
- and agreed plans for the continuation of current Council and GLL funding to ensure sustainability of a cancer prehabilitation service for a period of three years until 31st March 2027.

Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group Update

The Director of City Services provided the Members with an update in respect of the following matters:

- Update on the new Crematorium Development;
- Update on Bereavement Services Operations; and
- Future Burial Land; and
- Amended Working Group Meeting Time.

Following an issue raised by a Member regarding incidents of dog fouling in the City Cemetery, the Director of City Services undertook to check the status and to add the Cemetery to the list of fouling patrols.

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group of 24th January.

Committee/Strategic Issues

Reference Group on Older People Update

The Neighbourhood Services Manager advised that the recent meeting of the Reference Group on Older People had been held at the City Hall on 12th December, 2023.

At this meeting an update had been provided on the following areas of work:

- Social Connections;
- Social isolation Training;
- Positive Ageing Month and Volunteer Celebration Event updates;

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- 2023 Age Friendly Calendars;
- Winter Planning;
- Cost of Living Support; and
- Overview of support provided by Community Centres to older people.

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes from the Reference Group on Older People held on 12th December, 2023.

**Draft response to DfC Voluntary and Community Sector
Infrastructure Support Framework Consultation**

The Committee considered the undernoted report and draft response to the Department for Communities Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Support Framework Consultation:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The main purpose of this report is to advise members of Department for Community (DfC) consultation relating to the Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Support Framework and seek members’ approval for the draft response to be submitted in advance of the deadline of 9th February 2024.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Members are asked:

- **To note the consultation exercise, consider the draft response that has been prepared and approve that this is submitted as a formal council response.**
- **To note that the consultation ends on Friday 9th February and approve that the draft response is issued in advance of that deadline. Any additional comments from February Council can be issued by officers to DfC after the formal end date of 9th February.**

3.0 Main Report

Background information

3.1 Members may be aware that DfC is carrying out a programme of work aimed at refreshing the policy frameworks for its voluntary and community sector support. To this end, a consultation was launched by the Department on 15 November 2023. The current open consultation relates to DfC’s investment in the voluntary and community sector infrastructure support. This investment is currently made primarily through organisations operating at a regional level such as NICVA, Advice NI and Volunteer Now.

The Department's engagement took place between March and June 2023 and involved a range of methods to inform the shape and design of new policy and funding frameworks. This included the formation of a stakeholder's reference group, open invitation workshops, roundtable discussions, targeted workshops with different subsectors such as Age, LGBTQ+, Minority Ethnic communities, Disability, Women's sector, and local government officers as well as a survey to explore headline needs and priorities.

- 3.2 Sector infrastructure organisations are defined as '... those whose main purpose includes providing support to other voluntary and community organisations: building capacity and skills within the sector through training, advice, information exchange, convening, policy work, consultancy and providing platforms and access to resources (including physical spaces).

The full consultation document, supporting materials and online questionnaire can be accessed at [Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure and Support Policy Framework - NI Direct - Citizen Space](#) The following is a summary of the main elements.

- 3.3 The draft framework identifies an overarching vision of "A confident, independent and collaborative sector which empowers and sustains local action and volunteering; a sector that represents the diversity of our communities and supports the delivery of inclusive and accessible services and programme for government outcomes through partnership, innovation and challenge". It identifies the need for a spectrum of infrastructure support across four headline areas:

- Leadership and Advocacy
- Collaboration and Partnerships
- Capacity Building (practical skills and resilience) and
- Volunteering

The infrastructure support framework is built on six core values;

- Value 1: Accountability
- Value 2: Active Participation
- Value 3: Social Justice
- Value 4: Independence
- Value 5: Collaboration
- Value 6: Sustainability

- 3.4 The framework identifies five key areas where the DfC can lead and deliver in support of sector outcomes:
1. **Creating effective partnerships: working with sector partners, with government and independent funders**
 2. **Sustained investment in sector infrastructure: commissioning an integrated framework of support geared towards a common outcomes framework**
 3. **Creating a more enabling regulatory and policy environment: delivering the agreed reforms to charity regulation and strategic policy**
 4. **Applying and championing improved funding practices: exploring, developing, applying and sharing good practice**
 5. **Improving understanding about the work and impact of the sector: collating, interpreting and sharing data and evidence**

- 3.5 Although this consultation is centred on the framework to support to regional organisations DfC also notes that it will work with local government to redesign the community development element of the Community Support Programme (CSP) and align it with the vision, outcomes and delivery priorities of the Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Support Framework.

Members will be aware that Council received significant funding through the CSP. Officers received approval at last month's committee to develop a new Community Support Plan for the city and engagement with DfC will form part of that work to ensure that any emerging plan aligns with any changes to the Community Support Programme and any other relevant programmes.

Response to Consultation

- 3.6 The draft Belfast City Council response to this consultation is provided in Appendix 1. Members are asked to consider this document and approve its submission as the formal Belfast City consultation response.
- 3.7 The key elements to note in the response are:
- **Recognition that DfC provided a range of engagement methodologies during its information gathering stage that was appropriate and inclusive.**

- The draft Framework clearly articulates DfC's intention and sets out the infrastructure support needs, core values, vision, headline outcomes and identified areas where DfC can maximise its impact.
- Council broadly agrees that each element of the framework sets out reasonable ambitions that will underpin support to regional support organisations which are relevant to the implementation of the framework.
- The draft framework presents the DfC's intention and is high level, Council's response notes that resourcing and implementing the aspirations outlined have yet to be discussed and that this should include consideration of the CSP and how local organisations are supported. There is reference in the framework to sustainability, collaboration, partnership working and accountability. These are areas that require further consideration and explanation.
- Although focussed on regional infrastructure organisations, the council response notes that there is little reference to the relevance of these organisations in supporting smaller groups, neighbourhood community based organisations and communities of interest. The definition of support provided by Community Infrastructure Organisations (sub-regional), Community Infrastructure Organisations (sub-sectoral) and Volunteer Centres is useful but further detail on how these will interact with each other to provide accessible support should be considered.
- The role of Local Authorities is mentioned but is very limited. The response highlights that the role of local council in providing support to the sector, through provision of funding and investment and partnership working needs to be specified in the Framework. In particular, Community Planning needs to be specified in the Framework and its function and relationship with regional support organisations elaborated on.
- The response reiterates the need to work with local government to redesign the community development element of the Community Support Programme.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.8 No implications at present for Belfast City Council.

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

3.9 No implications at present for Belfast City Council.

Appendix 1- Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Support Framework - Draft Framework: Draft BCC Consultation response

Overview

The Department is carrying out a programme of work aimed at refreshing the policy frameworks for our voluntary and community sector support. This includes agreeing with our partners on the outcomes that we should prioritise in future years. A review of sectoral needs will inform how we can better support the sector to deliver outcomes set out in any future Programme for Government.

Engagement

As part of this review, we engaged with a wide range of organisations in the sector, to draw together their collective experiences, understand key priorities and needs, listen to ideas and opinions, and add voice and input to help us shape future programmes for whom the refresh will deliver. We have also engaged with other departments, local government, independent funders and established a reference group comprising of a range of sectoral interests.

Our engagement approach involved a range of methods to inform the shape and design of new policy and funding frameworks and took place between March and June 2023.

Definition

Sector infrastructure organisations are those whose main purpose includes providing support to other voluntary and community organisations: building capacity and skills within the sector through training, advice, information exchange, convening, policy work, consultancy and providing platforms and access to resources (including physical spaces).

Identified Needs

The Department has surveyed VCS organisations and led an extensive programme of engagement to explore the range of needs and priorities for future infrastructure delivery. This process has confirmed the need for a spectrum of infrastructure support across four headline areas:

- Leadership and Advocacy
- Collaboration and Partnerships
- Capacity Building (practical skills and resilience) and
- Volunteering

Core Values and Ways of Working

Value 1: Accountability

A shared commitment to act with high standards of integrity and professionalism. This includes being open, honest, and transparent in the interests of a shared and common agenda and demonstrating mutual respect, and accountability for our actions and in our decision making.

Value 2: Active Participation

A shared commitment to the active participation of all stakeholders in Northern Ireland, which seeks to address inequalities of power and ensures genuine opportunities for participation, involvement, and influence. This is rooted in the shared belief that communities and people have the right, and should be empowered to, identify their own needs and interests and the outcomes required to meet these.

Value 3: Social Justice

A shared commitment to human rights, equality, and anti-discrimination. This involves promoting, advancing, and protecting human rights and equality in our society, while recognising the intersectional impacts of inequality and discrimination experienced by individuals, groups, and communities.

Value 4: Independence

A shared understanding of the need for an independent, resilient, and sustainable voluntary and community sector to meet shared societal outcomes; recognising and supporting the sector's legal rights to give voice to civic society, to participate in, shape, comment and challenge public policy and decision making and to determine and manage its own affairs.

Value 5: Collaboration

A shared commitment to promoting and sustaining opportunities for relationship building, collaboration and partnership working between our sectors, and to broadening shared experience and understanding, for the benefit of the communities and people we serve.

Value 6: Sustainability

A shared commitment to climate justice and sustainable development, including promoting cultural, environmental, economic, and socially sustainable policies and practices.

Belfast City Council strongly agrees with the values and practices outlined as a way of supporting the relationship between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

Resourcing and implementing the aspirations outlined have yet to be discussed and that this should include consideration of the CSP and how local organisations are supported. There is reference in the framework to sustainability, collaboration, partnership working and accountability. These are areas that require further consideration and explanation. The section on collaboration should include reference to local authorities as a key sector/stakeholder in this work, particularly through the Community Support Programme and Community planning structures and opportunities.

Belfast City Council strongly agrees that a future Concordat/agreement would be strengthened if a legal duty were created to require NI Executive Ministers to act in compliance with the concordat values and practices when making decisions and carrying out ministerial responsibilities.

Belfast City Council has no preference on the term used to refer to a wider range of “civil society” organisations: a very broad definition that includes everything outside the state (public sector) and the market (private sector).

Vision

“A confident, independent and collaborative sector which empowers and sustains local action and volunteering; a sector that represents the diversity of our communities and supports the delivery of inclusive and accessible services and programme for government outcomes through partnership, innovation and challenge”

Belfast City Council strongly agrees with the intention of Vision within the context of delivering on government outcomes. Further thought will be given to how the Vision relates to our Community Planning outcomes, themes and priorities.

Headline Outcomes

The Department has developed 4 headline outcomes to articulate what success looks like against this vision:

Leadership and Advocacy headline outcome

Strong leadership and effective advocacy within the sector promotes the interests of our diverse communities and enables community connection and engagement.

Volunteering headline outcome

Volunteering activity is enabled and supported to maximise benefits for individuals, organisations and communities.

Core Capacity and Resilience headline outcome

Core capacity and resilience of organisations within the sector is sustained and further developed to enable people and communities to thrive.

Collaboration and Partnership headline outcome

Effective collaboration and partnership enhance the impact of the sector's work.

Belfast City Council strongly agrees with the four headline outcomes. However, we recognise that the outcomes also need to reflect that the VCSE sector works within a wider system that includes local government, communities, service users, funders, partnerships and networks and that all parts of that system need to play an active part.

Council notes that it would be useful to clarify the definition of sector-led and to clarify whether work be led by the VCSE sector. If this is the case, detail on how the VCSE sector will be resourced to undertake this work and what the governance arrangements will be to ensure accountability.

Delivering the Ambition

DfC's recent engagement and discussion with stakeholders points to five key areas where the Department for Communities can lead and deliver in support of sector outcomes:

1. **Creating effective partnerships: working with sector partners, with government and independent funders**
2. **Sustained investment in sector infrastructure: commissioning an integrated framework of support geared towards a common outcomes framework**
3. **Creating a more enabling regulatory and policy environment: delivering the agreed reforms to charity regulation and strategic policy**
4. **Applying and championing improved funding practices: exploring, developing, applying and sharing good practice**

**5. Improving understanding about the work and impact of the sector:
collating, interpreting and sharing data and evidence**

Belfast City Council agrees with the five delivery areas.

Council welcomes the department's commitment to working in partnership with sector infrastructure organisations to ensure effective delivery against the agreed vision and outcomes and the creation of a regional infrastructure delivery partnership covering the whole of NI. Further consideration should be given to the role of local government and community planning in delivering support and resources to achieve sector outcomes.

Belfast City Council welcomes the commitment to redesign the Community Support Programme in partnership with local government and align it with the vision, outcomes and delivery priorities of the Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Support Framework. We welcome the Department for Communities recognition of the distinct role of local government in supporting grassroots community development activity within council areas which will be enabled and enhanced by the provision of high quality regional and sub-regional sectoral infrastructure support.

Council suggests that further detail on how Community Infrastructure Organisations (sub-regional), Community Infrastructure Organisations (sub-sectoral) and Volunteer Centres will interact with each other to provide accessible support to small locally based organisations should be considered.

We welcome the intention to provide sustained investment. A commitment to fund organisations and service provision beyond short-term funding cycles and ensure sustainability will contribute significantly to achieving the stated Vision. Council agrees with the Indicative Priorities for Investment.

Measuring impact and sharing data will contribute significantly to our understanding of sector, its services and needs of the users and communities. We will give further thought to the how we gather and share this information and its contribution to evidence-based decision making.

Statutory Assessments

Belfast City Council agrees with the conclusion of the equality screening exercise.

Rural Needs Impact Assessment

Belfast City Council cannot identify any further issues that the proposed draft framework presents for rural communities at this time.”

The Committee noted the consultation exercise and agreed that the draft response, as detailed above, be submitted as the formal Council response by the 9th February deadline, subject to Council ratification, with any additional comments received after the deadline to be submitted by Council officers.

Summer Schemes for Children with Additional Needs

The Committee was reminded that a report had previously been presented to the November 2023 meeting of the People and Communities Committee which had provided an overview of 2023 leisure centre holiday recreation schemes as delivered by GLL.

During discussion of that report, a Member had highlighted that children with special needs were often not able to avail of these schemes due to their high support needs and it was subsequently agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting which would consider the inclusion of children with special needs in the holiday scheme programme.

The Strategic Director then provided an overview of the current provision. He reported that, through engagement with Family Support Hubs and meetings with partners, including the Education Authority (EA), officers were aware that there was a growing number of young people presenting with additional needs and that there was a lack of provision to support their participation in activities. Youth workers and community organisations reported that they were struggling with these issues and the associated impacts on their insurance, health and safety, risks and staff not being adequately trained in working with these young people.

He advised that the EA provided funding for voluntary summer scheme provision with around 450 applications from primary, post-primary, special schools and EOTAS settings. In addition, a number of organisations including Kids Together, Sólás, the Cedar Foundation, Mencap NI, NI Autism Centre, Autonomy and the NOW Group also delivered summer schemes for children and young people with additional needs. Mitchell House, Fleming Fulton and Harberton special schools also provided summer schemes.

The Director continued that, in order to contribute to addressing this gap in provision, it was proposed that a request be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee seeking funding for specialist providers to facilitate four additional summer schemes for children with additional needs, one in each area of the City, at a total cost of £80,000 (maximum £20,000 per scheme), which would allow increased numbers of children to participate in summer schemes that were suitable for their needs.

He advised that, if funding was agreed, Council officers could then undertake initial engagement with the relevant organisations to scope the potential to procure provision of four additional summer schemes for children with additional needs in summer 2024.

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There was unanimous support from this proposal from across the political parties. A Member highlighted that the report made the point that additional places might be offered with parent/carer support. She stated that, whilst some parents/carers might welcome this and be available to go along, she was conscious that this was a group of people who already provided intensive support and care to their children and who were also in need of a break and she stated that she felt that the Council should, where possible, be striving to offer an inclusive service, not a different one.

The Member also sought clarity on several other issues pertaining to the proposed pilot and the Director undertook to have an officer contact her directly to discuss the proposal in more detail.

The Committee:

- noted the report and agreed that a request be made to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for additional funding to procure specialist providers to facilitate four additional summer schemes for children with additional needs, with a view to delivering the additional schemes in summer 2024, one in each area of the City, with discussion to take place with the relevant Area Working Groups and the Belfast City Youth Council in advance of any locations being agreed; and
- agreed to submit an update report to a future meeting detailing the sensory play areas available throughout the City, along with the locations of these.

Operational Issues

**Cherryvale Playing Fields –
Recent Animal Welfare Cases**

The Neighbourhood Services Manager provided the Members with a comprehensive update on two reported incidents of dog illness following a suspected ingestion of grass cuttings within Cherryvale Park and Playing Fields that had been reported to the Council on 23rd December 2023.

The officer drew the Members' attention to the details of the sequence of events leading to, and following, the dogs illness reports, as well as the actions taken by officers prior to and following the incident, in order to ensure that the park remained safe for all users.

The Members were advised that maintaining high levels of both cleanliness and safety within Council parks included having regard for all park users as well as considerations for animal welfare. The signage advising dog owners to keep their dogs on leads had been increased and whilst Council officers could make every effort to ensure that the site was safe for all users, the Council could not guarantee that all sites were free from inedible material and therefore the officer emphasised that the best way to ensure pets remained safe was to keep them on a lead.

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The officer advised that, to date, the Council had received no evidence to suggest that the reported cases of illness at Cherryvale Park was related to any product used by or work practice employed by Council operatives, however, the grass cuttings from the pitch had been removed from the site as a precaution. He advised that the results of a laboratory sample from the cuttings was outstanding and he undertook to keep the Committee updated.

Several of the Members thanked the Council officers for their prompt response in investigating the incident.

A Member voiced his desire to see the inclusion of dog off lead exercise areas included in some Council parks, particularly Ormeau.

A further Member stated that, whilst she too was keen on the provision of such areas, she was keen to ensure that these would be well signposted to ensure that other users of the park were aware of them.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager advised that an update report on potential dog exercise areas would be submitted to the Area Working Groups in due course and, at the request of a Member, it was agreed that bench marking of the required facilities against other Councils would be undertaken prior to the submission of this report.

The Committee noted:

- the actions taken by Council officers to ensure the safety of all park users of Cherryvale Park; and
- that an update on the outcome of the grass cutting test sample would be submitted to a future meeting, when available.

Article 4 and 5 of Waste and Contaminated Land (NI) Order

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The Waste and Contaminated Land (Amendment) (2011 Act) (Commencement No. 3) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022

To make Members of the People and Communities Committee aware that The Waste and Contaminated Land (Amendment) (2011 Act) (Commencement No. 3) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022, which came into force in January 2023, gives councils a joint responsibility with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) for certain matters under the aforementioned legislation including, but not limited to the offence of fly-tipping.

- 1.2 No additional funding has been provided to councils by the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to support the implementation of the new powers under Article 4 and 5 of the Waste and Contaminated (Northern Ireland) Order 1997. These powers are discretionary for councils to use in circumstances where they chose to do so.
- 1.3 Council officers have been involved in discussions with officers from other councils in Northern Ireland in order to agree a consistent and proportionate approach, as these matters may involve operations and offences which extend beyond Belfast City Council area.
- 1.4 The NIEA is the waste licensing authority for NI and it obtains the fees associated with legitimate waste operators. NIEA has been the sole enforcing authority under Article 4 and 5 for the previous 25 years. It is therefore unlikely that councils will seek to use their discretionary powers under Article 4 or 5 where the NIEA should be seeking to regulate the matter using its licensing powers.
- 1.5 Operational Arrangements on Fly-Tipping - Protocol Agreement between Northern Ireland Environment Agency and Belfast City Council
- 1.6 Both the NIEA and local Council have powers and responsibilities to deal with fly-tipping. The Protocol sets out the criteria for the determination of responsibility for waste crime incidents between NIEA and local Councils.
- 2.0 **Recommendation**
- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:
- Note the report;
 - Agree the Fixed Penalty Rate for Article 4 offences to be set at £400;
 - Decide whether or not to offer an early payment discount;
 - If an early payment discount is to be offered agree a discounted rate of £300 the Article 4 Fixed Penalty Notice is paid within 10 days;
- 3.0 **Main Report**
- 3.1 **New Enforcement Powers**

3.2 **Article 4**

Power to enforce against the Unauthorised or Harmful Deposit, Treatment or Disposal of Waste under the Waste and Contaminated Land (NI) Order 1997. Under Article 4 of the Order a person shall not (a) deposit controlled waste, or knowingly cause or knowingly permit controlled waste to be deposited in or on any land unless a waste management licence authorising the deposit is in force and the deposit is in accordance with the licence; or (b) treat, keep or dispose of controlled waste, or knowingly cause or knowingly permit controlled waste to be treated, kept or disposed of (i) in or on any land (ii) by means of any mobile plant, except under and in accordance with a waste management licence; (c) treat, keep or dispose of controlled waste in a manner likely to cause pollution of the environment or harm to health.

3.3 The offence under Article 4 is commonly referred to as fly-tipping. If a fly-tipping offence, under Article 4, is detected by an Authorised Officer the Officer may give to that person, Notice offering them the opportunity of discharging any liability to conviction for the offence by payment of a Fixed Penalty Notice. The amount of the Fixed Penalty Notice cannot be less than £100 and not more than £400.

3.4 Our officers are currently dealing with fly-tipping offences under the Litter (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 with a Fixed Penalty Rate of £80, reduced to £60, if paid within 10 days. However, the offence of fly-tipping has been described by the former Department of the Environment as a premeditated act involving more than a single item of waste collected together and moved to a location without any regard to its final legitimate disposal. On the contrary, littering tends to involve smaller quantities of material which are dropped or disposed of shortly after the item has become of no further use to the offender.

3.5 Officers from councils in NI set up a working group to try to agree a consistent and proportionate approach to the enforcement of Article 4 as this type of offence can involve movement of waste across council boundaries. It is proposed that all councils set the Fixed Penalty Rate for this offence at £400. If a council wishes to agree an early payment discount, it is proposed that this should be a discounted amount of £300 if paid within 10 days of the date of the notice.

Article 5

3.6 Article 5 of the Order imposes a “*duty of care*” on any person who imports, produces, collects, carries, treats, or disposes of

controlled waste or, as a broker or dealer has control of such waste, shall take all such measures applicable to them in that capacity as are reasonable in the circumstances to prevent any contravention by any other person of Article 4 of the Order.

- 3.7 Powers available under Article 5 are much broader and are likely to involve illicit waste operations and other commercial and industrial entities. There is an extensive list of offences included in Article 5 of the Order, which would impact the volume of work and officer involvement and will require more consideration on resources needed and operability. It is more likely if Council were to exercise these discretionary powers it would be done so in partnership with relevant bodies including NIEA.
- 3.8 Article 5 powers can be used to assist with enforcement matters in relation to commercial waste. Officers are aware of the impact of additional financial burdens on the business community which is already under significant financial strain following the pandemic and the current cost of living crisis. It is anticipated that officers will use a graduated approach when dealing with potential offences under Article 5. However, there could still be situations where there are no other means of resolving an issue other than to use Article 5 powers. An offence under Article 5 has a set Fixed Penalty of £300.
- 3.9 It is proposed that Members would agree that Article 5 of the Waste and Contaminated Land (NI) Order 1997, should only be implemented when there is a significant possibility of significant harm to the environment or where conditions are prejudicial to health or when there are no other means of resolving an issue other than to use Article 5 powers.
- 3.10 We have a small team of authorised officers working in this area where the key role is detecting littering and fly tipping offences. This team already works closely with colleagues in our Open Spaces and Street scene function. These powers came into effect on 2 January 2023 and are a useful additional regulatory tool. However we will need to continue to assess and monitor the impacts on resources and budgets. Therefore depending on the impact of application of these discretionary powers it may be necessary to bring a further report back to committee. We will avail of additional training to support implementation.
- 3.11 The Operational Arrangements on Fly-Tipping - Protocol Agreement between Northern Ireland Environment Agency and Belfast City Council is attached. (See Appendix)The Protocol sets out the criteria for the determination of responsibility for waste crime incidents between the NIEA and local councils as follows:

Volume of waste deposited

- 3.12 Local Councils will have responsibility for all non-hazardous waste deposits under 20 cubic metres in volume or accumulations of several small-scale fly-tipping incidents.
- 3.13 The NIEA will have responsibility for all waste deposits over 20 cubic metres in volume regardless of the waste classification.

Photo of waste emptied from a bin lorry = 18.5m³



Classification of the waste deposited

- 3.14 Local Councils will have responsibility for all hazardous waste of a type and volume that could be accepted at an appropriately authorised Council operated civic amenity or waste recycling centre.

The NIEA will have responsibility of all other hazardous waste of a type and volume which would not be accepted at a Council operated Recycling Centre.

Mixtures of waste containing hazardous material that cannot be safely removed will be treated as hazardous in their entirety.

It is noted there is an error in Appendix 1 of the Protocol as NIEA has not included Article 4 and 5 as powers now available to councils. This has been brought to the attention of NIEA and it is anticipated this amendment will be made to the Protocol. Members are asked to agree in principle, subject to amendment of Appendix 1, to sign the Protocol.

Finance and Resource Implications

- 3.15 Budget within the City Services will be utilised to train staff to enforce the new powers. NI councils hope to source this training jointly in order to reduce the costs. There may additional income

from the service of Fixed Penalty Notices. The impacts of these new powers on budgets and resources will be monitored.

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

3.16 None.”

The Committee agreed that the Fixed Penalty Rate for Article 4 offences be set at £400 and that no early payment discount rate would be available.

Events in Parks Requests

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The Committee is asked to note that Council has received several requests from event organisers to host events across several city park locations in 2024. These include:

- Bloomfield Gospel Hall Gospel Outreach – Dixon Playing Fields
- Festival of Fools – Cathedral Gardens
- Belfast 24 Hour Run – Victoria Park
- Belfast Photo Festival – Botanic Gardens
- St Patricks Day Festival – Cathedral Gardens
- Lear – Victoria Park
- Afro-Fest Belfast – Crescent Park Belfast
- Annual 12th July Demonstration – Barnetts Demesne

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to grant authority to the applicant for the proposed event on the dates noted and to delegate authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to ensure the following:

- I. Where appropriate negotiate a fee which recognises the costs to Council, minimises negative impact on the immediate area and takes account of the potential wider benefit to the city economy, in conjunction with the Councils Commercial Manager.
- II. Negotiate satisfactory terms and conditions of use via an appropriate legal agreement prepared by the City Solicitor, including managing final booking confirmation dates and flexibility around ‘set up’ & take down’ periods, and booking amendments, subject to:

- The promoter resolving any operational issues to the Council's satisfaction.
 - The promoter carrying out appropriate resident and community engagement
 - The promoter meeting all the statutory requirements of the Planning and Building Control Service including the terms and conditions of the Park's Entertainment Licence
- 2.2 Please note that the above recommendations are taken as a pre - policy position in advance of the Council agreeing a more structured framework and policy for 'Events', which is currently being taken forward in conjunction with the Councils Commercial team.
- 3.0 **Main Report**
- Key Issues**
- 3.1 If agreed, the event organiser or promoters will be required in advance of the event to submit an event management plan for approval by the Council and all relevant statutory bodies. This will include an assessment of how the event will impact upon the surrounding area and measures to mitigate these impacts.
- Bloomfield Gospel Hall Gospel Outreach - Dixon Playing fields**
- 3.2 The church has a small congregation with around 50 members who meet in Bloomfield Gospel Hall, Woodcot Avenue. As part of their community work, they have held a number of gospel outreach events in Dixon Park in recent years. This has involved the erection of a portable hall for a number of weeks. In 2023 the council granted permission for drive-in services on Sunday evenings throughout the Spring and Summer months.
- 3.3 In addition, the church also hosted their outreach programme Monday to Friday throughout the month of June. The organiser has informed Council that this was very well received by the local community with a number of non-members attending the services.
- 3.4 The organiser would like to repeat the success of the last 2 years in 2024. During the Sunday evening services a small curtain-sided van will be used as a platform for the event guest speaker with low volume battery powered portable loudspeakers being used to enable the persons speaking to be heard within the carpark. The group have also requested to carry out a Summer Bible Time outreach event that would include children from the local area along with Polish, Slovakian and Romanian children.

3.5 The organisers have a good working relationship with the Scirocco Football Club who use the playing fields. The football club help to advertise the services on their website and on the few occasions that football training occurs during the services, there is ample room for both groups to co-exist.

3.6 The key dates for the request are:

- Sunday Evening Services
- Sunday 7 April 2024 to Sunday 29 September 2024
– 7pm to 7.30pm
- Summer Bible Time
- Monday 5 August to Thursday 8 August 2024 – 4pm to 5pm & 7pm to 8pm
- Friday 9 August 2024 – 4pm to 8pm

24 Hour Run – Victoria Park

3.7 The event organiser has requested the use of Victoria Park to host the 24-hour championship race. The race is in its 14th year having moved to Victoria Park in 2016.

3.8 The key dates for the request are:

- Friday 14th June 2023 – Set Up
- Saturday 15th June – Official Race begins at 12pm
- Sunday 16th June – Official Race ends at 1pm
- Sunday 18th June – De-rig & off site for 3pm

3.9 It is estimated that around 250 runners will take part. This event takes place throughout the night and in previous years there have been a number of noise disturbances so Council officers will work closely with the event organiser this year to ensure these disturbances are mitigated. The event is to raise money to help send the Northern Ireland Ultra team to events along with a charity yet to be selected. The event will host the 24-Hour Championship along with the 100k & 50k championship. The event organiser also hopes that it will include the Irish 24-Hour championship.

3.10 As Victoria Park has 24-hour access due to forming part of the Connswater Community Greenway there are no additional operational considerations that need addressed as part of this request.

Festival of Fools – Cathedral Gardens

3.11 Festival of Fools Ltd have requested the use of Cathedral Gardens to host their Festival of Fools event 2024.

3.12 Festival of Fools is a free to attend family friendly festival that will incorporate circus and outdoor arts shows. The show will incorporate international acts that will provide both circus and street entertainment.

3.13 The key dates for the request are:

- Saturday 4 May – Set up from 10am
- Saturday 4 May – Main Show 12pm to 7pm
- Sunday 5 May – Main Show 12pm to 7pm
- Monday 6 May - Main show 12pm to 7pm
- Monday 6 May - De Rig and Off Site

Belfast Photo Festival – Botanic Gardens

3.14 Belfast Photo Festival is a not-for-profit organisation that presents one of the leading international festivals of photography in the United Kingdom and the Visual Arts Festival of Northern Ireland. Launched in 2011, this now annual photographic event has been described as one of the “best photography festivals in the world” (Capture Magazine) and attracts upwards of 100 thousand visitors a year, celebrating some of the finest National and International contemporary photography across 30 museums, galleries and public spaces. Capturing wide appeal through popular culture, accessible themes and unexpected encounters with photography, the festival aims to instil and inspire public enjoyment and participation by utilising the most accessible artistic medium and bringing it to new audience in cool and unusual ways. The festival consists of exhibitions, talks, symposiums, workshops, screening, masterclasses, portfolio reviews and tours.

3.15 The primary location of the Belfast Photo Festival over the past years has been Botanic Gardens, where large audiences engage with our outdoor photographic displays each year. This is a free event, accessible to the public. It runs over the month of June and consists of a series of exhibitions mounted throughout the park. There are no registrations to any of the exhibitions mounted throughout the park. There are no registrations to any of the exhibitions in the park and charity collections made.

3.16 The key dates for the request are:

- Set Up – 20 May to 2 June 2024
- Event Run Time – 1 June to 30 June 2024
- De Rig – 1 July to 8 July 2024

St Patricks Day Festival – Cathedral Gardens

- 3.17 Belfast TradFest are delivering the St. Patrick's Day Weekend Musical Showcase programme on behalf of Belfast City Council from 15th – 17th March 2024. The main focus of activity will be the creation of a St. Patrick's Day village around the Cathedral Quarter between 2pm – 5pm on Sunday 17th March.
- 3.18 The festival village will include a live outdoor music stage, family fun activities and a food village in Cathedral Gardens, an open-air acoustic music and dance stage in Saint Anne's Square and an ongoing afternoon Céilí in The Mac.
- 3.19 The key dates for the request are:
- Set Up – Saturday 16 March 2024 – 9am
 - Main Event – Sunday 17 March 2024 – 2pm to 5pm
 - De-Rig – Sunday 17 March 2024 – 9pm

Lear – Victoria Park

- 3.20 Green Room Productions NI have requested the use of Victoria Park for both rehearsals and performances of their King Lear production. Green Room Productions NI are an Outdoor Theatre Company who create Theatre, responsive to spaces, accessible to all. The event space being requested is the covered structure in Victoria Park.
- 3.21 The key dates for the request are:
- Rehearsals – Thursday 18, Friday 19, Monday 22 and Tuesday 23 April 2024 – 9am - 7pm
 - Performances – Wednesday 24, Thursday 25 and Friday 26 April 2024 – 9am - 7pm
 - Exit Site – Friday 26 April 2024 at 7pm
- 3.22 The group plan on having 4 days of rehearsals starting on Thursday 18 April and finishing on Tuesday 23 April. They then wish to have three days of performances starting with two performances on Wednesday 24 followed by 4 performances on both Thursday 25 and Friday 26 April 2024. The event will be a free ticketed event with it being based on a modern adaptation of the King Lear and is aimed at the local schools surrounding Victoria Park along with the neighbouring residential areas.

Afro-Fest Belfast – Crescent Park

3.23 Belfast City Council have received a request from Urbanmag for the use of Crescent Park for their Afro-Fest cultural event. The purpose of this event is to showcase the musical talent of people with Afro Caribbean descent in Northern Ireland and to bring together different cultures to help educate and explore the beauty of the arts and culture through Music.

3.24 The key dates for the request are:

- Event Set Up – Saturday 25 May – 8am
- Main Event – Saturday 25 May 12pm to 7pm
- De-Rig – Saturday 25 May 9pm

Annual 12th July Demonstration – Barnetts Demesne

3.25 Belfast City Council have received a request from the County Grand Orange Lodge of Belfast for the use of Barnetts Demesne for their Annual 12th July Demonstration. The purpose of this event is to facilitate a greater understanding of orange cultural traditions and the promotion of Orangefest events as inclusive and family friendly.

3.26 The key dates for the request are:

- Set up – Thursday 11 July 2024 – 6pm to 10pm
- Main Event – Friday 12 July 2024 – 1pm to 5pm
- De-Rig – Saturday 13 July 2024 – 8am to 12pm

3.27 The organiser wishes to use the event to promote Belfast in a positive light and encourage visitors to experience Orange culture throughout the year and to help improve community relations.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.28 Where appropriate the Director of Neighbourhood Services will negotiate an appropriate fee for each event, which recognises the costs to Council, minimises negative impact on the immediate area and takes account of the potential wider benefit to the City economy, in conjunction with the Councils Commercial Manager. If required the Director of Neighbourhood Services will also authorise the relevant level of the necessary bond of intent and reinstatement bond.

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

3.29 There are no known implications.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations at paragraph 2.0 of the report and agreed that an update would be sought from the Council’s Commercial Team as to the status of the ongoing review into the framework and policy for Events.

Cavehill Mountain Biking Pilot – MoU

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting held on 5th December 2023, it had agreed to a 2-month extension to an existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Council and Cavehill Mountain Bikers Club (CMC). The MOU had originally been put in place following the agreement of the Committee, at its meeting in November 2021, to facilitate a Mountain Biking Pilot Project in Cavehill Country Park. The Pilot had focused on a partnership approach to the maintenance, management, and inspection of the ‘The Middle’ - the first official mountain bike trail in Cave Hill Country Park which had formally opened for public use in October 2023.

The Members then considered a report which outlined the key findings of the evaluation, as follows:

- both the Council and CMC were content with the partnership working arrangements established to support the project;
- the MOU had been adhered to in full;
- the Middle’s Trail Management Plan had been operationally delivered through the Pilot period;
- Health and Safety records held by the Council showed that there had been no increase in reported incidences or near miss collisions between mountain bikers and pedestrians within Cave Hill Country Park (no incidences/near miss collisions at all recorded during 2-year Pilot period);
- according to a consultation exercise on the pilot project carried out via the Council’s Your Say Belfast platform visitor satisfaction had not adversely impacted by the opening of the Middle Trail. A total of 78% of respondents to the survey during the first month of the trail’s official opening, agreed that their visitor experience within the Cave Hill Country Park had ‘improved’ since its introduction. This increased to 90.1% of respondents when the survey had been repeated during the Pilot’s last month; and
- anecdotal evidence showed that there had been more use of the new Middle Trail by mountain bikers at the expense of the other existing informal trails in the Country Park.

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Furthermore, it was noted that the new MOU would also permit the Council to explore the viability of including further established trails at Cave Hill Country Park with CMC through similar partnership arrangements.

The Committee noted the outcome of the Cavehill Mountain Biking Pilot and agreed to a 3-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Council and Cavehill Mountain Bikers Club, to be agreed and progressed by Legal Services.

Dual Language Street Signage Application

Moved by Councillor Bunting,
Seconded by Councillor Kelly,

That the Committee agrees not to erect a dual language sign at Cranmore Gardens.

On a vote, 5 Members voted for the proposal and 13 against and it was declared lost.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to the erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at, Cranmore Gardens, Stewartstown Mews, Mountainview Parade, Mountainview Gardens, Bingnian Drive, Mizen Gardens, Dermott Hill Road and Marcus Ward Street.

Naming of New Street

The Committee approved the applications for the naming of two new streets in the City, Black Ridge Court and Black Ridge Grove.

Alleygates Phase 5 Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 This report provides an update on the Alleygate Phase V Programme and the DFC Funded Alleygate programme for the Holyland.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 The Notice of Intention for those streets meeting the threshold will be advertised for the period of 30 days on 7th February, for representations and objections. Following this a paper will be brought to Committee seeking enactment of the legislation.

3.2 The terms and conditions for a local inquiry have been agreed should there be substantive objections received to the Notice of Intention. Should this occur it is proposed that those streets objecting to the installation of Alleygates will be removed from the

proposed gating order whilst the inquiry is being held, to enable the progression of those locations where no objections have been received.

- 3.3 The canvassers are being recruited for the consultation exercise and Members will be informed when letters are posted to the streets being consulted. Several community sessions will be held at centres close to or within the consultation areas. This will enable residents to have any questions clarified or receive help in completing the consultation form. Members will be informed of these as well.
- 3.4 Once the consultation is completed and there are no substantive objections it is proposed that these locations move to public notification.
- 3.5 Members will be aware that Department for Communities have funded a further Alleygating scheme within the Holylands to complement the existing gates. During the consultation a high number of objections were received to the proposal (108 returns to the Holylands consultation, 27% of the properties surveyed. Of these returns there were 61 objections to the gates). Most of these objections came from Landlords and Letting Agents, concerned with the use of the alleyways post gating.
- 3.6 Officers met with a delegation representing the objectors. The objectors are not objecting to the installation of gates but rather to any potential alleyway transformation schemes following gating. Citing 'Wildflower Alley' they raised safety issues and access problems that would occur should transformation schemes go ahead.
- 3.7 Members will be aware that Cleaner neighbourhood legislation sets out the process Council's must follow when implementing an alleygating scheme. There is no legislation that regulates Alleyway Transformation schemes and that such a scheme can take place without an alleygate being in place Members will also be aware that there are many examples of this across the city and that Belfast City Council have also introduced criteria that must be met for any Council funded schemes to proceed.
- 3.8 In response to the issues raised officers agreed to review the wording of future key holder agreements to include a number to call should gated alleyways become obstructed and to remind of the need to get the support of residents for any potential transformation scheme. Any future alleyway transformation schemes funded by Belfast City Council will require the consensus of those living in and/or owning properties that frontage the proposed area.

- 3.9 The objectors have requested the opportunity to make a representation to the People and Communities Committee to highlight their concerns. Members should note that this paper is for noting and no decision is required and that officers have already met with the objectors. Members should also note that should a substantive objection be received then a local inquiry will be set up.**

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.9 All associated costs are covered within existing budget estimates.**

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

- 3.10 No Good Relations or Equality issues.”**

Following a query, the Neighbourhood Services Manager confirmed that the Elected Members would be informed when the letters had been posted to the streets being consulted about proposed alleygates and added that, as previously requested, consultation sessions would be held at centres close to those streets to provide clarity and assistance to those residents who required it. He encouraged the Members to contact him directly should they have any further queries about the process.

The officer advised that a request had been received from objectors seeking to make a deputation to a future meeting of the Committee. The Members noted that officers had met with the objectors and their views had been taken into consideration and therefore did not accede to the request.

The Committee noted the update provided.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

**Signage at Ruby Murray Park –
Councillor T. Kelly**

The Committee was advised that the signage erected at the Ruby Murray Village Green was very small and, at the request of Councillor T. Kelly, agreed to erect larger signage at the Green and that the new signage would include some information on Ruby Murray.

**Biodiversity in Council Parks and
Open Spaces – Councillor Flynn**

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor R. Brooks

“The Council recognises Northern Ireland is currently 12th worst in the world for biodiversity loss, with factors such as Habitat degradation, pollution and climate change playing a significant role in habitat loss.

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The Council notes the range of health benefits that natural biodiverse spaces provide within our city, including a positive impact on our mental health, stress reduction, improving life expectancy and positive contributions for children's development.

The Council further notes that the Council currently owns and maintains a significant portion of green space throughout Belfast, giving an opportunity to identify and prioritise areas for enhancing biodiversity.

Officers are asked to submit a report outlining how the Council could commission a survey of parks and green spaces to create a list of priority habitats and species within them, this survey should be robust enough to inform future work of incorporating recommendations for new zoning of parks and introduction of appropriate management prescriptions into site management plans, to protect and enhance biodiversity in our parks and green spaces in accordance with the Lawton principles of "bigger, better and more joined up".

At the request of Councillor Flynn, the Committee agreed that officers would submit a report to a future meeting to consider how the Council could commission a survey of parks and green spaces to create a list of priority habitats and species within them.

At the request of Councillor Bunting, it was agreed that an area at Belvoir Drive would be included in any future survey.

Chairperson

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 31st January, 2024

SPECIAL REMOTE MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

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

Also in attendance: Councillor G. McAteer

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Ms. L. Toland, Senior Manager – Economy;
Ms. C. Cassin, Markets Development Manager;
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor McDonough-Brown.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Restricted Presentation

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.

Members were also reminded that the content of ‘restricted’ reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as ‘confidential information’ and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

Translink - Belfast Grand Central Station

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. D. McAllister, Head of Belfast Grand Central Station Programme, Mr. D. Curry - General Manager Bus Services, Mr. D. Bannon, Central Area Manager, and Ms. L. Shannon, Corporate Communications Manager, representing Translink to the meeting.

The representatives provided an update of the Belfast Grand Central Station/ Weavers Cross Transport Led Regeneration Project which included details of the Street Works Programme and Public Transport Interventions.

During discussion, the representatives described further the Communication Plan and stakeholder engagement which had been undertaken.

In response to a Member's question in relation to the potential for the donation of the foundation cores of the Boyne Bridge, Mr. McAllister advised that this could be investigated.

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, Translink would provide further information on the issues raised.

Presentation

St. George's Market Traders

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. C. McLaverty, Mr. S. McCann, Ms. D. Whan and Mr. P. Lynn, representing St. George's Market Traders, to the meeting.

Ms. McLaverty described the success of St. George's market. She suggested that the Traders had had communication issues with the Markets management team, however, since the pandemic, there had been substantial improvements in the cascading of information. She highlighted that there was still scope to improve communication further.

She suggested the following objectives to improve the Market:

- The Council, Market Management, Staff and Traders act as one team for the ongoing success of the market;
- Regular Team Meetings between traders and the Markets Management Team/wider consultation days;
- Collective Working – embrace ideas, allow the Traders to share plans and ideas, collaborate, acknowledge and celebrate success;

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- Measure Success – For example: ongoing increase in footfall, increase revenue on non-market days, online reviews; and
- Leadership – inspire and challenge for a shared goal, encourage dynamic input, setting goals and achievable targets for all.

During discussion, Ms. McLaverty clarified the communication issues which had taken place and the need for consultation in the decision making process. She pointed out that a greater notice period of events taking place within the market was required to alleviate the disruption to Traders, and an events calendar would be useful.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance and they retired from the meeting.

During further discussion, the Director of Economic Development explained the challenges in regard to compliance of the attendance and storage policies. He highlighted the utilisation rates and provided an overview of external events.

The Markets Development Manager described the engagement that currently took place and advised that staff met with the traders regularly but the Team would explore further how to communicate and engage on a wider basis and plan ahead. She explained further the Markets Committee model, wider operational issues and work undertaken with stakeholders to measure the success of the Market.

The Senior Manager – Economy highlighted the success factors and the market development plan ambitions to include customer insights.

The Director of Economic Development advised that work would be undertaken with the Traders Forum to explore how to improve the Market. He also thanked the Markets Development Team and the Traders for overcoming the recent challenges for the benefit and success of the Market.

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided and the commitment from the Director of Economic Development to ensure further engagement with the Market Traders took place to improve communication and consultation.

Chairperson

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City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 7th February, 2024

HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

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

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

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of the High Sheriff, Councillor S. Douglas.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the 10th and 23rd January 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 February.

Declarations of Interest

In relation to item 2.d) Belfast 2024 Music Heritage Programme, Councillor McCabe declared an interest, in that she was employed by Féile an Phobail and left the meeting whilst the item was being considered.

Councillor Gormley also declared an interest in item 2.d) Belfast 2024 Music Heritage Programme, in that he was a Board Member of LORAG who had applied for funding under the Programme but had been unsuccessful.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the report associated with the following five items 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 items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt

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information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Members were also reminded that the content of 'restricted' reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as 'confidential information' and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

**Regeneration Lobbying and Advocacy Paper
and Regeneration Framework Update**

The Committee was provided with an update regarding the work which had been undertaken in relation to a Regeneration Lobbying and Advocacy proposition and a Regeneration Framework.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development presented a summary of a proposal to advance a direct advocacy with both the UK Government in Westminster and the Northern Ireland Executive. During discussion, it was suggested that this work should include an approach via the Shared Island funding structures.

During further discussion, a Member suggested that the Committee write to the new Minister for Communities to welcome him to his position and call on him to work with all relevant stakeholders to achieve the conferring of regeneration powers to councils with the appropriate budgets within this Assembly mandate.

After discussion, the Committee:

- I. Noted the update on the Regeneration Funding Lobbying and Advocacy Proposition Paper, including presentation summary slides as presented to Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum on 11th January, 2024;
- II. Noted that a report was being brought to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in February seeking agreement on advancing this advocacy work. This would include a proposal to advance a direct advocacy with both the UK Government in Westminster and the Northern Ireland Executive (when re-established) and informed by a detailed stakeholder mapping and engagement plan;
- III. Noted the update on the Regeneration Framework and its interdependencies with the Advocacy and Lobby Proposition work and that further Member engagement was planned in respect of the Regeneration Framework over the coming weeks; and
- IV. Agreed to write to the new Minister for Communities to welcome him to his position and request that he would work with all relevant stakeholders to achieve the conferring of regeneration powers to councils with the appropriate budgets within this Assembly mandate.

Update on externally funded placemaking and active travel projects: Active Travel Enablers, Grey to Green and South West Quarter

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided an update on the delivery of external funded placemaking and active travel projects including Grey to Green, Active Travel Enablers, Business and Community Cluster Grants and the South- West Quarter Revitalisation.

During discussion, the Senior Development Manager explained further the process for secured Cycle Parking Facilities and the covered Cycle Stands City Wide project, together with the potential reallocation of covered and secured cycle lanes and their locations. He also advised that he would provide further detail on the application of the secure cycle parking at Finaghy Primary School.

After discussion, the Committee:

- I. Noted the update in relation to the Council and Department for Communities funded Great Victoria St Tactical Regeneration work;
- II. Noted the ongoing delivery of the Department for Infrastructure funded Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund 2022/23, including the issues experienced in delivering some of these project strands and the on-going work which was being undertaken to progress covered cycle stands and secure cycle parking facilities;
- III. Noted that officers were working with delivery partners, including Queens and Maritime Belfast, to provide additional funding to deliver previously approved projects within the conditions of the Letter of Offer; and
- IV. Noted that the Chief Executive would be writing to the Minister for Infrastructure to reiterate the Council's concerns in relation to the short timeframe available for the delivery of the Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund and the potential for a more flexible approach to in-year funding.

Belfast Zoo - Scale of Charges 2024-25

The Director of Economic Development outlined the increase to the Zoo scale of charges for the financial year 2024-2025 and confirmed the date of implementation.

The Committee:

- Noted the price increases for existing categories; and
- Noted the change of date for the introduction of price increases to commence on Monday, 8th April, 2024.

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Belfast 2024 Music Heritage Programme

The Director of Economic Development informed the Committee of the results of the Music Heritage Programme 2024 process and sought approval for the recommendations which had been outlined in the report. He also updated Members on the Gradam Ceoil bursary project.

The Committee:

- Noted the contents of this report and agreed the recommendations under the Music Heritage Programme 2024, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- Agreed to continue the Gradam Ceoil bursary project with an allocation of £15,000.

Belfast 2024 funding reallocation

The Director of Economic Development reminded the Committee that the Council, at its meeting in January, had agreed that the reports associated with Belfast 2024 be referred back to both the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, for consideration to be given to reprofiling the funding for the Power Plants project towards the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund.

He stated that Members were asked to consider referring the decision of the reallocation and repurposing of this budget to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Flynn,

Seconded by Councillor Lyons,

That the Committee agrees not to refer the decision to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee or consider the reprofiling of the funding for the Power Plants project towards the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund.

On a vote, two Members voted for the proposal and seventeen against and it was declared lost.

The recommendation as outlined in the report was put to the Committee and agreed.

Accordingly, the Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed to refer the decision of the funding reallocation to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

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Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) Workshop

The Committee noted the forthcoming joint workshop of the People and Communities Committee and the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, scheduled for 20th February with the NIHE in relation to housing supply and demand.

Correspondence from the Department for Infrastructure

The Committee noted the correspondence received from the Department for Infrastructure which provided an update on queries which had been raised at the Special Committee in November 2023.

Strategic and Operational Issues

Minutes of the Belfast Stories Working Group

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Belfast Stories Working Group of 23rd January, 2024.

Request to Present – Living with Water Team (NIW)

The Committee agreed to receive a presentation from the Living with Water Team at the Special Committee meeting on 27th March, 2024.

Request to Present – Visit Belfast

The Committee agreed to receive a presentation on Visit Belfast's 2024-25 Business Plan at the Committee meeting on 13th March, 2024, including a request for Council support towards the work programme for the coming financial year.

Chairperson

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Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 21st February, 2024

MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor McKeown (Chairperson);
Aldermen McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers;
Councillors Anglin, Bradley, P. Donnelly, Doran,
D. Douglas, Lyons, Murray,
F. McAteer, McCabe, McCann,
McMullan, Ó Néill and Smyth.

In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
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

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor Gormley.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 17th January, 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 February, 2024, 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.

Delegated Matters

THE COMMITTEE DEALT WITH THE FOLLOWING 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.

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

The Committee noted a list of applications which had been approved under the Council's Scheme of Delegation during January 2024.

**Application for a New Licence to operate a House
of Multiple Occupation for 22 Penrose Street**

The Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Manager presented the details of the application to the Committee. He highlighted to the Members that the application was not subject to call-in, as the call-in period would exceed the time limit for determining the application pursuant to Schedule 2, Paragraph 2, of the 2016 Act and, therefore would be in breach of a statutory duty

He explained that the property had had the benefit of an HMO licence issued by the Housing Executive in the name of the applicant which expired on 19th August, 2023. Due to an administrative oversight, a reminder letter was not sent to the applicant, informing him that the licence was about to expire. On 24th September, 2023, an HMO licence application was received from the owner of the accommodation.

The HMO 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;
- 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 full planning permission for use as an HMO was granted on 25th February, 2008.

It was reported that the NIHMO Unit had consulted with the Environmental Protection Unit in relation to daytime noise; the 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. The Environmental Protection Unit confirmed that three noise warning notices had been issued in relation to nighttime noise, dated 30th August 2020, 16th August 2021 and 19th May 2022. The

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applicant had confirmed that they had not been convicted of any relevant offences under the 2016 Act.

For the purpose of Section 12(2) of the 2016 Act, the Council had determined the locality of the accommodation as being Housing Management Area (HMA) "2/22 Botanic, Holylands, Rugby" as defined in the document Council's Local Development Plan Strategy, which was formally adopted on 2nd May, 2023. It was reported that Legal Services had advised that there was a clear requirement in section 8 of the 2016 Act upon 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:

"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 Committee was advised that, on the date of assessment, 17th January, 2024, 90% of all dwelling units in policy area HMA 2/22 were made up of HMOs and flats/apartments, which in turn exceeded the 20% development limit as set out in Policy HOU10. There were 1095 (45%) licensed HMOs with a capacity of 4808 persons in that HMA.

It was outlined that 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 Houses in Multiple Occupation Manager reminded the Committee that there was a need for intensive forms of housing and, to meet that demand, HMOs were an important component of the housing provision. 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 and asylum seekers.

The Committee was advised that, on 17th January, 2024, out of 38 premises available for rent within the BT7 area on PropertyNews.com there were 11 licensed HMOs which, from the information presented on the website, represented 43 bed spaces. The HMO Manager advised the Committee that anecdotal evidence from previous

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conversations with HMO managing agents suggested that that there was currently a lack of HMO accommodation available in that locality.

On 7th December, 2022, the Ulster University Director of Campus Life advised the Council's City Growth and Regeneration Committee that there was an "increase in competition for HMOs particularly from NIHE, Immigration Services and statutory agencies and there were increasing accommodation issues across the housing sector which required a holistic view and should include the consideration of international students, families and graduates looking for professional accommodation."

However, the QUB Director of Student Plus had confirmed that the current trend indicated a significant move of students to purpose-built student accommodation blocks. She had advised the Members that there were 7,000 purpose built managed student accommodation (PBMSA) rooms in the city, the majority having been built since 2018, and approximately 5,000 in the city centre.

It was reported that November 2023 monitoring information produced by the Council's Planning Service for PBMSA indicated that 2055 bedspaces were currently under construction with an operational date of 2024.

Therefore, with the continued expansion of the PBMSA sector and students transitioning from private rentals to PBMSAs, it was too early to tell whether the increased competition from non-students for HMOs was a temporary problem which could be managed by the contraction in students residing in existing HMO accommodation within the locality, or evidence of an emerging long-term supply issue.

The Houses in Multiple Occupation Manager explained that, in assessing the number and capacity of licensed HMOs, as well as the need for HMO accommodation in the locality, 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.

The Committee was advised that no objections had been received in relation to the application. It was also reported that the accommodation had been certified as complying with the physical standards for an HMO for three persons by a technical officer from the NIHMO service, on 23rd November, 2023.

On 17th January, 2024, 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 advising that it was proposing to refuse the licence on the grounds of overprovision. The Members were advised that a response had not been received from the applicant.

Moved by Councillor Murray
Seconded by Councillor McCann 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

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licence would result in overprovision of HMO accommodation in the locality of the accommodation, as determined under section 8(2)(d) of the Act; and

while recognising that there was no legal duty upon the Council to remind HMO owners when their licence was due to expire, officers should, out of courtesy, make a concerted effort to issue letters to that effect.

Application for a New Licence to operate a House of Multiple Occupation for 71 Eglantine Avenue

The Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Manager outlined the details of the application to the Committee.

He explained that the property had had the benefit of an HMO licence issued by the Housing Executive in the name of the previous owner, who was a Director of S&B Properties N.I. Ltd., which had expired on 10th June, 2023. On 2nd October, 2023, the applicant had purchased the property and, in accordance with Section 28 (2) of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (NI) 2016, the existing licence ceased to have effect on the date ownership transferred.

On 24th April, 2023, an application for a new HMO licence was received from S&B Properties N.I. Ltd., which was subsequently rejected on 5th May, 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. An application for a temporary exemption notice was issued on 30th August, 2023, and subsequently extended to 1st March, 2024.

The Members were advised that on 14th November, 2023, an HMO licence application was received from the owner of the accommodation. If the new owner had applied for a licence before the change of ownership had taken place, the licence which was already in effect in respect of the HMO would have been treated as being held by the new owner until such times as the application had been determined.

The HMO Manager outlined that, pursuant to the 2016 Act, the Council could only grant a licence if it was satisfied that:

- f) the occupation of the living accommodation as an HMO would not constitute a breach of planning control;
- g) the owner, and any managing agent of it, were fit and proper persons;
- h) the proposed management arrangements were satisfactory;
- i) the granting of the licence would not result in overprovision of HMOs in the locality;
- j) the living accommodation was fit for human habitation and—
 - iii. was suitable for occupation as an HMO by the number of persons to be specified in the licence, or
 - iv. could be made so suitable by including conditions in the licence.

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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 10th November, 2023.

It was reported that the NIHMO Unit had consulted with the Environmental Protection Unit in relation to nighttime and daytime noise; the 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. The owners of S& B Properties N.I. Ltd. had confirmed that they had not been convicted of any relevant offences pursuant to the 2016 Act.

For the purpose of Section 12(2) of the 2016 Act, the Council had determined the locality of the accommodation as being Housing Management Area (HMA) "2/09 Eglantine" as defined in the document Council's Local Development Plan Strategy, which was formally adopted on 2nd May, 2023. It was reported that Legal Services had advised that there was a clear requirement in section 8 of the 2016 Act upon 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:

"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 Committee was advised that, on the date of assessment, 1st February, 2024, 95% of all dwelling units in policy area "HMA 2/09 Eglantine" were made up of HMOs and flats/apartments, which in turn exceeded the 20% development limit as set out in Policy HOU10. There were 259 (22%) licensed HMOs with a capacity of 1297 persons in that HMA.

It was outlined that there were a total of 1175 dwelling units in HMA 2/09. 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 Houses in Multiple Occupation Manager reminded the Committee that there was a need for intensive forms of housing and, to meet that demand, HMOs were an important component of the housing provision. HMOs, alongside other accommodation

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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 and asylum seekers.

The Committee was advised that, on 1st February, 2024, out of 69 premises available for rent within the BT9 area on PropertyNews.com there were 9 licensed HMOs which, from the information presented on the website, represented 40 bed spaces. The HMO Manager advised the Committee that anecdotal evidence from previous conversations with HMO managing agents suggested that there was currently a lack of HMO accommodation available in that locality.

He reiterated that the Ulster University Director of Campus Life, in December 2022, had advised the Council's City Growth and Regeneration Committee that there was an "increase in competition for HMOs particularly from NIHE, Immigration Services and statutory agencies and there were increasing accommodation issues across the housing sector which required a holistic view and should include the consideration of international students, families and graduates looking for professional accommodation."

However, the QUB Director of Student Plus had confirmed that the current trend indicated a significant move of students to purpose-built student accommodation blocks. She had advised the Members that there were 7,000 purpose built managed student accommodation (PBMSA) rooms in the city, the majority having been built since 2018, and approximately 5,000 in the city centre.

The Committee was reminded that recent monitoring information produced by the Council's Planning Service for PBMSA indicated that 2055 bedspaces were currently under construction with an operational date of 2024.

Therefore, with the continued expansion of the PBMSA sector and students transitioning from private rentals to PBMSAs, it was too early to tell whether the increased competition from non-students for HMOs was a temporary problem which could be managed by the contraction in students residing in existing HMO accommodation within the locality, or evidence of an emerging long-term supply issue.

The Houses in Multiple Occupation Manager explained that, in assessing the number and capacity of licensed HMOs, as well as the need for HMO accommodation in the locality, 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.

The Committee was advised that no objections had been received in relation to the application.

It was reported that the accommodation had been certified as broadly compliant with the physical standards for an HMO by a technical officer from the NIHMO service, on 24th November, 2023, with some minor works to be completed.

On 1st February, 2024, pursuant to Paragraph 9 of Schedule 2 of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, officers had issued a Notice of Proposed

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Decision to the Applicant advising that it was proposing to refuse the licence on the grounds of overprovision. The Members' attention was drawn to the applicant's response.

The Chairperson then welcomed Mr. E. McCarthy, Barrister, representing the applicants, to the meeting. He advised the Committee that:

- in 2021, having acted upon legal advice, the owners transferred the property and 2 others, into a limited company, of which they were directors;
- the applicants ran a day nursery on the ground floor of the site of nos. 67, 69 and 71 Eglantine Avenue, and the upper floors provided accommodation for some of the daycare staff;
- the accommodation was much more generous in size than the minimum standards requirements for an HMO;
- the applicants understood that a licence application should have been made before the transfer of ownership had been completed and had apologised for that oversight;
- the reason for refusal given by officers was "overprovision", yet it was a case of replacing one HMO with another in exactly the same location; and
- had the applicants not transferred the property to a company, and had simply renewed the application, "overprovision" would not have applied.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. McCarthy for his attendance.

In response to a Member's query, the Solicitor confirmed that the Committee was bound to take overprovision into consideration as it was a new application.

In response to a further Member's question regarding setting a precedent, the Solicitor confirmed that the Committee had taken a consistent approach towards previous applications, each with varying personal circumstances, and that the Committee had not deviated from applying the policy to date.

Moved by Councillor O'Neill,
Seconded by Councillor McCann,

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.

Non-Delegated Matters

Pavement Cafe Licensing – Dfl in attendance

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. D. Healy, Divisional Manager at Dfl Roads Western Division, to the meeting.

He advised the Committee that, since the original pavement café legislation had been proposed, the Department for Infrastructure (Dfl) had been compiling a document to assist its staff in ensuring consistency across Northern Ireland.

He outlined that initial work on the guidance, up to 2020, had only reached draft stage as there had been a number of issues around consistency as well as getting agreement with Councils and disability groups.

The Committee was advised that the unpublished draft guidance had been used by Dfl staff in assessing Pavement Cafes to date. However, having been prompted by Belfast City Council's adoption of its permanent Pavement Café Licensing scheme, he had since been tasked, as Chair of the Network Planning Committee, to bring the draft guidance forward.

Mr. Healy explained that a number of amendments had been made in terms of suitable footway widths. He outlined that Dfl relied upon a number of different guides in terms of what were deemed acceptable footway widths. He stated that the minimum standard was 2metres but within each guidance document there were instances where that distance could be reduced. He pointed out that, in the Chartered Institution for Highways and Transportation "Planning for Walking" document, it suggested an absolute minimum of 1.8metres clearance, whereas the Inclusive Mobility document specifically relating to pavement cafes suggested that 1.5metre clear space should be regarded as a minimum acceptable distance.

He explained that the new guidance document from Dfl would draw upon the guidance from the various complementary documents and would consider in what circumstances a pavement café could operate with less than 2metres clearance. He outlined that Dfl would seek to produce guidance which was acceptable to Councils and to disability groups. He explained that the new document would look to assess applications for a pavement café where it had less than 2metres clearance of footway width.

The Members were advised that the updated draft guidance had been issued to Councils and disability groups in early January 2024. A meeting had subsequently been held with those groups on 18th January, 2024, with a number of amendments having been made as a result of the consultation. A further version of the guidance had been issued to stakeholders on 19th February, 2024 and Dfl was currently awaiting feedback.

The Committee was advised that, once the guidance was completed, it would go through the Department's Equality Screening assessment in advance of its publication.

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Mr. Healy confirmed to the Committee that the guidance would be a “live” document and would continue to evolve over time but would hopefully help to ensure consistency across all Council areas.

In response to a Member’s question regarding the most recent version of the guidance, the Building Control Manager advised the Committee that, while officers had only had sight of it two days previously, they had been working closely with the Department in respect of the guidance and that the guidance produced by the Council and the DfI seemed to be well aligned.

The Chairperson emphasised that it was important that the guidance was not set in stone so as to adopt best practice, learn from lived experience, and that it was ultimately people-centred and not policy-centred.

In response to a Member’s query, Mr Healy confirmed that only in certain circumstances should applicants be permitted to have less than 2metres footway clearance, such as in areas of very low pedestrian footfall.

A further Member queried how individual applications would be adjudicated, including who would decide if it was acceptable for a pavement café to operate if there was less than 2metres clearance available, and if there would be an appeal mechanism. In response, Mr. Healy explained that there was a section in the guidance outlining scenarios where less than 2metres clearance could be acceptable, where it would be up to the applicant to demonstrate that the pedestrian flow adjacent to the property was sufficiently low to lessen the risk of anyone on the footpath being impeded, or in areas of not more than 2metres long, known as pinch points. The Committee was advised that the information would also be verified by DfI staff on the ground.

A further Member queried how the appeals process would operate. The Building Control Manager outlined that the only right of appeal would be from applicants, if their application for a pavement cafe was refused. He explained that the Committee would be asked to consider any applications which had been refused by officers and were being appealed by applicants, but he clarified that users who felt disadvantaged by a pavement café would not have a right of appeal.

After discussion, a number of Members stated that it was important that the parameters were clear for officers and applicants, in order to provide reassurance to everyone.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Healy for his attendance and the update which he had provided.

Chairperson

Planning Committee

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HYBRID MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Garrett (Chairperson);
Aldermen Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers;
Councillors Anglin, Bell, Bradley, T. Brooks,
Carson, Doherty, P. Donnelly, S. Douglas
Doran, Ferguson, Groogan, Hanvey, Maskey,
McCann, Nic Bhranair and Whyte.

Also present: Councillor Flynn.

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);
Ms. C. Reville, Principal Planning Officer;
Ms. U. Caddell, Senior Planning Officer;
Mr. R. Taylor, Senior Planning Officer;
Ms. L. Walshe, Senior Planning Officer; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 16th and 23rd January, 2024 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 February, 2024, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Alderman Lawlor declared an interest in relation to item 8d on the agenda, LA04/2023/4021/F - Change of use from dwelling to 5 Bed House in Multiple Occupation (amended description) - 166 Upper Newtownards Road, in that his employer, Mr. G. Robinson MLA, had submitted a letter of objection to the application.

Councillor T. Brooks declared an interest in relation to item 2c on the agenda, Proposed pre-emptive Committee Site Visit for: LA04/2023/3778/F - Demolition of existing Russell Court buildings and re development of existing surface car park to accommodate two new buildings for the QUB Institute of Research Excellence for Advanced Clinical Healthcare (iREACH Health), including landscaping, parking, and servicing. 38-52 Lisburn Road, Malone Lower, Belfast, BT9 6AA, in that she was employed by Queen's University.

Committee Site Visits

Note of Committee Site Visits

The Committee noted the Committee site visits.

Proposed briefing and pre-emptive Committee Site Visit for: LA04/2023/2459/F - Redevelopment of the NICSSA pavilion complex within the Stormont Estate creating a centre of excellence for sport. The development will comprise of demolition of the existing pavilion building and replacement with new 2 storey building providing state of the art indoor sports halls, changing accommodation, function/meeting space offering improvements to the existing offering. Site works will include the demolition and site clearance of the Dundonald House site to facilitate the extension and development of new international standard outdoor multi-sports playing, training and ancillary facilities. Day to Day operation of the site will be improved by way of improvements to internal road network via new access/egress arrangements from the existing Stoney Road junction, additional car and cycle parking and new waste/recycling areas. (Further Information received). Lands within the Stormont Estate to include

The Committee agreed to hold a briefing and undertake a site visit.

Proposed pre-emptive Committee Site Visit for: LA04/2023/3778/F - Demolition of existing Russell Court buildings and re development of existing surface car park to accommodate two new buildings for the QUB Institute of Research Excellence for Advanced Clinical Healthcare (iREACH Health), including landscaping, parking, and servicing. 38-52 Lisburn Road, Malone Lower, Belfast, BT9 6AA

The Committee agreed to undertake a site visit.

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**Notifications of Provision/Removal
of Accessible Parking Bays**

The Committee noted the provision of accessible parking bays at the following locations:

- 22B Cloghan Park;
- 34 Lothair Avenue;
- 4 Paxton Street; and
- 30 Hillview Avenue.

**Notifications from Statutory Bodies:
Abandonment and Extinguishment**

Abandonment at Cairnmartin Crescent

The Committee noted the proposed abandonment.

Abandonment at Parkgate Avenue

The Committee noted the proposed abandonment.

Appeals

The Committee noted the appeals decisions.

Planning Decisions Issued

The Committee noted the planning decisions issued in January, 2024 and, at the request of Councillor Carson, agreed that the monthly report would be presented to future meetings of the Committee in a dashboard format.

Miscellaneous Reports

**Delegation of Local Applications
With NI Water Objections**

The Committee agreed to delegate authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control, those Local planning applications to which NI Water had objected to.

**DFI Consultation on review of the
Development Management Regulations**

The Planning Manager outlined the undernoted report to the Committee:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To report on the Department for Infrastructure’s public consultation on its review of the Development Management Regulations.

1.2 The Committee is asked to agree the Council’s response to the consultation.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 That the Committee gives delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to respond to the public consultation as per the ‘Assessment’ section of this report (pars. 3.7 to 3.30).

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 The Planning (Development Management) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (‘Development Management Regulations’) set out the following provisions:

- **Hierarchy of development** – the definition of Major development
- **Regionally significant applications** – to require consultation with DfI on applications for Major development of a certain scale to ascertain whether they will be ‘called in’ and determined by DfI as regionally significant
- **Proposal of Application Notices (PANs)** – the content of PAN applications required to be made to the Council. PAN applications set out the proposals for Pre-application Community Consultation relating to applications for Major Development
- **Pre-application Community Consultation** – requirements for Pre-application Community Consultation including holding a public event and publicising the proposal in a newspaper
- **Duty to decline to determine applications where section 27 is not complied with** – specifying a period of 21 days for the Council requiring additional information before declining to

- determine an application for Major development where the requirements of the PAN process were not followed
- **Pre-Determination Hearings** – the requirement to hold a Pre-Determination Hearing for applications notified to DfI but which it returns to the council for determination
 - **Schemes of delegation** – requirement for Councils to prepare a scheme of delegation that sets out the classes of Local development that are to be determined by officers. Prevention of such applications being determined by an officer where the application is made by the council or an elected member, or the council has an estate in the land. Requirement to send a copy of the scheme of delegation to DfI and not to adopt it until it has been approved by DfI. Requirement to publish the scheme of delegation, making it available in the office and publishing it on the council's website. Requirement for the council to prepare a scheme of delegation at intervals of no greater than 3 years.
 - **Transition provisions** – the requirement for Pre-Application Community Consultation to only apply to applications for Major development submitted on or after 1st July 2015.

Public Consultation

- 3.3 The Department for Infrastructure ('DfI') is consulting on its review of the Development Management Regulations as part of the regional Planning Improvement Programme (PIP). The PIP is a response to recommendations of the Northern Ireland Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee reports published in 2022, which seek significant improvement of the NI planning system.
- 3.4 The consultation proposes changes in three areas:
- a review of the classes of development to ensure they reflect current and future development trends and that the associated thresholds take a balanced approach to community consultation in planning applications for major development;
 - proposals to make pre-determination hearings discretionary for councils which will help focus resources and reduce delays in issuing planning decisions for some planning applications; and
 - proposals to introduce online/digital methods into the pre-application community consultation (PACC) process, to enhance accessibility and encourage participation in the planning process by a broader range of people.
- 3.5 DfI announced the public consultation in December 2023 with the closing date for comments of 3rd March 2024.

Assessment

- 3.7 It is proposed that the Council responds to the public consultation as set out below.

Review of classes of development

- 3.8 The consequence of development being classified as 'Major' is twofold. Firstly, that the applicant is required to carry out formal pre-application community consultation before submitting the application to the council. Secondly, that the decision on the application cannot be delegated to officers but must be made by the planning committee.
- 3.9 In its consultation, DfI suggests that proposals for Major development '*...require considerably more assessment and processing resources than local developments which, by comparison, are less complex and, on the whole, raise fewer public interest issues.*' (par. 2.2).
- 3.10 However, this is not always the experience of the Planning Service. Applications for Local development, such as housing schemes of less than 50 residential units, can often be equally complex and raise more public interest issues than Major applications. Whilst the current thresholds for Major development are generally considered to be appropriate, consideration should be given to the requirement for secondary 'lighter touch' mandatory pre-application community consultation on certain scale Local applications. Local applications can have a significant impact on local people, particularly in locations such as Belfast which comprise many areas of tight-knit and dense communities where changes to the built environment can have considerable consequences. There should be a formal opportunity for those communities to engage with developers to help shape proposals for the better.
- 3.11 Conversely, there are examples of Major development proposals, such as larger commercial buildings on industrial estates, where the value of mandatory pre-application community consultation is questionable. There should be the provision for the council to advise that pre-application community consultation is not required in specific cases or for a council to be able to publish 'local guidance' on when pre-application community consultation is necessary (this would be criteria based similar to a scheme of delegation).
- 3.12 Officers recognise that consideration of these issues cannot be separated from the work to date of the regional [Planning Engagement Partnership](#), which published its report: [Planning](#)

[Your Place: Getting Involved](#) in March 2022. The report made various recommendations on how to improve public engagement in the planning process including the pre-application community consultation process.

- 3.13 It is noteworthy that BCC's Planning Service no longer places emphasis on whether a proposal falls under the 'Major' or 'Local' development categories, but whether a proposal is of 'strategic' importance to the city. For example, there are many examples of Local applications which are of strategic significance to Belfast and Major applications which are not necessarily of strategic importance, classified as 'technical Major applications' by virtue of their scale, particularly those relating to change of use of a large area of land.
- 3.14 Nevertheless, there is often a perception of the importance of a Major application and in this regard, the Department may wish to consider increasing the types of energy infrastructure development, particularly renewables, that fall within the Major development category in order that they are prioritised. Although this needs to be balanced against the commercial disadvantages of making applicants have to go through the 12-week Proposal of Application (PAN) process in terms of added time to the process when the regional objective is to facilitate such proposals in an efficient and timely manner.
- 3.15 Officers welcome the proposed introduction of a 'mixed development' category of Major development for the avoidance of any doubt – the Planning Service has experience of applicants trying to argue that their proposal is not Major development because it is a mixed-use scheme which does not fall within any of the specific current categories even though it is of considerable scale.
- 3.16 Clarification should be provided in the updated regulations of the category of development that Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) fall under to avoid future potential confusion.
- 3.17 In relation to category 6 'Housing', a significant upward change in the threshold for definition of major housing developments could result in virtually all residential developments proposed being classified as 'local' with resultant implications for the time available for processing and the removal of the need for pre-engagement processes such as PAD and PAN along with the requirement to consider masterplanning. This would therefore not be supported.
- 3.18 Regarding category 7 'Retailing, Community, Recreation & Culture', consideration should be given to splitting 'Retailing' into

a separate category since retail development presents distinct issues from the other forms of development in this category including retail impact.

- 3.19 Consideration should be given to increasing the 1 ha threshold for Major developments to 2 ha as some Major applications are considered ‘technical Major applications’ because of their scale but not their impact. Typically, this relates to proposals for a change of use of land or proposals such as ‘environmental improvements’ relating to public realm.
- 3.20 Officers have no observations in relation to the current thresholds for consulting Dfl on potentially regionally significant planning applications.

Pre-application Community Consultation

- 3.21 Officers recognise the significant merits of online and digital consultation in reaching a wider and in some cases younger population. However, this it is not considered that this should be a substitute for face-to-face public events because of the value of in-person communication and commitment to genuine engagement that face to face meetings can demonstrate. The Council should therefore support ‘Option 1’ of the consultation, which is to require both an in-person public event and online/digital consultation. Option 2, which is to give the developer discretion as to whether to carry out in-person consultation or online/digital consultation is not considered appropriate.
- 3.22 The requirements of the pre-application community consultation process should be re-examined having regard to the *Planning Your Place: Getting Involved* report. Consideration should be given to prescribing further publicity requirements including ‘leaflet drops’ to local property and site notices to be erected by the applicant.
- 3.23 It is also essential that pre-application community consultation is much more than a simple ‘tick box’ exercise carried out by the applicant. The bar for Pre-Application Community Consultation (PACC) reports submitted with applications is arguably too low. There must be a mandatory requirement for applicants to set out the views of local people and interested parties in the report, how they have responded to each of the points, and where changes were not made to address them, to clearly explain and justify the reasons why.
- 3.24 There should also be an automatic requirement for the applicant to notify the locally Elected Members for the area of the pre-application community consultation.

Pre-Determination Hearings

- 3.25 DfI is proposing to remove the requirement for councils to hold a Pre-Determination Hearing (which in turn requires a further meeting of the Committee to retake the decision) when an application is returned to the council for determination following notification to DfI. The current requirement is an unnecessary administrative burden which adds to delays to the application process and creates considerable uncertainty for applicants, an anathema for investors.
- 3.26 The proposal to remove the requirement for statutory Pre-Determination Hearings under such circumstances and to instead give councils the power to hold a discretionary Pre-Determination Hearing is very much welcomed with officers having lobbied DfI for this change for many years.

Other points

- 3.27 Officers welcome the proposal for a third category of development, perhaps titled 'Minor' development, for smaller scale proposals such as householder, advertisement, Listed Building Consent and Conservation Area Consent applications. This recognises that the definition of 'Local' development is currently far too wide, ranging for an application for single storey extension or satellite dish to 49 dwelling units, and does not permit meaningful interrogation of performance. There should in turn be an even shorter statutory target for determination of such Minor applications, which is less than the 15 weeks average processing time currently prescribed to Local applications.
- 3.28 Consideration should also be given to removing the requirement for all applications for Major development to be decided by a planning committee. This should be a matter for each council to decide and set out in its scheme of delegation.
- 3.29 The regulations relating to schemes of delegation should also be amended. Unlike in NI, there is no requirement in England and Wales for councils to have their schemes of delegation approved by central government. This is a localised decision-making matter and the current requirements are one of too many examples of the Department's over-interventionist role in the planning system in NI. DfI could perhaps amend the legislation to enable it to intervene if it considers an individual council's scheme of delegation to be inappropriate. In practice, it is questioned how many times the Department has not approved a council's scheme of delegation since 2015.

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3.30 Importantly, the Council’s proposed response to this focused consultation should not be considered to conclude that these regulations (and others applicable to the development management process) do not need further consideration and potential amendment.

4.0 **Financial & Resource Implications**

The changes proposed by the consultation have the potential to streamline legislative processes and in turn have a positive impact on finances, resources and performance.

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

5.1 There are no equality or good relations / rural needs implications associated with this report.”

The Committee delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to respond to the public consultation as per the assessment outlined within the report.

THE COMMITTEE DEALT WITH THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN PURSUANCE OF THE POWERS DELEGATED TO IT BY THE COUNCIL UNDER STANDING ORDER 37(e)

Planning Applications Previously Considered

LA04/2022/0646/F - Application under Section 54 of the planning (Northern Ireland) Act 2011 to vary Condition 2 of planning permission LA04/2017/2753/F (relating to details of public realm improvements) - 30-44 Bradbury Place

The Planning Manager explained that the application has been approved by the Committee at its meeting in August, 2022, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement. He reported that the Section 76 planning agreement had been signed, but that the decision had yet to be issued due to the need to resolve the details of the public realm required by condition two of the previous permission, including the timing of its implementation.

He stated that the matters had been resolved and the application was before the Committee for reassessment against the Plan Strategy, which had been adopted in May, 2023.

He informed the Committee that the applicant had advised that the public realm would be completed prior to occupation, however, tree planning would be delayed until October, 2024.

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He reported that officers had advised that, in order to build in contingency in case of slippage, condition two should be reworded to the following:

'The public realm improvements along the Bradbury Place frontage as highlighted in yellow on Drawing No.01A shall be implemented in accordance with the details approved under discharge of condition application LA04/2021/0917/DC approved on X and completed prior to 31st July 2024 of the hereby approved development, save for the tree planting which shall be carried out during the first planting season following afterwards.'

He stated that it was recommended that the application be approved with conditions.

The Committee approved the application, 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 issues that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

LA04/2023/2418/F - Demolition of existing retail units and vehicle drop off area of 215-225 Castlereagh Road, Belfast and erection of 4 storey apartment building containing, 16 no apartments with associated development and ancillary works. - 215-225 Castlereagh Road

The Senior Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the application and highlighted the following key issues for consideration:

- Principle of development;
- Design, scale, layout and impact upon the character and appearance of the area including residential amenity;
- 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.

He explained that the density, design and amenity were acceptable, and that the application had met the housing mix provision with 20% affordable housing. He added that no objections had been received from consultees, and that six third party objections had been received and fully assessed.

He stated that the application was considered acceptable and that it was recommended that the Committee approve the application, subject to conditions.

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Proposal

Moved by Councillor T. Brooks,
Seconded by Councillor Bell,

“That the Committee refuses the application on the basis of the height, scale and massing of the proposal, and delegates authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the refusal reasons.”

On a vote, four Members voted for the proposal and 16 against and it was declared lost.

Accordingly, the Chairperson put the officer recommendation to the Committee and 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 issues that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

LA04/2022/0097/F - Proposed three and a half storey residential development comprising of 18no. units (3no. wheelchair apartments and 15no. Category 1 - Social Housing) and associated access, bin storage, boundary treatments, bike stands, car parking and site and landscaping works (Amended Drawings) - 22-30 Hopefield Avenue

The Senior Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee and highlighted the following key issues:

- Principle of development;
- Affordable housing and housing mix;
- Design, layout and impact on the character and appearance of the area of townscape character;
- Accessible and adaptable accommodation; and
- Access and parking.

He explained that four objections had been received in relation to character, residential amenity, overdevelopment, parking and damage to street trees and referred the Committee to the case officer response which addressed those objections. He added that no objections had been received from consultees, with the exception of NI Water, which had advised that there was insufficient wastewater treatment capacity.

He stated that, having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal was considered acceptable and that it was recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

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The Chairperson welcomed Mr. M. Collins, Collins Rolston Architects, and Mr. D. Erskine, NB Housing, to the meeting.

Mr. Erskine explained that the scheme design was fully supported by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and was designed to meet DfC and NIHE standards. He added that there was a travel plan that would have three-year benefits for Translink, Belfast Bikes and car sharing.

He highlighted that the design evolution facilitated the relocation of the entrance in order to limit damage to the street trees.

Mr. Collins addressed potential concerns from local residents and stated that care had been taken to respect the character of the neighbourhood and would create an open space for residents as well as providing high quality vegetation and planning to the front and rear of the proposal.

The Committee granted 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 issues that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

**LA04/2023/4021/F - Change of use from dwelling to
5 Bed House in Multiple Occupation (amended description).
- 166 Upper Newtownards Road**

The Planning Manager provided the Committee with an overview of the application and explained that the application site was within an Intensive Housing Node where Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) were acceptable, in principle, under Policy HOU11.

He highlighted the key issues to be considered that included the impact on the surrounding residential amenity/character, traffic, parking, access, waste and refuse collection and over-occupation and antisocial behaviour.

He stated that the proposal complied with the relevant space standards and the location site was highly accessible and sustainable and that DfI Roads had offered no objections.

He added that there was adequate provision made for bin storage and that bicycle storage could be provided within the garage and secured by a planning condition.

The Planning Manager stated that, having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal was considered acceptable and it was recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. Adam Larkin, Planning Agent, Ms. L. Rogers and Mrs. F. Rogers, the applicants, to the meeting.

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Ms. Rogers explained that she ran seven other HMOs and targeted young professionals as occupants as there was a huge demand for HMO accommodation from those who could not afford to rent an entire property. She stated that young professionals were easy to manage and that the perception that the property would be used for student accommodation was untrue and that it was not an ideal location for students.

She stated that she deliberately chose HMO properties on the Glider routes and only within the HMO Planning Nodes to allow tenants ease of access to the city centre. She added that the property was located less than 100 metres from a greenway and would facilitate tenants who may chose to cycle or work to their place of work.

She outlined the changes that were made to the application in response to local objections that included converting one of the bedrooms back to a garage for in curtilage parking and bike storage and highlighted that there was no requirement to provide additional parking.

She pointed out that the property was residential and therefore would have no more bins than any other property within the location.

Ms. Rogers stated that, as a licensed HMO, the operation of the property would be heavily monitored by the Council and that an antisocial behaviour plan would have to be submitted and adhered to, as a condition of the license, and that, in the eight years of operating HMO properties, she has never received a complaint from any neighbour or authority about antisocial behaviour.

She concluded by stating that there would be no impact from tenants requiring parking, the bins that were currently provided, would be the same quantity as the neighbouring properties and that there was a misconception that the property would be used by students engaging in antisocial behaviour.

The Committee granted 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 issues that maight arise, provided that they were not substantive.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
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New Planning Applications

LA04/2020/0568/F and LA04/2020/0569/LBC - Change of use (including refurbishment of and 9 storey extension to rear) of former police station to 74 bedroom hotel with associated restaurant, bar & ancillary facilities. - 21 Queen Street

The Planning Manager provided an overview of the application to the Committee and highlighted the following key areas for consideration:

- The principle of a hotel at this location;
- Impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area;
- Impact on the special architectural and historic qualities of the Listed Building;
- Archaeology;
- Ancillary open space;
- Climate change;
- Traffic, movement and parking;
- Environmental impacts;
- Drainage and flood risk; and
- Natural heritage.

He explained that the building was Grade B1 Listed, located in the City Centre Conservation Area and on the heritage risk register.

He stated that the principle of hotel use in the location was considered acceptable and that the proposed alterations to the Listed Building were sympathetic and the proposal would help to secure the future of the Listed Building at risk.

He reported that no objections had been received from DfI Roads, DfC Historic Environment Division, DfI Rivers, NI Water, BCC Environmental Health or third parties, however, the Urban Design Officer and internal conservation advice had expressed concerns with regard to some aspects of the design.

He stated that, having regard to the Development Plan and other material considerations, the proposal was considered acceptable and that it was recommended that planning permission and Listed Building consent were granted, subject to conditions.

In response to a question from a Member with regard to the issues raised by the internal conservation advice and Urban Design Officer, the Planning Manager explained that, although concerns had been raised, it was a question of judgement as to whether the application was considered policy compliant and acceptable, and that, since the planning officers had concluded that the proposal was acceptable, it was not considered necessary to require the applicant to make a detailed enabling case for the proposal.

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Proposal

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor T. Brooks,

“That the Committee defers consideration of the application until further information is received with regard to concerns raised from consultees in relation to some aspects of the design of the proposal.”

On a vote, four Members voted for the proposal and 14 against and it was declared lost.

Accordingly, the Chairperson put the officer recommendation to the Committee and the Committee agreed to grant planning permission and Listed Building Consent, 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, provided that they are not substantive.

LA04/2022/1384/F - Residential development of 10 no. apartments within a single building, including demolition of existing structures, car parking and relocation of existing access, and all other associated siteworks. – Lands at 12 Inverary Avenue

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the application in order to undertake a site visit.

LA04/2023/4219/F - Single storey extension to rear and side. Changes to side elevation. Demolition of existing garage (amended description). - 6 Haddington Gardens

The Committee considered the application and granted planning permission, 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.

LA04/2023/3319/F - Proposed change of use from an existing dwelling to a house of multiple occupancies – 27 Ponsonby Avenue

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the application in order to undertake a site visit.

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**LA04/2023/3481/F - Change of use from dwelling to
6 bed HMO (sui generis) - 272 Limestone Road**

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the application in order to undertake a site visit.

**LA04/2023/4592/f – change of use from Retail (A1) to
Community facility (D1) – Ground Floor 102 Royal Avenue**

The Senior Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee and provided a site location plan, existing and proposed elevations and a proposed floorplan.

He explained that there were no physical alterations to the building in the proposal and all installations were internal and temporary.

He reported that, having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, it was recommended that the application was approved, subject to conditions.

The Committee granted planning permission, 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.

**LA04/2023/3646/F - Proposed outbuilding to provide
ancillary office space and meeting room - The Stableyard,
Barnett's Demesne Malone Road**

The Senior Planning Officer provided an overview of the application to the Committee and highlighted the following key issues in the assessment of the proposed development:

- Principle of development;
- Impact on amenity;
- Impact on rural character of the area and design;
- Lagan Valley Regional Park; and
- Climate Change.

He explained that the site was located to the rear of the existing Stableyard and was currently an area of hardstanding which had been occupied by Belfast Activity Centre, a charity that provided outdoor adventure and learning.

He reported that the proposal was neighbour notified and advertised and that no representations had been received.

He stated that, having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal was considered acceptable.

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The Committee granted planning permission, 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 issuing the decision, provided that they were not substantive.

Chairperson

Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 8th February, 2024

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);
Councillors Anglin, Bower, R. Brooks,
T. Brooks, Carson, 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 and
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland and Councillor Bell.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 11th January, were taken as read and signed as correct subject to the amendment that Councillor Long was recorded as being in attendance at the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Doherty declared an interest in that his employer had a collaborative business arrangement with Amazon Business Services (AWS).

Amazon Web Services – Climate Data Platform Challenge update

Councillor Doherty declared an interest as indicated previously and removed himself from the meeting during discussion of this item.

Mr. Adrian Hanley, Local Government Account Manager, Amazon Web Services (AWS), attended in connection with this item and was welcomed by the Chairperson.

The Monitoring Learning and Reporting Officer acknowledged and thanked the teams, both from AWS and the University of Arizona, for their work in the development of a wireframe climate data capture platform. Mr. Hanley provided the Committee with an overview of the investment by AWS in the local economy, including their support provided to the business sector and charitable organisations. The Committee was informed of AWS's commitment to

**Climate and City Resilience Committee,
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offer technical solutions to a wide range of business enterprises and also to the purchase of green energy, as part of their climate commitment, to reduce carbon emissions. He highlighted AWS's commitment to be one hundred per cent renewable, across the UK, by 2025.

Mr. Hanley reported that the Council had challenged AWS to provide a technical solution in regard to the collection, processing, analysis and communication of its climate data. To that end, the University of Arizona had been approached to develop a framework for the creation of a climate data platform using information provided by a range of teams, from across the Council, to ascertain its climate data collection and reporting requirements.

The Members were informed that, as part of that process, a seven-week engagement programme had taken place between Belfast City Council, stakeholders, AWS and the University of Arizona, to develop a prototype data capture platform. As part of the engagement programme, a graphical visual representation had been produced to illustrate how the climate data platform would be presented.

The Members were provided with an example of what a climate data platform might look like, including a range of categories which could be included with its format. Mr. Hanley provided information on the potential functionality of the data platform and how it could be used to simulate climate scenarios dependent on the input of various statistical data.

The Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer referred to the benefits of the climate data platform in communicating how the Council had performed, in terms of its climate ambitions, compared to other cities and stated that all data had been source identified and its integrity and accuracy verified.

In response to a question from a Member in regard to the timeline associated with the development of the data platform, the Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer stated that a business case was being prepared and that it was hoped that the software development team, within digital services, would be working on the development of a prototype climate platform, commencing in April 2024, using a range of data provided by the Council.

A Member requested information in regard to the installation of pop-up cycle lanes and the impact of that development on carbon emissions, specifically in regard to transport. In response, the Learning, Monitoring and Development Officer stated that, as the data was available a year after the data collection exercise had been completed, she would bring back information to the Committee after publication of the information requested.

In response to a further question from a Member in regard to the data platform being user friendly for those with disabilities, the Learning, Monitoring and Development Officer confirmed that, the Council had a statutory obligation to comply with its legal obligations in that regard

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Mr. Hanley for his detailed and informative presentation and he departed from the meeting.

Noted.

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**Shared Island Community Climate Action
Fund (Strand 1a) (Restricted Item)**

The Director provided the Committee with an update in regard to the involvement of Belfast City Council under the Shared Island Funding Initiative. The Members were informed that Council officers had continued to work with partner Councils in the Republic of Ireland in order to explore and develop potential project areas in line with the Shared Island Programme.

The Members were provided with an outline of the brief attached to Strand 1a of the Shared Island Community Climate Action Fund which provided the opportunity for communities/local authorities to take forward cross-border climate action projects in partnership with organisations in Northern Ireland

The Committee was provided with an overview of the key elements which were eligible for funding under strand 1a, including the funding tiers which were available under the scheme and incorporating the contact details of those authorities and Community Climate Action Officers responsible for the projects and administration of the funding process.

Noted.

Belfast Agenda refresh - update

The Director provided the Committee with an update on the work which had been undertaken with stakeholders, as part of a community engagement programme in order to update priority action areas within the Belfast Agenda.

The Director highlighted the significant community engagement programme which had been undertaken to ensure that the priorities were consistent with the needs of the city and that it had both community and business support.

The Committee was provided with an outline of the detailed processes associated with each phase of the engagement and participation programme. The Director stated that the ethos associated with a compassionate city incorporated with inclusive growth were key components of the Belfast Agenda. The Members were informed of a major addition to Belfast Agenda, in terms of climate change, and the objective to achieve a reduction in carbon emissions by eighty per cent, by 2025.

The Director referred to the five themes contained within the Belfast Agenda comprising:

1. Our People and Communities
2. Our Economy
3. Our Place
4. Our Environment and
5. A Compassionate City

The Committee was informed that the Belfast Agenda did not sit in isolation from regional government policy and should be viewed in that context. The Director emphasised the importance attached to securing collaboration with partner organisations, including the

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Executive, to deal with issues such as health inequality and Community and Neighbourhood Regeneration, alongside ensuring a just transition to net-zero.

The Climate Commissioner highlighted a range of interventions which had been undertaken, as part of the Climate agenda including, the "Our Planet" area of focus, including decarbonisation projects. She referred also to the delivery of two retrofit projects in deprived areas and the operation of the Artemis net-zero ferry service.

The Climate Commissioner reinforced the need to ensure a just transition to net zero and of the need to ensure that both the public and business sectors and society, in general, were on board if behavioural change to achieve net-zero was to be achieved.

The Director reported that it was anticipated to launch the Belfast Agenda refresh on 20th March 2024 and emphasised the need for a multi-agency collaborative approach if the ambitions with the Belfast Agenda were to be realised and targets met.

In response to a question from a Member, as to reason for the restriction of the item under the heading, 'Shared Island Community Climate Action Fund', the Director agreed that it would be possible to disaggregate the report to exclude the commercially sensitive elements and present the modified report to a future meeting of the Committee, in a non-restricted format.

In response to a further question in regard to the lack of infrastructure for electric vehicle charging and what the Council might do to support infrastructure in that regard, the Climate Commissioner reported that the nature of lease agreements and revenue streams associated with EV charging required to be considered at a strategic level and agreed to report back to the Committee, at a future date, on how the issue identified might be progressed.

A Member raised the issue of support for community energy projects the subject matter of which which the Member had submitted a previous motion to the Council. The Member requested information on how such projects could be developed, with particular reference to the most economically and socially deprived areas of the city. In response, the Climate Commissioner stated that she would submit a report to a future meeting of the Committee on how the Council might expand and develop those projects in an endeavour to support a just transition and meet its net zero commitments.

A Member raised a question in regard to how the city might incorporate its ambitions to become net-zero, within the Belfast Agenda, and highlighted its success, to date, in that regard. In response, the Director reported that the carbon disclosure project, which had provided the city an 'A' rating, was a major achievement towards the recognition of the city's green credentials. The Committee was reminded of the 'Pathway to net zero' being an integral part of the Belfast Agenda. The Climate Commissioner reported also that Belfast was rated eleventh in the global sustainability index, which sent a clear and unequivocal message of the city's commitment to a sustainable, net-zero economy.

In response to a request from a Member to have a simplified graphical representation of where the Council was on its various themes contained within the Belfast Agenda and prior to a the publication of a comprehensive dashboard, the Climate Commissioner reported that, in tandem with the development of a detailed climate dashboard, the Council had undertaken

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an annual review of this progress, on its range of climate ambitions, to the Climate and Sustainability Board, which would be available for the Committee's consideration. The Director informed the Members that the Corporate Performance Management Framework was being amended and would provide a valuable insight into the Council and the progress made to deliver its climate ambitions.

Noted.

Chairperson

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Standards and Business Committee

Thursday, 22nd February, 2024

MEETING OF THE STANDARDS AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Alderman Rodgers (Deputy Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Groogan;
Aldermen Lawlor and McCullough; and
Councillors Bradley, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, D. Douglas,
Duffy, Kelly, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, F. McAteer, G. McAteer,
McDowell, R. McLaughlin and McMullan.

In attendance: Ms. N. Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal
and Civic Services;
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager, and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

(Alderman Rodgers in the Chair)

An apology was reported on behalf of the Chairperson, Councillor McDonough-Brown.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 23rd January 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 February.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Motions

The Committee considered the following three motions which had been received in advance of the Council meeting on 4th March:

Gender Pay Gap Recording and Reporting

The Committee agreed that the motion, which had been proposed by Councillor T. Brooks and seconded by Councillor F. McAteer, be referred, in the first instance, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

**Standards and Business Committee,
Thursday, 22nd February, 2024**

Housing Crisis

The Committee agreed that the motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Groogan and seconded by Councillor Smyth, be referred, in the first instance, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Solidarity with Palestine

Proposal

Moved by Alderman McCullough,
Seconded by Alderman Lawlor,

That the motion be rejected.

Amendment

Moved by the Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor Lyons,

That the motion be referred to Council for debate, with no restrictions on the number of speakers.

On a recorded vote, two Members voted for the amendment and sixteen against and it was declared lost:

<u>For 2</u>	<u>Against 16</u>
Councillors Groogan and Lyons	Aldermen Rodgers, Lawlor and McCullough, Councillors Bradley, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, D. Douglas, Duffy, Kelly, Magee, Maghie, F. McAteer, G. McAteer, McDowell, McLaughlin and McMullan.

On a recorded vote, the original proposal standing in the name of Alderman McCullough was put to the Committee and sixteen Members voted for the proposal and two against and it was declared carried:

<u>For 16</u>	<u>Against 2</u>
Aldermen Rodgers, Lawlor and McCullough, Councillors Bradley, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, D. Douglas, Duffy, Kelly, Magee, Maghie, F. McAteer, G. McAteer, McDowell, McLaughlin and McMullan.	Councillors Groogan and Lyons

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Anti-Poverty Strategy

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Lyons,
Seconded by Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Groogan,

That the motion be referred to Council for debate, with no restrictions on the number of speakers.

Amendment

Moved by Alderman McCullough,
Seconded by Alderman Lawlor,

That the motion be adopted.

On a vote, sixteen Members voted for the amendment and one against, with one no vote and it was declared carried.

The amendment was thereupon put to the meeting as the substantive motion and passed.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to adopt the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Doherty and seconded by Councillor Whyte:

“This Council notes the significant increase in families living in poverty across Belfast as a result of the cost-of-living crisis and other financial pressures.

This Council notes the legal obligation on the Northern Ireland Executive under the 2006 St Andrew’s Agreement and subsequent Northern Ireland (St Andrew’s Agreement) Act 2006 and New Decade, New Approach Agreement 2020 to “*adopt an Anti-Poverty Strategy setting out how it proposes to tackle poverty, social exclusion and patterns of deprivation based on objective need*”.

This Council notes that the Executive is acting unlawfully by failing to adopt an Anti - poverty Strategy.

This Council will write to the Minister for Communities calling on him to bring forward an Anti-Poverty Strategy and to outline how he intends to live up to his legal obligation to tackle poverty with measures, targets, and timescales for doing so.”

Chairperson

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