

Public Document Pack

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



**Belfast
City Council**

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE COMBINED PACK (FINAL)

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet both online and in-person, in the Lavery Room, City Hall on Friday, 19th December, 2025 at 9.30 am, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. Routine Matters

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

2. Restricted Items

- (a) Revenue Estimates 2026/27 and Medium-Term Financial Planning (Pages 1 - 6)
- (b) Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann (Pages 7 - 24)
- (c) Boxing Strategy (Pages 25 - 56)
- (d) Belfast City Innovation Programme Update (Pages 57 - 62)
- (e) Bad Debt Write Off (Pages 63 - 64)

3. **Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**

- (a) Draft Public Health Agency Partnership and Engagement Strategy 2025-2030 (Pages 65 - 72)
- (b) Hardship Programme 2025/26 - Response from DfC Minister (Pages 73 - 78)
- (c) Planning Information (Pages 79 - 94)
- (d) Attendance at Horizon 2020 UPSURGE Final Conference in Katowice, Poland and Pathways2Resilience Launch Summit in Budapest, Hungary in February, 2026 (Pages 95 - 98)
- (e) Draft Amenity Byelaws (Pages 99 - 200)

4. **Physical Programme and Asset Management**

- (a) Physical Programme (Pages 201 - 208)
- (b) Asset Management (Pages 209 - 230)
- (c) Area Working Update (Pages 231 - 276)

5. **Finance, Procurement and Performance**

- (a) Contracts Update (Pages 277 - 288)
- (b) Audit and Risk Panel Report and Minutes of Meeting of 2nd December (Pages 289 - 306)
- (c) Belfast City Council Statement of Accounts 24/25 (Pages 307 - 424)

6. **Equality and Good Relations**

- (a) Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting of 1st December (Pages 425 - 482)

7. **Operational Issues**

- (a) Minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum of 11th December (Pages 483 - 488)
- (b) Requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality (Pages 489 - 494)
- (c) Minutes of the All-Party Working Group on the City Centre of 5th December, 2025 (Pages 495 - 498)
- (d) Minutes of the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group of 18th November, 2025 (Pages 499 - 504)

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

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	Belfast City Council	STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
Subject:	Draft Public Health Agency Partnership and Engagement Strategy 2025-2030.	
Date:	19 th December 2025	
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City & Organisational Strategy	
Contact Officer:	Kevin Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth & Anti-Poverty Brian Carr, Portfolio and Programme Manager Michelle McParland, Portfolio and Programme Coordinator	

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number <input style="width: 40px;" type="text"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime 	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision After Council Decision Sometime in the future Never	<input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to set out for Members consideration a draft council response to the recently published Public Health Agency's draft 'Partnership and Engagement Strategy 2025-2030'.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. note the contents of this report ii. consider and agree proposed draft Council response attached at appendix 1 iii. agree that the proposed Council response, reflecting any comments received from Members of the, be submitted to the Public Health Agency (PHA) in line with the deadline (19 December 2025). The response will state it remains subject to ratification by Full Council in January 2026.
3.0	Background
3.1	The Public Health Agency (PHA) has recently published for consultation a draft Partnership and Engagement Strategy for the period 2025-2030. The purpose of the draft Strategy is to set out a set of priorities with measurable indicators which shows a strong commitment to working with people and communities. A copy of the draft strategy is available @ Public Health Agency Partnership and Engagement Strategy 2025-2030 HSC Public Health Agency . Feedback is sought by 19 th Dec. 2025.
3.2	The stated vision is to "to make partnership and engagement working essential to Health and Social Care in a way that supports a healthier population". The draft strategy shows that the PHA is renewing its commitment to working in partnership with others. It intends to do this through two key areas: listening to people's experiences and involving them.
3.3	PHA states that it is making changes to how it works to better support people's health, with plans to deliver services more locally, focusing on neighbourhoods and tackling health inequalities. PHA intends to create a focused team which will support how the PHA engages and partners with service users, carers, families, communities and the general public with a view to improve health and wellbeing for everyone.
3.4	<p>Key considerations</p> <p>In reviewing the draft strategy, there is a clear omission or reference to the role of local authorities and the Council in promoting health and wellbeing within the city or the collaborative work already underway with the PHA in delivering the ambitions set out within the Belfast Agenda.</p>

3.5	In fact, the Council is already actively partnering with the PHA, and wider health sector partners, on a number of initiatives and programmes under the auspices of community planning including the joint funding and work being taken forward through the Belfast Health and Development Unit (e.g. Take 5, Active Belfast, Age Friendly Belfast), Heathier Systems 4 Healthier Weight (previously known as whole systems approach to obesity), Belfast Learning Cities.
3.6	The draft response attached at appendix 1, outlines these key points for consideration of the Public Health Agency.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.7	There is no financial or resource implications contained within this report.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.8	There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this report.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Draft Belfast City Council response

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Belfast City Council response
CONSULTATION ON THE PHA PARTNERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY
(2025-2030)



Belfast
City Council

Public Health Agency
12-22 Linenhall Street,
Belfast,
BT2 8BS,

Via email @ ppi.secretary@hscni.net

19 December 2025

Dear colleagues

REF: PHA Consultation on Partnership and Engagement Strategy (2025-2030)

Belfast City Council ("the Council") welcomes the opportunity to respond to the recently published Public Health Agency's draft Partnership and Engagement Strategy (2025-2030)

The draft Strategy was considered at a recent meeting of the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 19 December 2025. Elected Members welcomed the stated vision "to make partnership and engagement working essential to Health and Social Care in a way that supports a healthier population" as well as recognising the commitment to work in partnership, listening to people's experiences and involving them in service design and delivery.

Elected Members also supported the plans to deliver services more locally, focusing on neighbourhoods and tackling health inequalities. This includes the intention to create a focused team which will support how the PHA engages and partners with service users, carers, families, communities and the general public with a view to improve health and wellbeing for everyone. This approach recognises the need for and benefit of adopting place-based approaches.

In responding, the Council would highlight the joint work already underway between the Council, the PHA and other city and community partners through the Belfast Agenda (the community plan for Belfast) and the shared ambition that by 2035 to create a city where everyone experiences good health and wellbeing, an outcome that will necessitate a partnership approached if it is to be realised.

Specific comments for consideration

In reviewing the draft strategy, the Council would highlight the following specific comments for the consideration of the Public Health Agency (PHA).

Belfast City Council response
CONSULTATION ON THE PHA PARTNERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY
(2025-2030)

- i. The Council would note the current absence of any reference to local government and the Council in promoting health and wellbeing within the city or the collaborative work already underway with the PHA in delivering the ambitions set out within the Belfast Agenda.
- ii. In fact, the Council is already actively partnering with the PHA, and wider health sector partners, on a number of initiatives and programmes under the auspices of community planning including the joint work being taken forward through the Belfast Health and Development Unit (e.g. Take 5, Active Belfast, Age Friendly Belfast), Heathier Systems 4 Healthier Weight (previously known as whole systems approach to obesity), Belfast Learning Cities.
- iii. The Council believes the emerging draft strategy presents an opportunity to reference and highlight the statutory commitment of the PHA to Community Planning, and acknowledge local government as a key partner, particularly given the many challenging health issues that necessitate a partnership and wider population-based approach.
- iv. The Belfast Agenda provides a framework which maximises the opportunities for partnership working for collaborative gain on the agreed priorities within this plan, with health inequalities an identified priority under Our People and Communities theme of this plan.
- v. Our People and Communities theme has a published Action Plan. A key action, led by the PHA, is delivering on a Whole Systems Approach to Obesity. The PHA will be aware the Regional Obesity Prevention Implementation Group head up the regional Whole Systems Approach to Obesity. Within the governance of this programme of work, community planning is a structure that supports and feeds into the work, thereby illustrating one example of where community planning structures act as a key vehicle for partnership working in tackling challenging health inequalities.
- vi. In addition, the Belfast Health Development Unit is a co-located team of staff from PHA, BHSCT and Belfast City Council who are housed in council offices. We would highlight that this is a model of best practice in terms of partnership working and has resulted in the development of a range of innovative approaches in the Belfast council area. This partnership also supports more robust engagement across a range of stakeholders, particularly those who may not normally have their voices heard in relation to health issues, through the local community links that are in place through each service. We would recommend that this best practice is highlighted in the final strategy as a model for effective partnership working and engagement *‘that makes the best use of our combined resources’*.

Belfast City Council response
CONSULTATION ON THE PHA PARTNERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY
(2025-2030)

We look forward to continuing to work closely with PHA colleagues and identifying opportunities to bring forward prototype delivery models and test and learn demonstrator initiatives which can be scaled up across the region.

It should be noted that this response remains subject to Full Council ratification on 8 January 2026. We will update you of any further comments which may emerge.

I trust this information is helpful in informing the finalisation of the draft Partnership and Engagement Strategy.

Kind regards,

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Subject:	Update on Hardship Programme 2025/26
Date:	19th December 2025
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy Kevin Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty
Contact Officer:	Chris Tubridy, Hardship Programme Coordinator Brian Carr, Portfolio Manager Nicola Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager Margaret Higgins, Lead Officer, Community Services

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 40px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime 									
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Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on recent correspondence received from the Minister for Communities in response to the Council's request for the Department for Communities to make funding available to support the continued delivery of a Hardship Support Programme in the 2025/26 financial year.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report including the recent correspondence received from the Minister for Communities, dated 10 December 2025, confirming that funding would not be made available in future years to support a hardship programme.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Members will recall the update provided to members in October 2025 on the positive impact of the £1.1m Hardship Programme, which was implemented between December 2024 and June 2025 and supported in excess of 50,000 individuals. Members will be aware that while the Council had funded this year's programme, it had previously been funded by DfC in 2023/24.
3.2	At the meeting in October, Members had been informed that whilst some underspend from previous years was available to support a Hardship Programme in 2025/26, the amount available was £75,000 which is significantly lower than previous years.
3.3	As agreed by Members, correspondence was issued on behalf of the Council to the Minister for Communities requesting that urgent consideration be given by the Department for Communities (DfC) to the allocation of funding to support the implementation of a much-needed Hardship Programme in 2025/2026. This request recognised the statutory responsibility of DfC to bring forward an Anti-Poverty Strategy to help alleviate the impacts of poverty and hardship on our most vulnerable residents.
3.4	Attached at Appendix 1 is the response received from the Minister for Communities dated 10 th December 2025 advising that the DfC Hardship Grant Funding provided in 2023/24 would not be available in future years. The response did state that the Minister remains committed to providing services that help people who have fallen on hard times through initiatives such as the Social Supermarket Scheme, Discretionary Support Scheme, Affordable Warmth Scheme as well as the Winter Fuel Payments to those who are eligible.
3.5	<p>Hardship Programme Support 2025-26</p> <p>Members were advised in October that there is a current budget of £75,000 from previous years underspends available to support a Hardship programme for 2025-26. Members previously agreed that this funding would be made available to the 11 Family Support Hubs located across the city to help children and families in emergency need.</p>

	Financial & Resource Implications
3.6	The current available budget for a 2025-26 Hardship Programme is £75,000
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.7	None.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Correspondence from Department for Communities to Council issued on 10 Dec 2025

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From: The Minister

John Walsh
Chief Executive
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

Via email: WalshJohn@BelfastCity.gov.uk

Dear John

HARDSHIP PROGRAMME 2025/2026

Thank you for your letter of 10 November 2025 requesting consideration of funding support for the continuation of the Hardship Programme in the 2025/26 financial year.

My Department's letter to Council Chief Executives dated 28 March 2023 advised that £4m of hardship funding would be available in 2022/23 to allow councils to provide financial support in 2023/24 to the most vulnerable. Chief Executives were also advised that the funding was non-recurrent; it would not be available in future years; and should be considered additional to any hardship support funding already offered by the Council.

I remain committed to providing services that help people who have fallen on hard times through initiatives such as the Social Supermarket Scheme, Discretionary Support Scheme, Affordable Warmth Scheme as well as the Winter Fuel Payments to those who are eligible.

My Department also continues to provide funding to citizens most in need of support through the benefits system. Anyone facing hardship should be advised to contact Make the Call (telephone 0800 232 1271, text ADVICE to 079 8440 5248 or email makethecall@dfcni.gov.uk) to ensure that they are in receipt of all the benefits they are entitled to.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gordon Lyons', written in a cursive style.

Gordon Lyons MLA
Minister for Communities



Subject:	Planning Information
Date:	19 December 2025
Reporting Officer(s):	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control
Contact Officer(s):	Ed Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management)

Restricted Reports									
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Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To provide an update on Major planning applications and applications that have been determined by the Planning Committee.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The report is for notation.
3.0	Main Report

	<u>Background</u>
3.1	The Committee received an update on Planning Performance at its meeting on the 27 th August 2024. At that meeting and previously, the Committee sought a regular update on Major applications and applications that have been determined by the Planning Committee, especially those where a Decision Notice has yet to be issued.
3.2	All Major applications must be determined by the Planning Committee. The Key Performance Indicator (given in weeks) is calculated from when an application is considered to be valid to when the Decision Notice ("Green Form") is issued. This means that any delays either pre- or post- committee will impact on the KPI. The target for determining a Major application is 30 weeks.
	<u>Major applications</u>
3.3	Appendix 1 sets out the Major applications that are currently with the Council to determine. Details are given on the location, proposal, the validation date and target date for determination (using the 30 week target set out in the Key Performance Indicator) as well as a status update.
	<u>Applications determined by Committee</u>
3.4	Appendix 2 sets out the applications that have been determined by Committee since February 2022 which are yet to issue. For completeness information is also given on those applications determined by Committee which have had their Decision Notice issued. Details are given on the time taken (in weeks) to bring the applications before Committee and where decisions are yet to be issued, information is given relating to the main reason for the delay.
3.5	Following further discussion at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in May 2025, this table has now been amended to include a new non statutory target date and to give more detailed reasons for any delays in determination.
	<u>Conclusion</u>
3.6	This report will be brought to each Planning Committee and to each Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for information on an ongoing basis.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.7	There are no financial or resource implications associated with this report.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.8	There are no equality or good relations / rural needs implications associated with this report.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Major planning applications at December 2025 Appendix 2 – Applications determined by Committee at December 2025

Live Major Applications not previously considered by Committee @ 02.12.25

Number	Application No.	Category	Location	Proposal	Date Valid	Target Date	Status
1	LA04/2023/2633/F	Major	St Teresa's GAC, 2 Glen Road Heights, Belfast BT11 8ER	Proposed extension to existing clubhouse to provide indoor sports hall, changing rooms, reception, and fitness suite. Proposed relocation of grass pitch and new 4G training pitch with integrated ball walls. Proposed annex building with club store and matchday shop. Site works including increased parking, fencing, catch nets, floodlighting, dugouts, paths, and other associated amenities.	14-Mar-23	10-Oct-23	Under Consideration
2	LA04/2023/3799/F	Major	Vacant lands (partial site of the former Wolfhill Flax Spinning Mill) located to the south, of Wolfhill Manor, north of Wolfhill Grove and west of Mill Avenue, Ligoniel Road, Belfast, BT14 8NR	New single storey 10-class based primary school, separate nursery school accommodation and school meals accommodation to facilitate the relocation of St. Vincent De Paul Primary School and Nursery from existing site on Ligoniel Road, Belfast. Proposal includes new pedestrian and vehicular accesses onto Mill Avenue, car parking, covered cycle storage area and hard play areas. Hard and soft landscaping including wildlife walkway, fencing, retaining walls, underground drainage system to include the reinstatement of underground storm sewer and headwall into adjacent DFI River wayleave. Includes temporary contractors compound and all associated site works.	09-Oct-23	06-May-24	Under Consideration
Page 81	LA04/2023/4181/F	Major	Lands comprising the existing Sydenham Wastewater Pumping Station west of Park Avenue, Connswater River and King George V Playing Fields, to the south of the Sydenham By-Pass, east of The Oval football stadium, north and east of Parkgate Gardens and north of Parkgate Crescent, Parkgate Parade and Mersey Street, Belfast	Demolition of existing Wastewater Pumping Station (WwPS) with reinstatement of site as a landscaped area. Construction of a replacement WwPS including associated control building and hardstanding, the raising of site levels, in-channel works, provision of new rising main, other ancillary buildings, the creation of an access road on lands within the King George V Playing Fields to serve the facility, landscaping and other ancillary works. Provision of a temporary working area on lands within the King George V Playing Fields, the creation of a temporary access road from Mersey Street to facilitate construction traffic on lands to the rear of 1-35 Parkgate Gardens, the creation of a temporary footway adjacent to 88 Park Avenue and other ancillary development and landscaping restoration works.	14-Nov-23	11-Jun-24	Under Consideration
4	LA04/2024/0015/F	Major	Lands at Cabin Hill, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast BT4	Erection of 53 residential units (including 43 dwellings and 10 apartments) including creation of access, internal roads, landscaping and associated works (amended description and plans).	22-Dec-23	19-Jul-24	Under Consideration
5	LA04/2024/0570/F	Major	Stormont Hotel, 587 Upper Newtownards Road BT4 3LP and adjacent property 37-39 Summerhill Park, Belfast.	Change of use of from hotel, conference centre and offices (sui generis) to a 97-bed care home (Use Class C3(b) and 1,559sqm diagnostic medical facility (Use Class D1(a), associated access, car parking, landscaping and open space.	04-Apr-24	31-Oct-24	Under Consideration
6	LA04/2024/0569/O	Major	Stormont Hotel, 587 Upper Newtownards Road BT4 3LP and adjacent properties at Castlevue Road (nos. 2, 4, 6, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28 & 30), Summerhill Parade (nos. 18, 20 & 22), and Summerhill Park (nos. 37 & 39) and rear of 160 Barnetts Road, Belfast (amended address)	Outline planning permission with all matter reserved for independent living (Use Class C1) units and up to 62no. assisted living units (Use Class C3), associated internal access roads, communal open space, revised access from Castlevue Road, associated car parking, servicing, amenity space and landscaping.	04-Apr-24	31-Oct-24	Under Consideration

7	LA04/2024/0910/F	Major	70 Whitewell Road, Newtownabbey, BT36 7ES Site at Hazelwood Integrated College	Redevelopment of Hazelwood Integrated College to include demolition of existing building and development of new school campus, new sports pitch, outdoor play areas, car parking, hard and soft landscaping and retention and refurbishment of the Listed Building (Graymount House) and other associated site works including a temporary mobile village during the construction process.	23-May-24	19-Dec-24	Under Consideration
8	LA04/2024/1836/F	Major	Lands between Ballygomartin Road and Upper Whiterock Road and to the west (rear) of Moyard Parade and New Barnsley Crescent, Belfast Co. Antrim BT13 3QZ	Proposed development of new walking trails linking Black Mountain Shared Space Project building (approved under LA04/2022/0853/F) on the Ballygomartin Road with the Upper Whiterock Road and Moyard Parade. Proposal to include gated accesses, stockproof fencing, seated areas, information signage, landscaping and associated site works.	25-Nov-24	23-Jun-25	Under Consideration
9	LA04/2024/2024/RM	Major	Royal Ulster Agricultural Society, the Kings Hall, 488-516 Lisburn Road, Belfast, BT9 6GW	41no. retirement living apartments at Plot 6, parking and landscaping in accordance with outline planning permission LA04/2020/0845/O, seeking approval of layout, scale, appearance and landscaping details	18-Dec-24	16-Jul-25	Under Consideration
Page 82	LA04/2024/2145/F	Major	Lands at North Foreshore / Giant's Park Dargan Road, Belfast, BT3 9LZ	Creation of a new Adventure Park comprising a community / visitor hub building including café, creche, flexible exhibition / community space, ancillary office space and maintenance yard. Development includes community gardens, bmx track, crazy golf, dog park, walking/running/cycle paths, outdoor amphitheatre, bio diversity zones, and recreational facilities. Associated landscaping and infrastructure (drainage, lighting, car / coach parking, WC block etc).	15-Jan-25	13-Aug-25	Under Consideration

11	LA04/2025/0012/F	Major	Lands at the Waterworks Park, located off the Cavehill Road; and lands at Alexandra Park, located between Castleton Gardens and Deacon Street; extending along Castleton Gardens and Camberwell Terrace to the road junction approximately 30 metres to the north west of 347 Antrim Road, Belfast, BT15 2HF	<p>Refurbishment and safety work to the Waterworks upper and lower reservoirs, and Alexandra Park Lake reservoir, to be complemented with wider environmental, landscape and connectivity improvements.</p> <p>The reservoir works comprise of a new overflow structure with reinforcement and protection of the return embankment parallel to the by-wash channel at Waterworks Upper reservoir. Repairs to the upstream face of Waterworks Lower reservoir with the addition of wetland planting to reduce the overall capacity of the reservoir. Removal of an existing parapet wall and embankment reinforcement at the Alexandra Park Lake reservoir.</p> <p>Improvements at Waterworks Park comprise the demolition of the existing Waterworks Bothy and replacement with a new building to include public toilets, Changing facilities, multi-purpose community room and kitchenette. Extension to existing Cavehill Road gatehouse building. Entrance improvements, new events space including multipurpose decking; resurfacing of footways; new pedestrian lighting along key routes; a dog park; replacement platforms and viewing area. New 3-on-3 basketball court; replacement surface to existing small sided 3G pitch; and upgrades to existing Queen Mary's playground.</p> <p>Improvements at Alexandra Park include the resurfacing of footways; new pedestrian lighting along key routes; new reinforced grass event space; new lake viewing area; new public toilets and changing places; entrance improvements. 2no existing bridges replaced; new pedestrian entrance; reimagined peace wall; new multi-sport synthetic surface with cover; and upgrades to existing play parks.</p> <p>Streetscape improvements along Camberwell Terrace and Castleton Gardens include resurfacing of footways with new kerbs; resurfaced carriageways and new tactile paving at pedestrian crossings; and all associated works.</p>	20-Dec-24	18-Jul-25	Under Consideration
12	LA04/2024/2134/F	Major	Site of the former Dunmurry Cricket Club, Ashley Park, Dunmurry, Belfast BT17 0QQ, located north of 1-10 Ashley Park and south of 1-20 Areema Grove and Areema Drive, Dunmurry.	Mixed use scheme for new community recreational facilities, including basketball court, parkland and residential development comprising 37no social/affordable housing units with landscaping and associated works.	21-Dec-24	19-Jul-25	Under Consideration
13	LA04/2025/0088/F	Major	Lands adjacent and south west of Monagh By-pass, north west of Nos. 17, 19 and 22 Black Ridge Gardens and c.150 metres south east of Nos. 38 to 70 (evens) Black Ridge View (part of the wider Glenmona mixed-use development), Belfast	Proposed mixed use development (in lieu of the previously approved employment zone under LA04/2020/0804/F) comprising a three storey building of 36 no. Category 1 (over 55's) social housing apartments and 7 no. single storey Class B1/B2 Business/Light Industrial Units. Development includes 2 no. access points, car parking, landscaping and all associated site works	17-Feb-25	15-Sep-25	Under Consideration
14	LA04/2025/0184/O	Major	38-52 Lisburn Road, Malone Lower, Belfast, BT9 6AA	Seven storey building (39.3m AOD) mixed use development comprising of Use Class B1 (c): Business, Research & Development and Use Class, D1: Community and Cultural Uses, including landscaping, parking, and servicing (Amended Description).	10-Feb-25	08-Sep-25	Under Consideration
15	LA04/2025/0574/F	Major	Surface level car park at lands to east of Lanyon Place Station Mays Meadow, Belfast, BT1 3NR	Erection of eight storey building comprising seven floors of grade A office accommodation, ground floor retail / business units together with car parking (15 no. spaces), cycle parking and plant areas: and public realm improvements including dedicated drop-off area to front of building	17-Apr-25	13-Nov-25	Under Consideration

16	LA04/2025/0974/F	Major	Site to the south of the former Knockbreda High School. Lands bounded by the A55 Upper Knockbreda Road to the south and south-east, Wynchurch Road to the north-east, Knockbreda Primary School to the north and Knockbreda Park to the west.	Development of a new primary school building for Forge Integrated Primary School. including development of a nursery unit, hard and soft play areas, landscaping, car parking, internal drop-off areas and new access arrangements onto the A55 Knockbreda Road via a new signalised junction; demolition of no. 138a Knockbreda Park and associated site works	04-Jun-25	31-Dec-25	Under Consideration
17	LA04/2025/1272/F	Major	Harberton North Special School 29a Fortwilliam Park, Belfast, BT15 4AP	Erection of temporary mobile classroom village to facilitate future refurbishment and extension of existing Harberton North Special School, comprising 3 no. 2-storey blocks of temporary classroom accommodation, temporary hard play areas, temporary staff and visitor parking areas, tree removal and landscpaing. (Amended Plans)	31-Jul-25	13-Nov-25	Under Consideration
18	LA04/2025/1525/F	Major	Units 2a and 2b 38 Boucher Road, Belfast, BT12 6HR	Removal of condition 9 of LA04/2024/0714/F (Removal of fuel storage tanks)	09-Sep-25	07-Apr-26	Under Consideration
19	LA04/2025/1716/F	Major	Santander House, 1 Mays Meadow, Belfast, BT1 3PH	Proposed change of use from class B1(a) office to short term Transitional Care Unit (Use Class D1 Medical) comprising of 73 no. ensuite beds, associated ancillary facilities including café, rehabilitation suites and treatment rooms, laboratory, consulting rooms, 2 no. external terraces and all other ancillary, staff and storage rooms. Development includes ambulance drop off bay, replacement of existing windows, and all other associated site and access works.	05-Nov-25	03-Jun-26	Under Consideration
Page 84	LA04/2025/1896/F	Major	Former Belfast Metropolitan College Campus Whiterock Road, Belfast, BT12 7PH	Proposed mixed use development comprising of 77 No. social housing units (mix of 26 dwellings and 51 apartments) and a new children's centre, car parking, landscaping, open space, access and all associated site works including the installation of a new substation.(amendment to planning permission ref: LA04/2024/0122/F).	06-Nov-25	04-Jun-26	Under Consideration

Planning Applications Discussed at Committee Between 01 Apr 2019 and 02 Dec 2025

Decision Description	Totals
	17
Application Withdrawn	
Consent Granted	1
Consent Refused	
Permission Granted	5
Permission Refused	1
Total	24

Application No.	Location	Proposal	Category	Date Valid	Statutory Target Date	Statutory Target Weeks	Current number of Weeks	Committee Date	Weeks between Valid date and Comm date	Weeks Since Committee	Previous New Non-statutory Target Date	New Non-statutory Target Date	Reason decision not issued
LA04/2022/2059/F Page 85	Lands south of 56 Highcairn Drive Belfast BT13 3RU Site located at junction between Highcairn Drive and Dunboyne Park Belfast.	Social Housing Development comprising of 12 no. 3p/2b semi-detached dwelling houses with incurtilage parking and associated site works. (amended description and site location plan)	LOC	04-Nov-22	17-Feb-23	15	161	29/06/2023	33	126	31/12/25	31/01/26	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement - land ownership issues on the applicant's side
LA04/2021/2016/F	21-29 Corporation Street & 18-24 Tomb Street Belfast.	Demolition of existing multi-storey car park and the erection of 298no. build for rent apartments (19 storey) including ground floor commercial unit (A1/A2), car/cycle parking provision along with associated development. (Further information received).	MAJ	26-Aug-21	24-Mar-22	30	223	16/01/2024	124	98	30/11/25	31/12/25	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement - wording of clauses and CoT finally agreed. S76 sent to applicant for signing

LA04/2024/0483/F	34-44 Bedford Street and 6 Clarence Street, Belfast	Proposed change of use from Office (B1) and restaurant (Sui Generis) to Hotel comprising of 88 no. bedrooms, two storey rooftop extension, restaurant and bar offerings, gym facilities, including new dormer windows on roof, internal and external refurbishment and alterations, and all associated site works.	MAJ	19-Mar-24	15-Oct-24	30	89	15/10/2024	30	59	Unknown	Unknown	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement - issues to be resolved on the applicant's side
LA04/2024/0480/DCA	34-44 Bedford Street and 6 Clarence Street, Belfast	Part demolition of existing buildings (stripping back of roof, shopfront and other external alterations to facilitate change of use and extension of buildings to hotel use.	LOC	29-Mar-24	12-Jul-24	15	88	15/10/2024	28	59	Unknown	Unknown	See above
LA04/2024/0369/F	Lands at Former Monarch Laundry site, and Broadway Hall Site, No's 451 - 457 Donegall Road, Belfast, BT12 6HD.	Proposed Specialist Nursing and Residential Care Facility comprising approximately 158 no. beds, day/dining rooms, treatment rooms, staff rooms, office/store rooms, including car parking provision, cycle parking, refuse storage, landscaping, and associated site and access works.	MAJ	08-Feb-24	05-Sep-24	30	95	12/11/2024	39	55	31/10/25	Unknown	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement and new contamination issues - development commenced without planning permission and updated contaminated land survey submitted by applicant. Currently being reviewed by Environmental Health

LA04/2023/2557/F	Lands East of Meadowhill, North of Glencolin Court, North and East of Glencolin Rise, East of Glencolin Grove, North and West of Glen Road Rise, and North of Glen Road Grove. Belfast.	260 no. dwellings, children's play area and other ancillary and associated works.	MAJ	24-Feb-23	22-Sep-23	30	145	10/12/2024	93	51	Unknown	Unknown	Clauses in s76 agreed following specialist legal advice and discussion with applicant. Certificate of Title to be resolved
LA04/2024/0675/F Page 87	The Arches Centre 11-13 Bloomfield Avenue / 387-389 Newtownards Road, , Belfast, BT5 5AA	Change of Use of first and second floor to 39 No. apartments; extension to second floor for 6 No. apartments and erection of new third floor for 19 No. apartments (all social housing dwellings, 64 No. in total), and ancillary/associated works. Solar panels on roof (amended plans and description).	MAJ	13-May-24	09-Dec-24	30	81	15/04/2025	48	33			Permission Granted
LA04/2024/0058/F	68 Fortwilliam Park, Belfast BT15 4AS	Demolition of existing 31 no. bed private nursing home and erection of 20 no. sheltered housing units (3 storey building) for the elderly; warden accommodation; communal facilities; landscaping; car parking and site works.	LOC	20-Dec-23	03-Apr-24	15	102	13/05/2025	72	29			Permission Granted

LA04/2023/4543/F	885 Shore Road, Belfast, BT36 7DH	Proposed new changing pavilion, enhancing grounds entrances including turnstiles, ancillary facilities and upgrade to existing car park. Proposed 3G surfacing to existing grass pitch with flood lighting.	LOC	01-Feb-24	16-May-24	15	96	17/06/2025	71	24	Unknown	Unknown	DAERA NIEA recently provided its consultation response - advising that bat surveys required
LA04/2024/1036/F	Lands to the east of the River Lagan located between Lagan Gateway Phase 1 and Belvoir Park Forest, running adjacent to the west of Belvoir Park Golf Club and approximately 120 metres to the east of Newtownbreda Water Treatment Plant, Galwally Ave, Belfast BT8 7YA.	Lagan Gateway Phase 2 – Proposed greenway connection extending between Lagan Gateway Phase 1 at Annadale Embankment to Belvoir Forest Park. Comprising compacted gravel paths; a new elevated (4-5 meter high) timber boardwalk (approximately 85m long); landscaping works, new cycle stands, bollards, seats and bins; and all associated works	LOC	10-May-24	23-Aug-24	15	82	17/06/2025	57	24	Unknown	Unknown	Further information requested from applicant following request from DAERA NIEA
LA04/2024/0267/F	11 Friendly Way, Belfast, BT7 2DU	Change of Use from Dwelling to 6no bed/6person HMO (amended description)	LOC	15-Feb-24	30-May-24	15	94	17/06/2025	69	24			Permission Refused

LA04/2025/0535/F	Lands West of Monagh By-Pass South of Upper Springfield Road & 30-34 Upper Springfield Road & West of Aitnamona Crescent & St Theresa's Primary School. North and East of 2-22 Old Brewery Lane, Glanaulin, 137-143a Glen Road & Airfield Heights & St Mary's CBG School Belfast	Variation of conditions 1, 2, ,3, 4 ,5, 11, 14, 17, 18, 19, 36, 37 and 41 of approval LA04/2023/2390/F and LA04/2020/0804/F to facilitate removal of 31 previously approved dwellings and retaining structure along northern boundary of site adjacent to Upper Springfield Road. Retention of existing sloping ground levels and landscaping at this location.	MAJ	27-May-25	23-Dec-25	30	27	17/06/2025	3	24	30/11/25	31/01/26	Awaiting final DFI Roads response and conclusion of S77 agreement (amendment to S76 agreement)
LA04/2024/1654/F	432 Falls Road, Belfast, BT12 6EN	Change of use from a 7-bedroom dwelling house (C1) to a 7 bed/ 9 person House of Multiple Occupancy (Sui Generis)	LOC	21-Oct-24	03-Feb-25	15	58	12/08/2025	42	16	31/10/25	30/11/25	Preparing decision notice for issuing
LA04/2024/1865/O	Land between No 22 Squires View and Nos 57 & 59 Squires Hill Road, Belfast.	3no. detached dwellings part 2 storey part 3 storey (amended plans)	LOC	28-Oct-24	10-Feb-25	15	57	12/08/2025	41	16	30/11/25	31/01/26	Late objections received. Planning Service requested additional information from applicant in respect of land instablithy issue

LA04/2024/2077/F	Adelaide Business Centre 2-6 Apollo Road, Belfast, BT12 6HP	Proposed change of use from office space (B1) and storage or distribution (B4) to Bowling Alley, Restaurant, Indoor Golf, Children's Soft Play, VR Zone & Amusements, Smoking Area, Car Parking and Associated Site Works. Proposal includes changes to elevations. (Amended Plans Received).	MAJ	29-Jan-25	27-Aug-25	30	44	12/08/2025	27	16	30/12/25	31/01/26	Late objection received from neighbouring premises. Officers working through issues. Application will need to be reported back to the Committee for reconsideration
LA04/2024/0948/F Page 90	Derelict lands at and to the rear of no.s 34-36 The Mount, Belfast, BT5 4NA	Redevelopment of listed buildings and lands to the rear for a residential development comprising 20no. townhouses and 6no. apartments with associated landscaping, parking and site works	LOC	03-Jun-24	16-Sep-24	15	78	16/09/2025	67	11			Permission Granted
LA04/2024/0955/LBC	34-36 The Mount, Belfast, BT5 4NA	Restoration of external features with a new rear projection to no. 34 The Mount and new partitioning walls in both buildings to facilitate use for 6no. apartments	LOC	03-Jun-24	16-Sep-24	15	78	16/09/2025	67	11			Consent Granted
LA04/2025/0607/F	5 Squires Hill Road, Belfast, BT14 8FJ	Amendments to previously approved application(LA04/2023/4 093/F). Proposal includes raising of ridge, fenestration changes to side and juliet balcony to front.	LOC	09-Apr-25	23-Jul-25	15	34	16/09/2025	22	11			Permission Granted

LA04/2025/0613/F	23 Everton Drive, Belfast, BT6 0LJ	Single storey rear extension with fenestration changes. Creation of new patio areas and garden studio. Attic conversion and the creation of a rear dormer. Partial demolition of existing side and rear elevations. Demolition of existing patio areas and shed. Removal of existing rear roof to facilitate attic conversion.	LOC	15-May-25	28-Aug-25	15	29	14/10/2025	21	7			Permission Granted
LA04/2022/0809/F	Lands to the south and west of Woodland Grange to the north of Blacks Gate and to the east of Moor Park Mews Belfast.	Amendments to approved schemes ref. Z/2008/0993/F (erection of 53 No. dwellings) & ref. Z/2013/0120/F (erection of 46 No. dwellings); to reduce overall density from 99 No. dwellings to 94 No. dwellings and associated and ancillary works.	MAJ	21-Apr-22	17-Nov-22	30	189	14/10/2025	181	7	30/11/25	31/01/26	Application to be reported back to Committee as applicant served incorrect notice when application made and was therefore invalid
LA04/2025/0556/F	Lands at no's 10-22 Ann Street Belfast (including 8-10 Crown Entry and 12 Crown Entry) BT1 4EF	Proposed change of use from restaurant, public house, 2 no retail units and office use to public house, 2 no. restaurants, hotel with an additional 2no.storeys associated with the hotel use, and all external façade alterations (change of description and amended plans).	LOC	27-Mar-25	10-Jul-25	15	36	11/11/2025	32	3	N/A	31/01/26	Application to be reported back to Committee as amended plans received

LA04/2025/0557/DCA	Lands at no's 10-22 Ann Street Belfast (including 8-10 Crown Entry and 12 Crown Entry)	Demolition to include; ground floor facades remodelling, removal of window detailing to upper floors, removal and replacement of windows and doors, creation of new door and window openings, removal of roof to rear return and internal wall and roof demolition to accommodate reconfiguration of buildings and associated development for proposed change of use.	LOC	27-Mar-25	10-Jul-25	15	36	11/11/2025	32	3	N/A	31/01/26	Application to be reported back to Committee as amended plans received
Page 92 LA04/2024/1576/F	733-735 Antrim Road, Belfast, BT15 4EL	Demolition of existing buildings at no. 733 & no. 735 Antrim Road to facilitate proposed residential social housing development comprising of 2no. buildings containing 34no. units with associated in-curtilage parking and landscaping (Amended description)	LOC	18-Sep-24	01-Jan-25	15	63	11/11/2025	59	3	N/A	31/12/25	Awaiting execution of s76 agreement; reviewing final conditions in discussion with applicant

LA04/2024/0626/F	1 Havelock House Havelock Place, Ormeau, Belfast, BT7 1EB .	Erection of 104no. social rented residential units (comprising a mix of General Social Housing and Category 1 over 55's accommodation) across two detached blocks [ranging between 3 and 5 storeys], landscaping, communal and private amenity space, ancillary cycle and car parking provision, and other associated site works	MAJ	17-Apr-24	13-Nov-24	30	85	11/11/2025	81	3	N/A	31/01/26	Completion of s76 agreement delayed due to Certificate of Title issue
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Subject:	Attendance at Horizon 2020 UPSURGE Final Conference in Katowice, Poland and Pathways2Resilience Launch Summit in Budapest, Hungary in February, 2026
Date:	19 th December 2025
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director, City & Organisational Strategy
Contact Officer:	Debbie Caldwell, Climate Commissioner, City & Organisational Strategy

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

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	Members are asked to note the Council's intention to send two officers to the Horizon 2020 UPSURGE Project Final Conference taking place on 10 th – 11 th February 2026 in Katowice, Poland which the Council is required to attend as a project partner.

1.2	Members are asked to note the Council's intention to send one officer to the Pathways2Resilience Launch Summit taking place on 10 th – 12 th February 2026 in Budapest, Hungary which the Council is required to attend as a project partner.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Note that two BCC Officers will be attending the UPSURGE Final Conference on 10th - 11th February 2026 in Katowice, Poland. II. Note that one BCC Officer will be attending the Pathways2Resilience Launch Summit on 10th – 12th February 2026 in Budapest, Hungary. III. Note that all costs associated with the attendance at the above events are covered within the grant funding.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><i>UPSURGE Project</i></p> <p>Members will recall that in August 2020 Belfast City Council agreed to take part in the 'Upsurge Project' which focuses on testing nature-based solutions in partnership with four other EU cities, with the aim of sharing learning and good practice. The site selected as the demonstrator for Belfast is the open ground at Lower Botanic Gardens, beside the Queen's PEC. Belfast City Council was subsequently awarded € 660,375 funding through Horizon Europe to deliver the demonstrator project which will include opportunities for learning and knowledge sharing across the city.</p>
3.2	The UPSURGE project presented an innovative opportunity to develop an underused area of land within Belfast City Council's ownership, through a partnership with QUB, EU partners, and local community organisations. A project team has been established which includes Belfast City Council's Climate Team, Innovation Unit, City and Neighbourhood Services, Physical Programmes, City Regeneration, and Planning in addition to QUB representatives. The project acts as a hub, supporting rewilding, enhanced local food production, stimulation of local circular economy, and the development of community education programmes in relation to climate, digital innovation, and community resilience.
3.3	As part of the delivery of the project, a number of Project Group Meetings are taking place at different host cities, where updates on the project will be provided, an opportunity to share learning and expertise on the effective delivery of the project is able to occur, and each of the 5 partner cities (Belfast, Breda, Budapest, Maribor, and Katowice) are asked to report on progress towards the delivery of their demonstrator project. At least one representative from each partner city is required to attend as per the funding agreement.
3.4	Belfast City Council has previously taken part in meetings in Breda in September 2025, Maribor in March 2023 and in Prato in October 2022. The benefits to the project from these

	<p>meetings included building of relationships across project partners, learning on the various work packages, specifications and scope of works for the demonstrator development. It also created opportunities to identify risks, concerns and challenges between the 5 cities and communicate these to the other project partners so that the project can further support the cities to maximise the opportunities to deliver well on each of their demonstrator sites.</p> <p><i>Pathways2Resilience Project</i></p>
3.5	<p>The Pathways2Resilience Project is an EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change flagship initiative supporting over 100 regions across Europe to guide participants through transformative framework like the Regional Resilience Journey and the Adaptation Investment Cycle and helps regions co-design their own climate resilience strategies, action plans and investment plans with expert guidance and capacity building support.</p>
3.6	<p>Belfast City Council, in partnership with Northern Ireland Environment Link, has been successful in securing €198,000 in funding as part of this project. This funding will cover the commitment of one BCC officer to engage with the programme for the duration of the project and to develop a Belfast Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan over the 18 months.</p>
3.7	<p>The Pathways2Resilience Project officially launches with a Summit event to be held from 10-12th February 2026 in Budapest, Hungary. At least one representative from each project partner is required to attend as per the funding agreement.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no financial implications for Belfast City Council. All travel costs can be met within the grant funding for both projects.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None</p>
4.0	Appendices – Document Attached
	<p>Link to the Horizon 2020 UPSURGE project page here.</p> <p>Link to the Pathways2Resilience project page here.</p>

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Subject:	Draft Amenity Byelaws
Date:	19 December 2025
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor / Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Russell Connelly, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 40px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime 									
<p>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								

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

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide members with an opportunity to further consider;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the results of formal public consultation on draft byelaws for the city centre and further engagement, the revised draft byelaws which were presented to SP&R Committee last month.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> note the contents of this report and appendices; authorise officers to engage with DfC in relation to the revised draft byelaws to understand which aspects could be approved in the coming months.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>Members will be aware a report was previously presented to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 21 November 2025, updating members on the results of formal public consultation on draft byelaws for the city centre and further engagement. In addition, the report sought members approval of the draft byelaws.</p> <p>At Full Council meeting held on 1 December 2025, members agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21 November 2025 be referred back to the Committee for further consideration.</p> <p>Following on from some concerns previously raised, members will note that the proposed bye laws do not set a level for fixed penalty notices. £500 is the maximum fine which can be imposed by a Magistrates Court for breach of bye laws. This maximum fine is set by Section 92 of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972. The fixed penalty level would be considerably lower than the maximum fine which the Court can impose, typically this is approximately 10% of the maximum fine. The level of fixed penalty would be subject to engagement with DfC and would require Committee approval in due course. Members will note that officers have proposed that the reference to continuing offences is removed as it is not considered that this is applicable to the types of behaviour which these bye laws seek to regulate.</p> <p>Members will recall that some provisions in the draft bye laws relate to arrangements for special events such as the Fleadh. Therefore it is important that there is early engagement with DfC in relation to these proposals.</p> <p>Committee is asked for its further views in relation to the revised bye laws which were presented to Committee last month. It is also requested that Committee authorises officers to carry out engagement with DfC in relation to the revised bye laws.</p>

	<p>Members are asked to note that correspondence has been issued to PSNI and DoJ seeking;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to outline the need for a standalone Hate Crime Bill and highlight the requirement for an additional class of offenses, noting that the change model in sentencing did not go far enough. - clarity in the use of the PSNI powers under Articles 9 (Use of words or behaviour or display of written material), 18 (Riotous or disorderly behaviour in public place), and 19 (Provocative conduct in public place or at public meeting or procession) of The Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987. <p>When responses are received, officers will bring a report back to Committee with further proposals in relation to the issues of graphic imagery and alleged hate speech in the city centre. Dependent upon responses being received, it is anticipated that these proposals will be brought to Committee in early spring 2026.</p>
3.2	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no financial or resource implications connected to this report. As outlined in the report tabled on 21 November 2025, there will however be resource implications in enforcing the bye-laws if approved by DfC. This remains under consideration and more detail will be provided once a response is received from DfC.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>An equality screening was carried out on the draft byelaws that were presented for public consultation. The consultation provided useful feedback both on the draft screening form and more generally from Section 75 groups. Further screening will be undertaken as the byelaws progress to finalisation.</p>
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1: SP&R Report – ‘City Centre Byelaws - 21 November 2025’</p> <p>Appendix 2: Revised Byelaws December 2025</p> <p>Appendix 3 (a): Consultation report CAJ Response</p> <p>Appendix 3 (b): Consultation Report</p> <p>Appendix 4: Survey Report for 2 December 2020 – 26 March 2024, outlining high level quantitative survey results</p>

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Subject:	City Centre Byelaws
Date:	21 November 2025
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor / Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Russell Connelly, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
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1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • update Members on the results of formal public consultation on draft byelaws for the city centre and further engagement, • provide Members with revised draft byelaws for approval
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • note the contents of this report and appendices • approve the revised draft byelaws
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>Members will be aware of ongoing issues caused by noise and the display of graphic imagery in the city centre and the negative effect that this can have on social and economic activity. This primarily impacts the primary retail core but also extends more widely to those who work, live in and visit Belfast.</p> <p>The Council is empowered to draft byelaws under Part VI of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 (the “Act”) and in the absence of primary legislation to enforce such a nuisance, officers agreed to draft byelaws to address these issues.</p> <p>On 26 June 2023, Committee agreed to authorise officers to begin the formal public consultation process on a set of draft byelaws. This followed formal consultation and engagement with the Department for Communities and receipt of a legal opinion that addressed issues on human rights considerations that were raised by DfC.</p>
3.2	<p><u>Consultation and Engagement</u></p> <p>A public consultation was launched on 27 November 2023 on the Council’s online engagement platform YourSay Belfast. The consultation ran for a period of 14 weeks and ended on 4 March 2024.</p> <p>At the request of Elected Members, further workshops were held with stakeholders in May 2025.</p> <p>Party briefings have been carried out in the past few months.</p> <p>This report will give Members a high-level summary of the results of the public consultation and the workshops.</p>

	The proposed draft byelaws are attached to this report as Appendix 1 and the detailed Consultation Report is attached as Appendix 2 .
3.3	<p><u>Consultation Format</u></p> <p>The online survey contained a series of questions designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative information in relation to the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of agreement or disagreement with the introduction of a rules and regulations around the use of amplification devices and the display of promotional material (including graphic imagery) in the city centre • Level of usage of amplification and display of promotional material (including graphic imagery) in the city centre and for which purposes • Experience of the use of amplification and display of promotional material (including graphic imagery) in the city centre (positive, neutral or negative) • Extent of agreement or disagreement with the introduction of a permit scheme around the use of amplification devices and promotional literature (including graphic imagery) in the city centre • Extent of agreement or disagreement with standard conditions for a permit as listed in the draft byelaws • Extent of agreement or disagreement with the proposal that the Council may designate areas in which specific types of instruments or amplification is prohibited <p>Respondents were asked to declare their interest in Belfast in terms of whether they lived, worked, studied in Belfast, if they were a business owner in Belfast or a visitor. Respondents were also asked for feedback on equality of opportunity or good relations issues that they thought should be considered by the Council in relation to the draft byelaws.</p> <p>Standard monitoring questions for the categories of age, gender, community background, ethnic origin, disability and dependancy status were asked for the purpose of capturing data in relation to the Council's obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Just under three-quarters of respondents indicated that they would be happy to answer these questions.</p>
3.4	<p><u>Further Engagement</u></p> <p>At Members' requests, two further workshops with a range of stakeholders were held on 12 and 14 May 2025.</p> <p>These sessions were facilitated by an independent consultant and were attended by Elected Members from the DUP, the UUP, the Alliance Party, the Green Party and the TUV as well as representatives from the following organisations: The Committee on the Administration of</p>

	<p>Justice; Belfast Chamber; Linen Quarter BID; Crown Jesus Ministries; Socialist Party NI; TUV; PSNI; Belfast One and the Free Presbyterian Church.</p> <p>These sessions provided useful feedback, with general consensus being reached that there is nuisance created by amplified noise in the city centre.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Consultation results and analysis</u></p> <p>There was a total of 3,571 responses to the survey, with a combined total of 14,878 written comments.</p> <p>There was an extremely high level of engagement from varied sections of the public, who had a wide range of backgrounds, perspectives and opinions.</p> <p>Many of the written responses were nuanced, thoughtful, detailed, reasoned and complex. They provide a rich source of data in terms of how the city centre is experienced by individuals and groups from a wide range of backgrounds. Respondents stated in detail how amplified noise and /or the content of that amplified noise, as well as the display of graphic imagery have affected them personally, whether positively, negatively or both.</p> <p>An overriding theme amongst respondents' written answers is the importance that is attached to the (qualified) human rights afforded by the European Convention on Human Rights. The Consultation Report explores other themes in responses in more depth. Written submissions were received from a diverse selection of interested groups and organisations as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belfast & District Trades Union Council • The Committee on the Administration of Justice • HERe NI • Free Presbyterian Church • Northern Ireland Committee – Irish Congress of Trade Unions • NIPSA • UNISON NI • Rainbow Project • Socialist Party • Traditional Unionist Voice • WRDA • A joint response from People Before Profit on behalf of a range of political parties, activist groups, art collectives, and other organisations <p>A summary of these submissions is included as Appendix 3 to the Consultation Report.</p>

	<p>A total of 36 hard copy responses were received, which all expressed disagreement with the draft byelaws.</p> <p>High-level quantitative results from the public survey in the form of pie charts and bar charts are attached to this report as Appendix 3.</p>
3.6	<p><u>Summary of Content of Draft Byelaws</u></p> <p>The draft byelaws that were published for public consultation aimed to strike the balance between freedom of expression and the need to tackle the nuisance that can result when multiple individuals or organisations come together in busy pedestrian areas to share their views, ideas or performances, often using amplification devices.</p> <p>The draft byelaws contained a requirement for a permit for anyone wishing to use an amplification device in the city centre, including the primary retail core. This related to any situation where on-street amplification is used, such as busking, preaching and outdoor performances. The same rules applied for anyone wishing to place a stand, stall or vehicle carrying any form of promotional literature or other information, regardless of its purpose. This would include displays of graphic imagery.</p> <p>The draft byelaws further provided that a modest annual fee (to be determined) would be charged to cover the costs of administering the permit scheme.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Proposed Changes to Draft Byelaws Following Consultation</u></p> <p><u>Permits</u></p> <p>Feedback from the public survey and further engagement has indicated that whilst most respondents are in favour of regulating amplification in the city centre, a permit system is not considered to be the optimal way to achieve such regulation.</p> <p>Reasons for disagreement with a permit system ranged from concerns around any fee to be charged, potential interference with freedom of expression and the ability to undertake spontaneous performances, and the administration and enforcement of such a scheme. These are explored in more detail in the consultation report.</p> <p>Officers have therefore removed a permit system from the draft byelaws.</p> <p><u>Decibel limit</u></p> <p>The revised byelaws now provide for a maximum decibel limit of 70dB for performers wishing play music or operate amplifiers and similar devices in the city centre. This decibel limit is slightly louder than the ambient street noise and should ensure that performers can be heard, whilst not being excessively loud or intrusive.</p> <p><u>Graphic Imagery</u></p>

	<p>The draft byelaws presented for public consultation included provisions around the regulation of graphic imagery. Feedback from the public consultation indicates that the display of certain images in the city centre has a mixed reception. Whilst the majority of respondents in the public consultation indicated quantitatively that their experience was positive, the written comments of those not in favour of the display of graphic imagery (particularly with regards to abortion) expressed strong views to the contrary.</p> <p>Officers are aware that enforcing a ban on certain graphic images is difficult given the current lack of legislative framework in this area. It is therefore suggested that the provisions on graphic imagery are removed from the current draft of the byelaws and that a separate report is brought back as this issue is further considered.</p> <p><u>Special Events</u></p> <p>The revised byelaws now contain provisions relating to Special Events to be held in the city centre.</p> <p>Provision is made (i) for the restriction or prohibition of amplification in the city centre during Special Events and (ii) for the suspension contained within applicable Council byelaws for prohibition of consumption of alcohol in public places in certain areas of the city centre.</p> <p><u>Alcohol</u></p> <p>Whilst not directly addressed in the draft byelaws, the issue of on-street drinking was raised in the written comments during the public consultation and subsequently in the workshops.</p> <p>Members will note that a report on the Council's view of the proposed commencement of Articles 68-72 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 was presented at the People and Communities Committee on 9 September 2025 and subsequently ratified at Council on 1 October.</p> <p>The proposed commencement of these Articles would effectively extend the powers conferred on police officers requiring individuals to stop drinking alcohol in a designated area, and surrender any alcoholic drinks in their possession, to council officers. Anyone refusing will be committing an offence and may be issued with a fixed penalty notice. This is an 'opt in' power that the Council may choose to avail of.</p> <p>The Council has indicated broad support of the commencement of these provisions to DfC and has noted that they would complement the proposed byelaws to make Belfast a safe and welcoming place for all, in line with the Belfast Agenda.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Enforcement Mechanisms</u></p> <p>The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 provides a mechanism for officers to issue abatement notices in relation to noise, however, the current</p>

	<p>issues around noise in the city centre for the most part do not meet the threshold of a statutory nuisance.</p> <p>Members may be aware that Section 92 of the Act provides that penalties for the contravention of byelaws shall be in the form of a fine payable on summary conviction. The draft byelaws contain a provision whereby an authorised officer may issue a fixed penalty notice for an offence committed under the byelaws.</p> <p>Whilst the issuance of a fixed penalty notice via byelaws is not usual practice, the Department has indicated that it will consider the fixed penalty enforcement mechanism currently included in the draft byelaws.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Suggested next steps</u></p> <p>After considering feedback from the public consultation and workshops, officers have revised the draft byelaws that reflect the changes noted above. These are attached as Appendix 1 for Members' consideration and approval.</p> <p>Members are also advised that officers will continue to log and monitor all complaints about busking, preaching, or any other kind of street performance. Current statistics are included in the consultation report.</p> <p>Members will be aware that Section 91 of the Act requires byelaws to be approved by the Department for Communities before they can be adopted. Therefore, any revised draft byelaws will be subject to this process.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no financial or resource implications connected to this report. There will however be resource implications in enforcing the bye-laws if approved by DfC. This remains under consideration and more detail will be provided once a response is received from DfC.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>An equality screening was carried out on the draft byelaws that were presented for public consultation. The consultation provided useful feedback both on the draft screening form and more generally from Section 75 groups. Further screening will be undertaken as the byelaws progress to finalisation.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices - Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1: Proposed draft byelaws</p> <p>Appendix 2 & (a): Consultation report</p> <p>Appendix 3: High level quantitative survey results</p>

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BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

**BYE-LAWS FOR THE GOOD GOVERNANCE OF BELFAST CITY CENTRE
AND FOR THE PREVENTION AND SUPPRESSION OF NUISANCES IN BELFAST CITY
CENTRE**

Made by Belfast City Council :

**Confirmed by Department for
Communities :**

In operation on and from :

**BYE – LAWS
BELFAST CITY COUNCIL
FOR THE GOOD GOVERNANCE OF BELFAST CITY CENTRE AND FOR THE
PREVENTION AND SUPPRESSION OF NUISANCES IN BELFAST CITY CENTRE**

Bye-Laws made the _____ by Belfast City Council pursuant to Section 90 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 for the good rule and government of its City Centre and the prevention and suppression of nuisances in its City Centre at a meeting of the Council held on _____

INTERPRETATION

1. In these Bye-Laws -

‘Authorised Officer’ means any person employed by the Council or any other person authorised by the Council to carry out functions under these Bye-Laws for purposes of Section 93 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972.

‘City Centre’ means the area delineated in [colour tbc] in the map at Schedule One.

‘Council’ means Belfast City Council.

‘Perform’ means to engage in any type of public performance or exhibition with the reasonable expectation of attracting bystanders and / or receiving donations, and includes but is not limited to the playing of musical instruments, singing, circus-based skills, street theatre, reciting and public speaking and any other type of performance or exhibition not specifically listed but which would be similar in character. For the purposes of this Bye-Law this also includes preaching.

‘Performer’ means a person who engages in any activity described in the preceding paragraph in a Public Place.

‘Public Place’ means any area open to the public including any street, road, footpath, open space, park, cemetery, green space and amenity areas.

‘Special Event’ means a large scale event which is to take place in Belfast which is exceptional in nature and will attract a significant number of visitors to the city.

General Provisions

- 2.** These Bye-Laws apply to the City Centre as shown in the map at Schedule One.
- 3.** Notice of the effect of these Bye-Laws shall be given by signs placed in such positions as the Council may consider adequate to inform persons of their existence.

- a. No person shall, after being requested to desist by an Authorised Officer cause or permit any noise to be made above 70 decibels by
 - i. Playing a musical instrument; and/or
 - ii. operating or permitting to be operated any audio device, speaker, amplifier, or similar equipment of a similar type
4. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 3, where there are 2 or more Performers within 100 metres of each other and it appears to an Authorised Officer that there is a cumulative effect of the noise which is so loud or continuous as to give reasonable cause for annoyance to other persons either within places of work or in a Public Place, an Authorised Officer may ask the Performers to reduce their volume and/or to relocate to another place to perform.

Behaviour and Conduct of Performers

5. A Performer must not obstruct the public's access to and egress from any premises or interfere with the free and safe movement of pedestrians.
6. A Performer must comply with any Code of Conduct issued by the Council, which may be amended from time to time.

Exemptions

7. These Bye-Laws shall not apply to the following activities:
 - (a) Those activities taking place in a public place pursuant to an entertainment licence;
 - (b) Those activities taking place in a public place with the consent of Department of Infrastructure or the relevant landowner;
 - (c) Any procession which has been authorised by the Parades Commission;
 - (d) A cash collection in a public place which has been authorised by PSNI pursuant to The Charities Act (NI) 2008; and
 - (e) An official picket pursuant to Article 98 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (NI) Order 1995.

Offences

8. A person who fails, without a reasonable excuse, to comply with a reasonable request from an Authorised Officer pursuant to Paragraphs 3 or 4 will be guilty of an offence
9. Any person who contravenes any of these Bye-Laws shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 2 of the standard scale.
10. Where an Authorised Officer is of the opinion that a person is committing or has committed an offence under the preceding Bye-Law, the Authorised Officer may demand the name and address of such a person and if that demand is refused or the person gives a name and address which is false or misleading,

that person shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £500.

Fixed Payment Notice

- 11.** Where an Authorised Officer has reason to believe that a person has committed an offence under these Bye-Laws, the Authorised Officer may give that person a notice offering the person the opportunity of discharging any liability to conviction for that offence by payment of a fixed penalty to the Council.
- 12.** Where a person is given a fixed penalty notice under these Bye-Laws:
 - (a) no proceedings shall be instituted for that offence before the expiration of the period of 14 days following the date of the notice; and
 - (b) the person shall not be convicted of that offence if the person pays the fixed penalty before the expiration of that period.
- 13.** A notice under this section must give such particulars of the circumstances alleged to constitute the offence as are necessary for giving reasonable information of the offence.
- 14.** The Fixed Penalty Notice shall specify the name and address of the alleged offender and in general terms the nature of the contravention alleged to have been committed and the date and place of the alleged contravention.

Miscellaneous and Supplementary

Special Events

The Council may restrict or prohibit the use of amplification by Performers in certain areas of the City Centre when there is a Special Event due to take place in the city but only where it is considered necessary to do so for the purposes of facilitating or delivering the event. Any such restriction or prohibition may only be for the duration of the Special Event.

Where the Council proposes to restrict or prohibit the use of amplification for the purposes of a Special Event it shall place notice in 2 newspapers distributed in the city and on its website no less than 2 months prior to the Special Event.

The Council may suspend the prohibition contained within the applicable Belfast City Council Bye-laws prohibiting the consumption of alcohol in public places in certain areas of the city centre for Special Events. Any such suspension may only be for the duration of the Special Event and will be subject to consultation with PSNI and any other relevant stakeholders.

Where the Council proposes to suspend the prohibition contained within the Bye- Laws prohibiting the consumption of alcohol in public places in certain areas of the city centre for the purposes of a Special Event it shall place notice of the proposed restriction or prohibition in 2 local newspapers distributed in the city and on its website no less than 2 months prior to the Special Event.

Surrender of alcohol in designated places

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**Submission to Belfast City Council consultation on draft city centre Bye-laws
‘for the good governance of Belfast city centre and for the prevention and
suppression of nuisances in Belfast city centre’**

Consultation 27 November 2023 → 04 March 2024

1. The Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) is an independent human rights organisation with cross community membership, established in 1981, that works to ensure public authority compliance with obligations under international human rights law.
2. This is a response to the consultation by Belfast City Council on Bye-laws ‘for the good governance of Belfast city centre and for the prevention and suppression of nuisances in Belfast city centre’ which would introduce a Permit system in two designated areas of the City Centre, requiring a Council-issued Permit for ‘any amplified performance’, any use of ‘amplification devices’ and any non-commercial stand or stall.
3. The proposals engage human rights protected under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) relating, in particular, to freedom of assembly (Article 11) and expression (Article 10) on which CAJ has a significant body of work. ECHR rights are directly legally binding on the Council by virtue of the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA)
4. In summary, whilst understanding the issues the Council is seeking to address, CAJ has concerns that the proposed bye-laws will conflict with the ECHR and related human rights standards. In particular, the bye-laws as presented would risk creating an unprecedented de facto ‘authorisation’ regime for any static protest in the designated city centre retail area using any amplification device, and constitute a *de facto* ban, on pain of a fine, on such spontaneous protests. Permits would also limit the scope for protests in the precise area of the City Centre, where the right to protest is most frequently exercised. Take the following examples:
 - An offence would be committed by organising a static protest in the City Centre retail area using a loudhailer without first applying for a permit from the Council. This would constitute a de facto ‘authorisation’ regime for such protests (there are no notification requirements for such protests under NI law, there are notification, but not authorisation, requirements for parades).
 - The standard conditions envisaged for a Permit will not allow any such protests to take place before 11am on any day, and no such protest would be allowed to take place for more than two hours, with a 24hr ban on returning to the same location.
 - It would not be possible to hold any spontaneous static protest in the city centre retail area in response to a local or international event or atrocity, as first protest organisers would have to submit and await for approval from the Council for a Permit.

5. This submission will cover:

- Outline of Human Rights Framework.
- The issues the Council is seeking to address.
- The proposed bye-laws.
- Assessment of their compatibility with the ECHR

Outline of Human Rights Framework

6. As alluded to above, ECHR Article 11 protects the right to freedom of peaceful assembly as a fundamental right in a democratic society. Article 11 rights are closely linked to the right to freedom of expression (Article 10) and freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 9). There are also similar obligations under UN treaties.
7. The Council may find useful the following detailed guidelines on the scope of these rights:
- European Court of Human Rights: Guide on Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights: Freedom of assembly and association (2020).¹
 - European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly (3rd edition).²
8. None of the above rights are absolute and can be subject to restrictions under certain circumstances, when certain tests are met. In summary these are:
- **Legal Certainty:** restrictions must be “prescribed by law” which means not only a legal basis in domestic law, but also that the law is formulated with sufficient precision to be foreseeable, and hence avoid arbitrary application.
 - **Legitimate Aim:** restrictions can only be made in pursuance of one of a number of listed legitimate aims, namely, “the interests of national security or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.”
 - **Necessary in a Democratic Society (proportionality):** restrictions must answer a “pressing social need” and be proportionate to the “legitimate aim” pursued.
9. It is clear that the Council permit proposals engage and can interfere in the above ECHR rights, it is these tests that therefore would need to be met for that interference to be considered justified and hence lawful.

¹ [Guide on Article 11 - Freedom of assembly and association \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/t/Document/Article11/Freedom_of_assembly_and_association.pdf)

² [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2019\)017rev-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2019)017rev-e)

10. Most of the permitted legitimate aims are not relevant to the aims of the Council's policy aim of preventing 'nuisance.' The legitimate aim likely to be relevant is that of "protection of the rights of others". It should be noted that 'rights' of others is in reference to ECHR rights and other *rights* for which there is an imperative to include.
11. Other ECHR rights would include the positive obligations under Article 8 to protect persons from racist expression. The UN and Council of Europe have both held that sectarianism in NI is to be treated as a form of racism, and the European Court of Human Rights has also held that sexual orientation is also protected by Article 8.³ The duties under the ECHR, given further domestic effect by the HRA, therefore empower and place positive duties on Northern Ireland public authorities to take steps to tackle hate expression. These provisions should be read and interpreted in line with other relevant human rights standards. This would include Article 6 of the Framework Convention for National Minorities which obliges public authorities to: *'take appropriate measures to protect persons who may be subject to threats or acts of discrimination, hostility or violence as a result of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity'*.
12. Article 20 of the (UN) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which provides that: *"Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law"*. Incitement to hatred should be considered as a subset of and as the most serious type of hate expression, to be criminalised on the basis that it incites racial discrimination, hostility or violence in a public context. The ICCPR duties are further interpreted by the UN Rabat Plan of Action (on combatting incitement to hatred). Rabat sets out general principles that distinctions should be made between:
 - 1) Expression that constitutes a criminal offence.
 - 2) Expression that is not criminally punishable but may justify a civil suit or administrative sanctions.

³ The increased codification of Article 8 ECHR rights as providing for positive obligations for intervention to protect against actions that include being subjected to racist expression has been a feature of Strasbourg jurisprudence (see for example *Asku v Turkey* (app no 4149/04, 41029/04) 15 March 2012, and *Király and Dömötör v Hungary*, 2017). In relation to sexual orientation and gender identity falling within the ambit of Article 8, see *Bensaid v UK* (Application no. 44599/98) [47]. In 2011 the UN Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination made clear that "Sectarian discrimination in Northern Ireland [...] attract[s] the provisions of ICERD in the context of 'inter-sectionality' between religion and racial discrimination" (para 1(e) UN Doc CERD/C/GBR/18-20, List of themes on the UK). Later in the same year, the Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for National Minorities directly addressed the approach in the predecessor draft strategy, raising concerns that the Committee "finds the approach in the CSI Strategy to treat sectarianism as a distinct issue rather than as a form of racism problematic, as it allows sectarianism to fall outside the scope of accepted anti-discrimination and human rights protection standards". AC FCNM, Third Opinion on the United Kingdom adopted on 30 June 2011, ACFC/OP/III(2011)006, para 126. The UN Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination stated its position following representations from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission. The Commission had raised concerns that "policy presenting sectarianism as a concept entirely separate from racism problematically locates the phenomenon outside the well-developed discourse of commitments, analysis and practice reflected in international human rights law" and hence was not harnessing this framework to tackle sectarianism.

3) Expression that does not give rise to criminal, civil or administrative sanctions but still raises a concern in terms of tolerance, civility and respect for the rights of others.⁴

13. The duties to outlaw incitement to hatred are currently provided for under the 'stirring up hatred' and 'arousing fear' criminal offences in the Public Order (NI) Order 1987.⁵ This covers hate expression of a sectarian, racist, disablist or homophobic nature that reaches an incitement to hatred threshold. Reform and strengthening of this legislation has been recommended by the *Independent Review of Hate Crime Legislation in Northern Ireland*.⁶

14. The boundary between protected freedom of expression on one hand and prohibited advocacy of ethnic and religious hatred on the other has been debated internationally and locally for some time. ECHR jurisprudence has established that free expression is protected even when it "*shocks, offends or disturbs*"⁷ or is capable of "*creating a feeling of uneasiness in groups of citizens or because some may perceive them as disrespectful*".⁸ It does draw a distinction however between this and expression which "*spreads, incites, promotes or justifies hatred based on intolerance*"⁹ or matters such as "*the promotion of discrimination or ethnic division*".¹⁰

15. As alluded to below, part of the aim of the policy is to prevent the display of graphic materials. Should the Council wish to rely on the legitimate aim of 'morals' it should be noted that this has been interpreted narrowly.¹¹ Some 'graphic' material is of course already regulated by law.

16. In relation to a requirement for an authorisation procedure for a protest, it should be noted that this has only been held to be in keeping with the requirements of Article

⁴ Rabat Plan of Action, para 20, recommendations. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/outcome-documents/rabat-plan-action>

⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1987/463/part/III>

⁶ *Independent Review of Hate Crime Legislation in Northern Ireland*, final report 2020.

⁷ *Handyside v UK* 1976[49]

⁸ *Vajnai v Hungary* (2008) [57].

⁹ *Erbakan v Turkey* (1999) [57].

¹⁰ *Vona v Hungary* (application no. 35943/10) (2013) [66]

¹¹ OSCE/Venice Commission guidelines paragraph 142: *Protection of morals. On the face of Article 21, ICCPR and Article 11(2) ECHR the protection of morals may be invoked by States as a ground for imposing restrictions on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. In practice, however, the protection of morals should rarely, if ever, be regarded as an appropriate basis for imposing restrictions on freedom of peaceful assembly. As the UN Human Rights Committee has noted, 'the concept of morals derives from many social, philosophical and religious traditions; consequently, limitations [...] for the purpose of protecting morals must be based on principles not deriving exclusively from a single tradition [...]. Any such limitations must be understood in the light of universality of human rights and the principle of non-discrimination. Any restrictions based on a narrow or exclusive conception of morality will thus be incompatible with relevant standards governing non-discrimination (at paragraphs 101 et seq. above) and content-based regulation (see paragraph 30). Moreover, States may not legitimately invoke morality as a ground for restriction in cases which concern facets of an individual's existence and identity (in particular, because these constitute the very essence of the right to freedom of expression).*

11(1) ECHR where required to ensure the peaceful nature of a meeting.¹² This limited exemption is therefore not applicable to the current Council policy.

17. It should be noted that there is a difference between an 'authorisation' requirement (whereby permission must be given before a protest takes place) and a 'notification' requirement whereby authorities must be *notified* in advance, but an 'authorisation' is not to be awaited. With or without a notification requirement, there can still be powers to impose restrictions on a protest. There are currently no authorisation requirements for protests in Northern Ireland.
18. Under the law in Northern Ireland at present, static protest (in law 'open air public meetings') have no notification requirements (with the exception of counter protests to parades). The legislation (Part II of the Public Order NI Order 1987) provides for a senior police officer to impose restrictions where there is a risk of 'serious public disorder, serious damage to property, serious disruption to life of the community' or when the purpose of the protest is for the intimidation of others from legitimate activity.¹³
19. Under Parades legislation (Public Processions NI Order 1998), there is a notification requirement for parades of 28 days, which can be waived where not 'reasonably practicable' (for example a moving protest called at short notice in response to a local or international event) in which case notice is to be given as soon as possible. Counter protest to parades have a similar 14 day notification requirement. The Parades Commission may then impose restrictions.¹⁴
20. More recent legislation has made provision for Safe Access Zones for premises providing abortion services to prevent the harassment or impeding of persons accessing abortion services within a designated zone in the vicinity of the premises.¹⁵

The issues the Council is seeking to address

21. The consultation document alludes to (but does not elaborate on) the issues the policy is seeking to address as follows:

The council has encountered issues in recent years relating to loud busking, religious preaching and various other activities involving the use of amplification devices and/or the display of graphic imagery in the city centre.¹⁶

22. The Equality Screening produced with the consultation sets out the objectives of the policy as follows:

¹² *Ziliberg v. Moldova*

¹³ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1987/463/part/II>

¹⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/2/contents>

¹⁵ Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Act (Northern Ireland) 2023 see [Safe Access Zones | Department of Health \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁶ <https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/consultation-on-city-centre-byelaws>

Significant issues have been raised over the past number of years regarding the activities of buskers, preachers and various interest groups in the City Centre, mainly within the primary retail core. Officers recognise that busking can bring vibrancy to the area and should be facilitated. It is also recognised that street preaching and the ability to protest are important rights of expression in a democratic society and are protected under the European Convention of Human Rights. However, it is important to consider the context within which these activities are being considered, their cumulative impact and how this affects others.

The proposed bye-laws will introduce rules and regulations around participation in amplified performances, public speaking, meetings and events, and the display of promotional literature or other information in the City Centre. The bye-laws are not intended to prevent street preaching or the promotion of any public interest causes. Rather, they are intended to reduce the overall ambient noise and unacceptable nuisance which is caused by the cumulative impact of these various activities in the City Centre.¹⁷

23. In recent years CAJ is aware of complaints alleging that some preachers have engaged in homophobic expression, and a stall by anti-abortion protestors has carried graphic images of aborted fetuses that have caused alarm and distress.
24. In order to demonstrate compliance with the 'pressing social need' test of restrictions on rights to freedom of assembly and expression, the Council would need to provide an evidence base to justify its proposed measures.

The proposed bye-laws

25. The proposed bye-laws would introduce a Permit system for particular activity in the City Centre. They create two zones – one an (outer) City Centre covering the whole City Centre and a second a more limited (inner) City Centre ("Primary Retail Core"). The main bye laws provide that:
 - A person may not conduct or take part in any amplified performance (whether vocal or instrumental), dance, concert or other such performance in a public place in the City Centre (including the Primary Retail Core) without a valid Permit issued by the Council.
 - A person may not use amplification devices in a public place, whether as part of a performance or otherwise, in the Primary Retail Core without a Permit issued by the Council permitting the use of said device.
 - A person may not erect, place, maintain or otherwise be responsible for a stand, stall, or vehicle with promotional literature or information (whether connected to a business, charity, political or any other non-commercial purpose) in a public place in the Primary Retail Core without a Permit issued by the Council. This

¹⁷ <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Documents/City-Centre-Bye-Laws-Equality-Screening>

provision does not apply to those vehicles which are within the said area solely for the purposes of delivery to or collecting goods from business premises.¹⁸

26. Permits will be available from the Council for a fee (to be determined).
27. An offence is created for contravening the bye- laws punishable by a fine of up to £500. The Council has powers to revoke a permit when conditions are not being abided by (with a right of appeal to a magistrates court), and powers to remove unattended stalls and stands.
28. The “Permit will be subject to such conditions as the Council believes necessary and proportionate” with a number of ‘standard conditions’ listed that may be specified in permits namely:
- Permits may only be used by the performer named on the permit, and shall not be used by, or transferred to, any other person.
 - A Permit granted by the Council will be valid for one year from date of issue or such lesser period as may be considered appropriate by the Council.
 - A Permit shall not normally be granted for activity between the hours of 11pm and 11am.
 - A Permit will only allow the permitted activity in a specific location for a maximum of TWO hours. After this period the person must re-locate to a different place not within 100 metres of his/her previous location and may not return within 100 metres of any previous location until the following day.
 - A Permit holder is only permitted to perform in the Primary Retail Core for a maximum period of ONE hour. After this period they must relocate to a different place not within 100 metres of their previous location and may not return within 100 metres of any previous location until the following day.
 - The maximum performance periods set out in these bye-laws shall include any time spent setting up and packing up.
 - The Council may designate areas in which specific types of instruments or amplification is prohibited.
 - A Permit Holder will comply with a request from an authorised officer to cease their activity or move on where in the opinion of the authorised officer the activity is endangering public safety or causing an obstruction.
29. A number of exemptions are listed to the bye-laws. In summary these are:
- Activities in a public place organised by the Council, or with the consent of the Department of Infrastructure or other relevant landowner.
 - A parade “authorised” [sic] by the Parades Commission.
 - Cash collections authorised by PSNI under the Charities Act (NI) 2008.

¹⁸ <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Documents/Bye-laws-for-the-good-governance-of-Belfast-city-c>

- Trade union pickets, under Trade Union and Labour Relations (NI) Order 1995.

Assessment of their compatibility with the ECHR

30. There are a number of significant concerns that the bye-laws will infringe ECHR rights, the most prominent is the risk for static protests.
31. It is not entirely clear if the aim of the policy is to capture protests and related protected expressive activity, reference is made, without elaboration, to 'meetings' in the equality screening of the policy aims. It appears the bye-laws are not intended to capture protests, as only those using loudhailers or amplification equipment will fall within scope.
32. However, many such protests rely on such equipment and take place in the vicinity of the inner city centre and often City Hall. The bye-laws provide an exemption for parades and trade union *pickets* (presumably as already otherwise regulated) but not for static protests ('open air public meetings'), regulated by public order legislation.
33. In conflict with the ECHR, the bye-laws essentially constitute a de facto authorisation process for any static protest in the designated zone in which a loudhailer or similar equipment is used. Furthermore, they would preclude any spontaneous such protest as a permit would have to be applied for in advance.
34. It would also require a prior-authorisation for anyone erecting a table or stand with promotional literature or information for a non-commercial purpose, raising similar issues.
35. No permitted *legitimate aim* is expressly cited as the lawful basis for restrictions. This is also expressly the case in relation to the 'conditions' which make general reference to proportionality, but do not cite a legitimate aim.
36. The 'standard conditions' for permits would constitute a disproportionate restriction on the right to protest (with a loudhailer etc). For example, the stipulation that no protests can be held before 11am or last for more than two hours in the same place.¹⁹

¹⁹ OSCE/Venice Commission Guidance at paragraph 146. **Restrictions on 'time' or 'duration'**. Restrictions imposed on the time or duration of an assembly must be based on an assessment of the individual circumstances of each case. The touchstone established by the European Court of Human Rights is that demonstrators ought to be given sufficient opportunity to manifest their views. In some cases, the protracted duration of an assembly may itself be integral to the message that the assembly is attempting to convey or to the effective expression of that message.

OSCE/Venice Commission Guidance at paragraph 147. **Restrictions on 'place'**. At the core of the right to freedom of assembly is the ability of the assembly participants to choose the place where they can best communicate their message to their desired audience.²⁸² It would be disproportionate if authorities categorically excluded places suitable and open to the public as sites for peaceful assemblies. The use of such suitable sites must always be assessed in the light of the circumstances of each case. The fact that a message could also be expressed in another place, is by itself insufficient reason to require an assembly to be held elsewhere, even if that location is within sight and sound of the target audience....

37. Any reliance on the rights and freedoms of others as a legitimate aim should specify which rights of others are engaged in relation to restrictions.²⁰
38. If a particular concern is that some of the expression by preachers or others has included homophobic or other hate expression, the Council may wish to consider alternative interventions. Such alternative methods may include monitoring for breaches of the criminal law on stirring up hatred on grounds of sexual orientation that can be reported to the PSNI or public awareness campaigns and messaging tackling homophobia.
39. In relation to 'graphic images' other areas of legal regulation may also be relevant.
40. It should be noted that content-based restrictions on assemblies are not permitted where *protected* expression is concerned.²¹
41. The requirements for a permit regulating 'amplified performances' appear more designed to regulate cultural activity and in general are less of a concern in ECHR terms than the other bye-laws. There is a risk, however, that this provision may capture expressive activity on a protest and in other formats in the absence of any exemption.
42. Overall, we are concerned that the proposed bylaws as they stand would constitute an unjustifiable restriction on rights to free assembly and expression for the reasons set out above. In a practical sense, should they be implemented, the Council is likely to face legal challenge on attempts to place restrictions on protected expressive

²⁰ OSCE/Venice Commission Guidance at paragraph 143. **Protection of the rights and freedoms of others.** Assemblies potentially impact on the rights and freedoms of those who live, work, shop, trade and carry on business in the same locality. However, balancing the right to assemble and the rights of others should always aim at ensuring that assemblies may proceed, unless they impose unnecessary and disproportionate burdens on others. Rights that may be claimed by non-participants affected by an assembly include, among others: the right to privacy (protected by Article 17 of the ICCPR and Article 8 of the ECHR), the right to peaceful enjoyment of one's possessions and property (protected by Article 1 of Protocol 1 to the ECHR), the right to liberty and security of person (Article 9 of the ICCPR and Article 5 of the ECHR), and the right to freedom of movement (Article 12 of the ICCPR and Article 2 of Protocol 4 to the ECHR). Some degree of disruption with respect to these rights must be tolerated if the essence of the right to peacefully assemble is not to be deprived of any meaning. Furthermore, as also noted at paragraphs 48 and 62, neither temporary disruption of vehicular or pedestrian traffic, nor opposition to an assembly, are of themselves legitimate reasons to impose restrictions on an assembly. Where a State restricts an assembly for the purpose of protecting the rights and freedoms of others, the relevant public authority should explain in detail:

- which specific rights and freedoms of others are engaged in the particular circumstances;
- the extent to which the proposed assembly would, if unrestricted, interfere with these rights and freedoms;
- how any restrictions on the proposed assembly would serve to mitigate these interferences, and why less restrictive measures would not lead to the envisaged success.

The authorities should be allowed a margin of appreciation when assessing these issues. In particular, despite the fact that no violent act or crimes have occurred during an assembly, the intimidating character of the rallies may be taken into account by the authorities. What matters is that the repeated organisation of the rallies was capable of intimidating others and therefore of affecting their rights, especially in view of the location of the parades.

²¹ See para 30 OSCE/Venice Commission Guidance.

activity, and in particular that relating to protest, that could be captured by the bye-laws.

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Consultation Report

Proposed City Centre Byelaws

November 2025

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Appendices

1. Draft byelaws
2. CAJ submission
3. Summary of written responses

1. Executive Summary

On 26 June 2023, the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee authorised officers to begin the formal public consultation process on draft byelaws for the city centre.

A consultation on the draft byelaws was launched on the Council's consultation platform, YourSay Belfast, on 27 November 2023 and ran for 14 weeks until 4 March 2024. This report sets out the findings from the online consultation survey and the various submissions that were received during the consultation period.

This report presents:

- the consultation background
- the process for developing and launching the consultation
- a quantitative report of the consultation survey responses and a qualitative analysis of text responses

The aim of this report is to give Elected Members as clear a picture as possible of the public response and issues raised in relation to the proposed byelaws. This will allow Elected Members to make an informed decision based on this evidence.

2. Background on the draft byelaws

The Council's power to make byelaws arises from Part VI of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 (the "Act"). Section 90 sets out the purposes for which the Council may make byelaws, which are:

- "(a) For the good rule and government of the whole or any part of its district;*
- (b) For the prevention and suppression of nuisances in its district;*
- (c) For any purpose for which bye-laws may be made by it under any other transferred provision."*

Section 91(1) of the Act confirms that byelaws made by the Council shall not have effect until they are confirmed by the relevant Department. Departmental guidance on drafting byelaws was issued in February 2015 and account of that has been taken in the development of the draft byelaws.

On 18 February 2022, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee authorised officers to undertake an initial informal consultation and engagement exercise with the Department for Communities (DfC). DfC subsequently highlighted a number of issues for further consideration:

- DfC observed that there may be the potential for the byelaws to interfere with rights under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the subsequent possibility for challenge.
- DfC commented that the power to confiscate property and dispose of it how they see fit is very powerful and may be better suited to primary legislation rather than Council byelaws. Save for the purposes for which bye-laws can be made, as set out in Section 80 of the 1972 Act, there is no restriction on the content of bye-laws, other than that "byelaws should not be made in respect of matters which are already dealt with in legislation". Ultimately, it is for the Council to decide if the existing law deals sufficiently with the matter at hand.
- DfC recommended that an exemption may need to be included for an official picket organised by a Trade Union under Article 98 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 ('the 1995 Order') which provides for peaceful communication of information.

A legal opinion was sought on the draft byelaws and an opinion was received on 10 March 2023. The opinion provided an analysis of Articles 9, 10 and 11 of the European Convention of Human Rights. Counsel advised that the draft byelaws may have an impact upon the right to freedom of expression pursuant to Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights. Counsel noted that this is not an absolute right, and interference with this right may be justified if the Court were to find there was a legitimate aim in doing so. Counsel also advised that it would be prudent to include reference to a peaceful picket organised pursuant to Article 98 of the 1995 Order in the language of the exemption.

After consideration of both the feedback from DfC and the legal opinion, the byelaws were amended to include an exemption for an official picket organised by a registered Trade Union (pursuant to authorisation granted in Article 98 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (NI) Order 1995). The title of the byelaws was amended to include “*And for the prevention and suppression of nuisances in Belfast City Centre*”.

Draft byelaws were brought to Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 26 June 2023 and the Committee authorised those draft byelaws to be issued for public consultation. These draft byelaws are attached to this report as Appendix 1.

A draft Equality Screening was conducted in relation to the draft byelaws, which was published alongside the consultation on the YourSay platform. The screening did not find there to be any likely impact of the draft byelaws on the nine grounds included within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (religious belief, political opinion, race, age, marital status, sexual orientation, men and women generally, disability and dependants).

Summary of Content of the Draft Byelaws

The draft byelaws provide that anyone who wishes to use an amplification device in the city centre, including the primary retail core, would require a permit from the Council. This would include any situation where on-street amplification is used, such as busking, preaching and outdoor performances.

The same rules would apply to anyone wishing to place a stand, stall or vehicle carrying any form of promotional literature or other information, regardless of its purpose. This would include displays of graphic imagery.

The byelaws provide that a modest annual fee will be charged to cover the costs of administering the permit scheme. This fee is yet to be determined.

European Convention on Human Rights

The articles potentially engaged by these draft byelaws are as follows:

- Article 9: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- Article 10: Freedom of expression
- Article 11: Freedom of assembly and association

These rights and freedoms provided are qualified rights; they may be interfered with or restricted in certain circumstances if necessary and for a legitimate aim.

Restrictions can be imposed provided any such restriction is:

- prescribed by law
- in pursuit of one or more legitimate aims specified in paragraph 2 of the Article in question
- necessary and
- proportionate

The 'legitimate aims' specified for each Article are as follows:

Article 9:

'in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.'

Article 10:

'in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.'

Article 11:

'in the interests of national security or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This Article shall not prevent the imposition of lawful restrictions

on the exercise of these rights by members of the armed forces, of the police or of the administration of the State.'

3. The Context of the Consultation

3.1 Belfast City Council Context

Belfast City Council recognises that it is important to support the role of the City Centre as a focal point of social and economic activity and protect the amenity of the area for those who visit, live and work there.

Significant issues have been raised over the past few years regarding the activities of buskers, preachers and various interest groups in the City Centre, primarily within the primary retail core. The Council recognises that busking can bring vibrancy to the area and should be facilitated. It is also recognised that street preaching and the ability to protest are important rights of expression in a democratic society and are protected under the European Convention of Human Rights. However, the Council must consider the context within which these activities are being undertaken, their cumulative impact and how this affects others.

Street preaching using significant amplification is occurring on a regular basis throughout the Primary Retail Core. This in turn attracts counter protests, usually but not exclusively at the weekend. In addition, protestors are regularly displaying images which cause significant distress to a variety of people for different reasons. For example, graphic images of abortions, animal experimentation and factory farming conditions. Since there are no restrictions on these activities, those protesting frequently use significant amplification to compete with each other. This in turn also appears to drive away those buskers who do not use amplification but may add to the vibrancy of the area.

Whilst the proposed byelaws would apply to the district as a whole, it is envisaged they will have a particular relevance to the city centre.

The Council has collated statistics on how many complaints have been received in recent years. Table 1 below demonstrates that whilst the total number peaked in 2020, the Council continues to receive complaints on the issues of loudspeakers and street performers in Belfast and in the city centre:

Table 1

	Loudspeaker Complaints in Belfast	Loudspeaker complaints in City Centre	Street performer complaints in Belfast	Street performer complaints in City Centre
2018	10	8	76	76
2019	17	14	78	78
2020	62	51	29	27
2021	24	22	34	34
2022	45	41	53	53
2023	29	27	22	20
2024	31	30	39	38
2025 (up to 11/11/25)	30	30	53	52

4. Consultation Design Process

Council officers within the Legal & Civic Services Department along with colleagues from Strategic Policy & Performance discussed the approach to be agreed for consultation and engagement.

Officers recognised that qualitative feedback was important to understand how the draft byelaws would be received, and therefore open-ended text response questions relating to various aspects of the draft byelaws were included in the online survey.

Recognising the importance of knowing who was contributing to the survey, respondents were asked to declare their interest in Belfast in terms of whether they

lived, worked, studied in Belfast or if they were a business owner in Belfast or a visitor. Respondents were also asked for feedback on equality of opportunity, good relations and rural needs issues that they thought should be considered by the Council in relation to the draft byelaws.

Standard monitoring questions were asked for the purpose of capturing data in relation to the Council's obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 for the categories of age, gender, community background, ethnic origin, disability and dependancy status.

5. Methodology

The public consultation on the draft byelaws was launched on the Council's consultation online platform, YourSay Belfast on 27 November 2023 and ran for 14 weeks, concluding on 4 March 2024. This online engagement platform provides the Council with several 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 hard copy format of the survey was made available upon request and responses received via hard copy have been read and considered for this report.

5.1 Pre consultation engagement sessions with stakeholders in relation to the draft byelaws

Relevant stakeholders from the city centre business community had attended the Strategic and Policy Resources Committee on 18 February 2022 to present their concerns about how persistent disruptive on-street activity, in the form of protests, street entertainers, preaching and lobbying, often involving the use of amplifiers, was increasingly creating difficulties for retailers and businesses operating in the general area of Cornmarket. It was noted that the impact of these activities was creating difficulties for retailers and businesses as well as having a detrimental effect on staff mental health and wellbeing.

6. Consultation Responses

6.1 Collation of statistics from surveys

As stated above, Council officers felt it appropriate to ask a series of open-ended questions to gauge opinion on various aspects of the draft byelaws. This quantitative feedback is summarised in Section 7 of this report. Statistical breakdowns of general sentiment in terms of level of agreement or disagreement is also included.

The combination of qualitative information and statistical information will give as comprehensive a picture as possible of the responses. It should be noted, however, that like other surveys conducted on the YourSay platform, no guarantee can be given that individual respondents have not filled in the survey multiple times. This is a known limitation in the analysis of public consultation data that is provided anonymously.

In the online survey, respondents were presented with questions based on various sections of the draft byelaws and were asked to state if they definitely agreed, somewhat agreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, somewhat disagreed or definitely disagreed. Percentages in relation to each question are given in tabular format with a discussion with some of the commentary and themes in written answers following on from this.

6.2 Consultation analysis

In addition to the statistical analysis of the responses to the survey, officers have reviewed written commentary submitted by the respondents. In many cases, comments were very complex with mixed feelings towards buskers, religious preaching and graphic imagery. General recurring themes have emerged from the comments and those are discussed in the analysis of the text comments for each question.

6.3 Written submissions

A number of written submissions were made during the period of the consultation. A substantial written response was submitted by the Committee for the Administration of Justice, which laid out concerns as to how the proposed byelaws could conflict with rights set forth in the European Convention on Human Rights, the most prominent issue being the risk that it would be an offence to have static protests in the city centre. A copy of this submission is included as **Appendix 2**.

Written responses were also received from the following organisations:

- Belfast & District Trades Union Council
- The Committee on the Administration of Justice
- HERe NI
- Free Presbyterian Church
- Northern Ireland Committee – Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- NIPSA
- UNISON NI
- Rainbow Project
- Socialist Party
- Traditional Unionist Voice
- WRDA
- A joint response from People Before Profit on behalf of a range of political parties, activist groups, art collectives, and other organisations

Several of these organisations endorsed the CAJ submission. A summary of these written submissions is attached to this report as **Appendix 3**.

6.4 Petitions

No petitions were received.

6.5 Email responses

There was a total of 5 emails received that commented on the consultation. These touched on various aspects of the draft byelaws and included criticism that the terms and conditions are ill defined and are arbitrary, and that whilst the city centre benefits from music and the ability to protest, hate speech that constitutes bullying and harassment is unacceptable.

6.6 Letter Response

One letter response was received, which cautioned against enacting the byelaws. The respondent felt that they would breach human rights by removing the opportunity to protest, gather, inform and peacefully campaign.

6.7 Responses to the survey (hard copy submissions)

A total of 36 hard copy responses were received, all of which expressed disagreement with the draft byelaws. These respondents commented on the importance of freedom of expression in relation to the heritage of open-air preaching (in particular by the evangelical Christian / Protestant community) and supported the display of graphic imagery in the city centre.

7. Breakdown of Responses

7.1 Overall responses to the online survey

There were 3,571 responses to the online survey and a combined total of 14,878 written comments.

The analysis of the written comments clearly shows that there is considerable strength of feeling and demonstrates that respondents took time to compose responses that in many cases were thoughtful and reasoned.

7.2 Responses to the Consultation Questions on the draft byelaws

The consultation presented a series of questions to allow respondents to give their opinion on the substance of the proposed byelaws. The consultation also collected monitoring data on respondents' age, gender, religious background (regardless of whether or not they practice), their national identity, whether or not they were impacted by a disability, their ethnic origin and whether or not they have dependants.

Respondents could fill in the questionnaire as many times as they wanted. None of the questions in the questionnaire was mandatory. There is not, therefore, an equal number of responses for each question.

Q1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council should introduce rules and regulations around the use of amplification devices and the display of promotional literature or other information (including the display of graphic imagery) in the city centre?

This question had a total of 3,540 responses (31 skipped)

	Percentage	Number
Definitely agree	39.7	1,404
Somewhat agree	4.8	171
Neither agree nor disagree	1.0	36
Somewhat disagree	3.8	133
Definitely disagree	50.7	1,796
Total	100	3,540

It is immediately apparent that the majority of respondents to this question (54.5%) either definitely disagreed or somewhat disagreed with the proposal to introduce rules and regulations around the use of amplification devices and the display of promotional literature or other information in the city centre. Only 1% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

Q2: Please provide any additional comments in the space below.

This question had a total of 2,215 written responses and allowed respondents to express why they agreed or disagreed with the introduction of rules and regulations as set out in Question 1.

This was a very broad and general question and it therefore elicited many broad and general responses. However, general themes were evident and are discussed in further detail below:

Themes in Responses – Definitely Agree / Somewhat agree

Too loud

Respondents who were in favour of the introduction of rules and regulations simply stated that the city centre is 'too loud', an 'aural nightmare' and that the noise of amplified voices and instruments is 'intrusive' and 'unbearable'.

Cumulative Impact

A theme that emerged from the analysis of these comments is that the cumulative impact of amplification and 'noise pollution', can be 'very very annoying to be bombarded by numerous buskers and preachers', feels 'out of control and unmanaged' and has 'ruined the experience' of being in the city centre.

Negative Impact on City Centre

Respondents commented that current noise levels in the city centre from buskers and preachers does not create a 'welcoming environment' for both residents and tourists, makes the city centre feel 'unsafe', makes them feel 'anxious' and 'annoyed' and that they 'avoid going to the city centre'.

Content of Speech

Some respondents noted that the content of some of the religious preachers' speeches is 'oppressive', 'hateful', 'hurtful' and 'damaging'. Respondents commented that buskers are sometimes 'very loud' and 'intrusive' and that there is 'no need' for amplification at all.

Decibel Limit

A suggestion that speakers should be kept at a 'reasonable level' and the imposition of a 'decibel limit' for any amplification was a further recurring theme.

Disability

Respondents commented that amplification makes the city centre 'extra difficult' for those with disabilities and neurodivergency disorders, such as Autism Spectrum Disorder and is 'harmful to wellbeing'.

It was also noted that unregulated speakers and performers who 'take up so much space' make the city centre 'less accessible' to those with physical disabilities who require a wheelchair or rollator.

Graphic Imagery

Respondents commented that images displayed by pro-life / anti-abortion groups are 'medically sensitive', 'highly triggering', cause 'stress', are 'disturbing', 'hugely traumatising for anyone that has been through a 'pregnancy loss' and 'should not be seen by children'. It was suggested that the use of 'very graphic images / contentious campaigns should only be used after 9:30 pm / similar to TV watershed', which would 'help balance equality with freedom of speech'.

Themes in Responses – Somewhat disagree / Definitely disagree

Freedom of Expression

Those respondents who disagreed with the introduction of rules and regulations stated that this was a 'blatant attack' on 'the fundamental right to free speech' and 'rights of assembly', that the byelaws would 'severely restrict the vibrancy' of the city centre and would 'silence the gospel message'. It was noted that the byelaws would constitute 'discriminatory behaviour' towards Christians and that 'religious liberty' is of 'vital importance', given the 'rich heritage of preaching' in Northern Ireland.

Questioning the Need

Respondents noted that the introduction of these byelaws should be as a 'measure of last resort', that they should be 'proportionate and reasonable', that there 'already laws' in relation to hate speech and that it's 'up to police' to deal with these issues. Respondents commented that the draft byelaws breach the Good Friday Agreement where it states that *'The parties affirm their commitment to the mutual respect, the*

civil rights and the religious liberties of everyone in the community ...the parties affirm in particular ...the right to freedom and expression of religion'. Respondents stated that existing legislation, for example, The Public Order Act, should 'suffice' to address these issues. It should be noted that respondents in some cases incorrectly cited legislation that does not apply in Northern Ireland.

Other City Centre Issues

Respondents commented that the Council should address 'way bigger issues' in the city centre such as 'drug paraphernalia', 'homeless sleeping in doorways', 'anti-social behaviour' and 'shoplifting' and that it should 'focus on cleaning the streets' before introducing these types of byelaws.

Council Process and Fee

Questions were raised about the Council process for granting permits citing 'huge concerns as to how this will be fairly and correctly monitored' and whether this could lead to 'subjective decisions' being made about who would or would not be granted a permit. Respondents were critical of the introduction of a fee, saying that this could be a 'barrier' that could disproportionately affect individuals.

Q3: In the past 12 months have you used an amplification device in the city centre?

This question had a total of 3,525 responses (46 skipped)

- Yes: 144 (4.1%)
- No: 3,381 (95.9%)

Q4: If the answer is yes, please indicate the activity you were participating in from the list below (select all relevant activities):

This question had a total of 141 responses (3,430 skipped)

	Percentage	Number
Busking	17.7	25
Street performance	14.9	21
Street preaching	57.4	81
Display of promotional literature or other information (including graphic imagery)	23.4	33

Other (please specify)	31.9	45

There were no written comments that addressed or specified the 'other' activities.

Q5: In the past 12 months have you displayed promotional literature or other information (including the display of graphic imagery) in the city centre?

This question had a total of 3,529 responses (42 skipped)

- Yes: 164 (4.6%)
- No: 3,365 (95.4%)

Q6: If the answer is yes please provide a description of the promotional literature or other information displayed (to include a description of any graphic imagery).

This answer had 154 text responses, which included the following descriptions:

- Anti-abortion / right to life imagery
- Vegan charity
- Prayer cards
- Religious literature including gospel tracts
- Environmental information
- Animal rights information
- Political causes e.g. Free Palestine, Gaza, support for refugees and asylum seekers
- LGBTQ+ information / Pride placards

Q7: What is your experience of the use of amplification devices in the city centre (i.e. speakers, public address system, loudspeaker, megaphone or any electronic device for the amplification of sound). You may select more than one option.

This question had a total of 3,512 responses (59 skipped)

	Percentage	Number
Very positive	32.0	1125
Positive	20.8	731
Neutral	12.8	448
Negative	13.3	466
Very negative	30.5	1071

Q8: Please explain your answer in the space below.

This question had a total of 2,690 written responses. It should be noted that many respondents wrote text responses which were partly positive and partly negative, for example in favour of music and busking but not in favour of the content of certain religious preaching, such as the following comment: “Very positive in terms of buskers/musicians. Very negative in terms of preachers and those using PA systems and megaphones to spread hatred in what is a growingly diverse city.” Another example of this viewpoint was a respondent who commented that their experience of amplification in the city centre has been ‘mixed’ and who stated that ‘the use of amplification must respect the views within our community, fostering a culture of respect and tolerance’.

However, as can be seen from the statistics, the majority of respondents have a ‘very positive’ or ‘positive’ experience of amplification in the city centre. Those responses are analysed in more detail below:

Themes in Very Positive / Positive responses

Positive Impact

Those who had a positive experience noted that they were ‘uplifted’ from listening to preachers and were ‘educated and informed’ by ‘organisations and demonstrations’. Respondents noted that amplified activities add to the ‘atmosphere and buzz’ and ‘vitality’ of the city centre.

Tradition of Preaching

Respondents noted that open air preaching has been a ‘force for good’ in society, that public preaching has a ‘long tradition’ in Belfast that is ‘part of our diverse culture’ and that to restrict it ‘would interfere with a long-term religious practice’. It was noted that freedom of expression is ‘paramount in a modern and free society’, that preachers are a ‘huge part of our culture which should be heard’ and ‘to shut that down is to oppose freedom of speech’.

Mix of Content

Respondents noted that amplification devices and buskers are a ‘welcome addition’ to the city centre and add to Belfast’s ‘atmosphere and character’. It was noted that

music adds to the 'vibrancy' of Belfast 'especially as a UNESCO City of Music' and is a 'traditional part of our culture and heritage, as well as something which can unite communities.' The 'diversity' of the city was commented upon in terms of a mixture of 'a busker in one corner and a street preacher in the other'.

Themes in Very Negative / Negative responses

Too Loud / Negative Impact on City Centre

A strong theme for those whose experience is negative is that the amplification is 'too loud', an 'assault' and 'out of control' for those visiting and working in the city centre and that the noise is 'off putting' which creates a 'disincentive to visit the city centre'. The cumulative impact of a lot of amplification was described as 'ridiculous', creating 'a very difficult atmosphere' and 'making the shopping experience unpleasant'.

The impact of high levels of noise was described as a 'cacophony' which is 'stressful' and it was stated that there is 'no need' for amplification devices, which were 'not designed for city streets'.

Disability

For those who declared themselves to be autistic or declared that they have dependants who are autistic, noise levels were described as 'painful to cope with', 'overwhelming' and 'overstimulating'.

Content of Speech

Respondents commented on experiencing amplified 'hate speech' and described this as being 'homophobic', 'transphobic', 'overtly offensive to the LGBT community', 'upsetting' and has 'no place in a modern society'.

Quality of Content

Respondents commented on the 'quality' of the content of what it being amplified', noting that there is 'no quality control', 'no standard in terms of quality of the performance' and that a performance can become an 'annoying nuisance'.

Q9: What is your experience of the display of promotional literature or other information in the city centre (including the display of graphic imagery)? You may select more than one option.

This question had a total of 3,517 responses (54 skipped)

	Percentage	Number
Very positive	29.3	1029
Positive	18.9	664
Neutral	21.5	755
Negative	12.9	452
Very negative	24.8	867

Q10: Please explain your answer in the space below.

This question had a total of 2,342 text responses.

Themes in Very Positive / Positive responses

Expression of Views

Those whose experience of graphic imagery was positive commented that it is 'important that Belfast is a space for inclusive views which allows everyone to express and share them freely and openly', that it 'offers a diverse range of information' and that 'it helps people understand'. Respondents commented on the importance of freedom of expression, noting that 'people should be free to promote or protest whatever images they want'.

Look Away

Respondents commented that if people don't like certain imagery, 'they don't have to look at it'. Although respondents acknowledged that some graphic imagery 'might be difficult to look at', it should not be 'censored' and that it is important for 'raising awareness'. It was also noted that such imagery is less 'intrusive' than loud noise.

Themes in Neutral Comments

Respondents noted that there is a 'variety of promotional literature' given out and questioned the 'criteria' for judging it. It was noted that 'a challenge lies in

establishing a fair and transparent process for determining what constitutes “graphic” content.

Themes in Very Negative / Negative responses

Upsetting

Those whose experience of graphic imagery was negative commented with regard to anti-abortion imagery that it is ‘disturbing’, ‘distressing’ ‘distasteful’, ‘triggering’, ‘upsetting’, ‘insensitive to those who have lost a child’, ‘grotesque’, ‘aggressively graphic and shocking’ ‘inappropriate in a shopping area’ and ‘offensive’.

Children

Respondents commented that this type of imagery ‘should be age appropriate’, that it is ‘inappropriate when children are present’ and ‘difficult for parents to explain’. It was further stated that some of the graphic abortion imagery would be ‘subject to age restrictions when in film and TV’ and that they ‘would be rated 18 in a movie’.

Tourists / Visitors

The impact of graphic imagery on tourists to Belfast was noted as ‘horrendous’, ‘uninviting’ ‘deeply embarrassing’ and ‘creating an unwelcome backdrop to their visit’.

Questions relating to the Permit Scheme

Q11: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council should introduce a permit scheme around the use of amplification devices in the city centre?

This question had a total of 3,443 responses (128 skipped)

	Percentage	Number
Definitely agree	31.9	1099
Somewhat agree	9.6	331
Neither agree nor disagree	3.1	108
Somewhat disagree	5.3	181
Definitely disagree	50.1	1724

Q12: Please provide any additional comments in the space below.

This question had a total of 1,894 text responses (1,677 skipped).

Themes in Responses – Definitely Disagree / Somewhat Disagree

Council Process / Fee

Those who disagreed with the introduction of a permit system commented that it may lead to ‘unintended consequences’ such as ‘subjectivity’ in the issuance of permits and a ‘financial barrier’ for those who do not have the means to pay for a permit, which could ‘silence important voices in the public sphere’. Concern was expressed that such a system could negatively impact the arts community if it was overly complicated or expensive.

Freedom of Expression

The theme of freedom of expression was once again apparent in the responses to this question. Respondents commented that the requirement of a permit ‘conflicts with the rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression (Articles 10 and 11 of the Human Rights Act), and the right to religious liberties (affirmed in the Belfast Agreement)’, ‘puts barriers up to free speech in the city’ and would ‘be seen as censorship by the back door’.

Administration and Enforcement

The process of how a permit system would be managed and administered was described as ‘cumbersome regulations’ that would ‘divert public resource’, ‘costing the public purse in administration costs’. Queries were raised about the criteria for the issuance of permits, how this ‘would be open to political influence and abuse’ and that it would be ‘very hard to police and make fair decisions on who does and who does not receive a permit.’

Ban Amplification

Respondents commented that instead of introducing a permit system, the Council should ‘ban amplification’ in the city centre.

Themes in Responses – Definitely Agree / Somewhat agree

Ban Amplification

Those who were in agreement with a permit system for amplification commented (similarly to those who disagreed with the permit system) that an overall ban on amplification ‘full stop’ would be preferable for ‘acoustic buskers only please’, stating that there should be ‘no amplification’ as ‘there is no requirement for it’, particularly

for small groups but instead allow amplification where it is 'necessary' for larger crowds.

Manage Amplification

Respondents commented that a permit system would help to 'limit' the 'out of control volume' and could specify a 'maximum level of amplification'.

Support for Buskers

It was noted that any fee for buskers should be 'reasonable' or 'low' so as not to 'deter' or 'discourage' them and concern was expressed that if a permit is 'overly complicated or expensive' to obtain, Belfast could lose a 'fantastic array' of buskers.

Comments on Process

Queries were raised about the process for rescinding a permit if its conditions were broken. Respondents also noted that such a system 'will be difficult to police' and queried 'how well will it be monitored?'

Q13: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council should introduce a permit scheme around the display of promotional literature or other information in the city centre (including the display of graphic imagery)?

This question had a total of 3,526 responses (45 skipped)

	Percentage	Number
Definitely agree	29.7	1047
Somewhat agree	9.0	318
Neither agree nor disagree	6.2	219
Somewhat disagree	6.1	215
Definitely disagree	49.0	1727

Q14: Please provide any additional comments in the space below.

This question had a total of 1,612 text responses (1959 skipped).

Themes in Responses – Definitely Disagree / Somewhat Disagree

The majority of written comments were from those who disagreed with the introduction of a permit system for the display of promotional literature or other information, including graphic imagery.

Censorship

Respondents commented that the Council should not act as a 'censor of content' and that any regulations should be 'clear, transparent and applied equally to prevent any form of discrimination or bias'. Respondents raised concerns about the Council 'shutting down' those with whom they disagree and noted that this is an 'overreach of authority', 'draconian', 'an attempt at censorship', 'partisan' and an 'infringement of freedom of speech and civil liberties'. It was also suggested that such a system would 'introduce a level of bureaucracy that would hinder those who want to preach in the city centre'.

Permit Hours

It was noted that a permit would not be granted before 11am, which would put a restriction on handing out literature to commuters coming into work. It was noted that there is a 'long standing tradition' of handing out literature in the city centre.

Subjective

In determining what constitutes 'graphic content', it was noted that decisions made by the Council must be 'guided by clear, objective criteria' and that this subject is generally 'subjective'. Respondents queried the 'unclear' term of 'graphic' and asked how that will be determined or defined by the Council.

Barrier

Concern was expressed that a permit system would 'slow down solidarity actions for international events' and would create 'barriers' for 'grassroots initiatives and community -led projects.'

Existing Legislation

Respondents suggested that existing legislation around harassment and anti-social behaviour may be 'sufficient' to deal with issues that may arise.

Themes in Responses – Definitely Agree / Somewhat Agree

Regulate Content

Respondents in favour of a permit commented that this would be a 'positive step' to ensure that content displayed in public places would be 'appropriate and sensitive to the diverse audience' in the city centre (including children) but queried how it would be enforced. It was noted that 'images that are designed to shock, upset or

discriminate are not acceptable' and that having regulation around what can be displayed will 'create much more of a welcoming environment' in the city centre.

Children

Concern was expressed for certain images relating to abortion that children may see in the city centre. It was stated that it is 'not appropriate' for children to see those images and that 'subjecting them to images like that shouldn't be permitted'.

Respondents noted that 'forcing graphic imagery' on people is 'completely unacceptable' and that the people sharing images 'can't control the age of the people who will see them.'

It should be noted that these comments seemed to assume that the content of graphic imagery would be regulated by the Council, but this is not the intention.

Q15: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the standard conditions listed within the proposed byelaws? (Answers range from definitely agree to definitely disagree)

PERMIT IS NOT TRANSFERABLE	Number
Definitely agree	1521
Somewhat agree	191
Neither agree nor disagree	226
Somewhat disagree	284
Definitely disagree	1245

PERMIT IS VALID FOR 1 YEAR	Number
Definitely agree	1614
Somewhat agree	294
Neither agree nor disagree	353
Somewhat disagree	465
Definitely disagree	697

PERMIT NOT NORMALLY GRANTED FOR 11PM – 11AM	Number
Definitely agree	1272
Somewhat agree	209
Neither agree nor disagree	342
Somewhat disagree	390

Definitely disagree	1261
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PERMIT APPLIES TO SPECIFIC LOCATION AND DURATION	Number
Definitely agree	1557
Somewhat agree	226
Neither agree nor disagree	233
Somewhat disagree	392
Definitely disagree	1063

PERMIT HOLDER CAN PERFORM FOR MAX 2 HOURS IN SPECIFIC LOCATION	Number
Definitely agree	1599
Somewhat agree	300
Neither agree nor disagree	284
Somewhat disagree	457
Definitely disagree	839

PERMIT HOLDER CAN PERFORM FOR MAX 1 HOUR IN PRIMARY RETAIL CORE	Number
Definitely agree	1658
Somewhat agree	290
Neither agree nor disagree	282
Somewhat disagree	345
Definitely disagree	902

MAX 1 PERFORMANCE TIME INCLUDES SETTING & PACKING UP	Number
Definitely agree	1851
Somewhat agree	359
Neither agree nor disagree	284
Somewhat disagree	207
Definitely disagree	785

PERMIT HOLDER MUST RELOCATE TO A DIFFERENT PLACE NOT WITHIN 100M OF PREVIOUS LOCATION	Number
Definitely agree	1717
Somewhat agree	296
Neither agree nor disagree	347
Somewhat disagree	336
Definitely disagree	781

Q16: Please provide any additional comments in the space below.

This question had a total of 1,531 text responses (2040 skipped)

The responses to this question were extremely broad ranging, given the various proposed permit conditions in the draft byelaws.

No Need

A general theme that emerged was that there should be ‘no need’ for a permit and that this was ‘authoritarian’, ‘bureaucratic’ and would ‘impinge on human rights and freedom of expression’.

Disadvantage Musicians

Respondents commented that the time limits would ‘overwhelmingly disadvantage musicians’, be ‘burdensome’ and that the time spent setting up and packing up for buskers should be excluded. It was further noted that ‘it’s important to foster an environment where artists are given ample time to prepare and offer a high quality auditory experience’.

100 Metre Distance

Respondents commented that the distance of 100m is ‘too short’, ‘still within earshot of amplifier’ and may cause ‘continued disturbance to a particular area’.

Enforcement

The issue of ‘enforcement’ was highlighted in the responses to this question. Respondents stated that it will be ‘impractical to monitor’, ‘difficult to enforce’ and that if the permit system ‘isn’t going to or can’t be policed, it’s pointless trying to do it at all’.

Permit Application

Several respondents made the point that if the permit applies to a person, rather than an event, this would 'add to the difficulty of simply being able to preach the gospel' and 'would discriminate against certain groups'.

Cost

Cost was mentioned in terms of the permit system being 'costly', 'an unnecessary drain on public expenditure' and a question of 'who would pay for such policing?'.

Q17: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council may designate areas in which specific types of instruments or amplification is prohibited?

	Percentage	Number
Definitely agree	31.7	1115
Somewhat agree	9.8	344
Neither agree nor disagree	6.2	218
Somewhat disagree	5.4	189
Definitely disagree	46.9	1646

Q18: Please provide any additional comments in the space below.

This question had a total of 1,137 text responses (2434 skipped)

Specific Places

Respondents who were in favour of a prohibition in designated areas suggested specific places, such as outside City Hall, Royal Avenue, the 'main pedestrian shopping and entertainment areas', 'near religious buildings, medical buildings or residential buildings' and 'outside of city centre offices.'

Encourage Residential Dwellers

It was stated that restricting the use of amplification in residential areas 'should go some way to encouraging people to dwell in the city centre'.

Ban Amplification

The theme of banning amplification emerged in the responses to this question with respondents saying that 'safe and quiet spaces are needed', there should be a

‘blanket ban on all amplification devices’, that amplification should be ‘prohibited entirely’ and ‘should be made illegal’.

Freedom of Expression and Right to Protest

Those not in favour of such a prohibition commented that it is ‘vital that these restrictions do not impinge upon the right to protest’, that ‘this is a dangerous path to be going down’ and that any such designation would ‘conflict with the rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression’. Respondents also commented that this is ‘overreach’ by the Council and it is ‘not the Council’s place to restrict freedom of expression’.

Equality Screening

Q19: Please provide any comments in relation to equality of opportunity or good relations issues that you feel should be taken into account by the council in relation to the proposed byelaws.

This question had a total of 1,303 text responses (2268 skipped)

Breach of Good Friday Agreement

A pro forma (83 submissions) recurring comment in response to this question was that the draft byelaws ‘breach the Good Friday Agreement, which states, ‘*The parties affirm their commitment to the mutual respect, the civil rights and the religious liberties of everyone in the community ...the parties affirm in particular ...the right to freedom and expression of religion*’ and that the proposals could ‘increase tensions between different groups if it appears the Council is discriminating between them by granting permits to one group but not another’. As part of this same comment, it was suggested that ‘the Council could then be responsible for damaging good relations across the city’ and a ‘full EQIA’ was requested.

Freedom of Expression

The right to freedom of expression was mentioned in response to this question with concerns being raised that ‘this is an attempt to circumvent the presumption of basic human rights’ and the Council’s potential ‘censorship’.

LGBT+ Community

Regarding the LGBTQ+ community, respondents commented that some of the preaching was 'homophobic', constituted 'hate speech' and that that community is 'constantly under attack' by 'these hate preachers.' It was noted that 'homophobia and transphobia has been going unchecked for far too long', that the LGBTQ+ community 'should not be forced to listen to hateful and insulting content' and that this group are 'often the targets of harassment and bigotry broadcast over loudspeakers'.

Disability

Disability was mentioned by respondents in the context of how noise levels in the city centre 'discourage or even prohibit' the use of it by those with 'auditory sensitivity or visual impairment'. It was noted that the 'current use of speakers and their high volumes directly affects those with sensory and auditory processing issues and leads them to feelings of anxiety and confusion'.

Respondents who declared themselves to be autistic or who declared that they have dependants on the autistic spectrum commented that amplification 'creates an uncomfortable environment' and that 'the city centre should be an accessible and reasonably predictable environment'. It was also commented that 'the city needs to view this as a 'disability rights / access issue' as the city centre has become a 'hostile environment' for those who are autistic or have sensory processing issues.

It was noted that the byelaws could have a 'positive impact' and 'would make the streets easier to navigate for people who use mobility devices', if permits favoured applications in an area with wider pavements.

Disproportionate Effect

A further theme that emerged from this question was the suggestion that these byelaws would have a disproportionate effect on evangelical Christians and would constitute 'religious discrimination'. Respondents commented that this is 'an attempt to stifle the religious expression of the Evangelical Protestant community', that 'this proposal indicates preachers are the target' and that 'freedom to preach the gospel with liberty will be denied'. It was noted that 'it is crucial for the council to

acknowledge and address any bias or discriminatory attitudes towards certain forms of expression, particularly open-air preaching’.

Equality Screening

There was some criticism of the draft Equality Screening in terms of its use of ‘anecdotal evidence’, however, the data provided by the consultation responses will be considered when finalising the byelaws.

7.3 Responses to Consultation Monitoring Questions: breakdown by type of respondent (individual or group), gender, community background, national identity, age, geographical location and relationship to Belfast

Q20: Are you responding as an individual (member of the public) or on behalf of a group or organisation?

- Individual (member of the public): 98.3%, 3463
- On behalf of a group or organisation: 1.7%, 59

Q21 (if responding on behalf of a group): What is the name of your organisation or group?

This question had 55 text responses.

Q22: We would like your permission to disclose your organisation name, your written comments, and to reference your organisation name in our analysis and feedback reports. Please indicate your preference for what we do with your organisation name.

- I agree you can share and publish my organisation name and any written comments submitted on behalf of my organisation (43.6%, 24 organisations)
- I agree you can publish my organisation name as responding to the consultation but keep our written comments anonymous (20%, 11 organisations)
- Do not share or publish my organisation name (36.4%, 20 organisations)

Q23: Please indicate which sort of group you are representing:

Type of Group	Number
Church or faith based group	30
Charity	17
Community or voluntary group	13
Other (please specify)	8
Business	6
Public body	4
School	2
TOTAL	80

(The survey ended at this point if the response was on behalf of a group.)

Q21 (if responding as an individual): **About you, please tick all that apply:**

Connection to Belfast	Number
I live in Belfast	1718
I am a visitor to Belfast	1352
I work or study in Belfast	1190
I am a business owner in Belfast city centre	74
Total	4334

Q22: Demographic and monitoring questions

73.1% of respondents indicated that they were happy to answer a series of demographic and monitoring questions (26.9% declined to answer).

Q23: What is your age?

What age are you?	Number	%
Under 18	10	0.4
18-24	193	7.6
25-34	566	22.4
35-44	571	22.6
45-59	713	28.2
60+	479	18.9
Total	2532	100

Q24: What is your gender?

	Number	%
Male	1400	55.3
Female	1054	41.6
Prefer not to answer	38	1.5
Use another term	40	1.6
TOTAL	2532	100

Q25: Do you consider yourself to be trans or transgender?

Trans can be used as an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, nor does it sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a variety of terms e.g. transgender, transsexual, gender- queer (QC), gender- fluid, non-binary, crossdresser, genderless. The use of trans as an umbrella term may not be acceptable to all transgender people.

Transgender is someone who intends to transition, is transitioning or has transitioned from the gender they were assigned at birth.

- **Yes:** 49 (2.0%)
- **No:** 2364 (94.7%)
- **Prefer not to answer:** 84 (3.4%)

Q26. Community background of respondents

Please indicate your community background	% Total
Member of the Protestant community	41.2
Member of the Roman Catholic community	26.4
Neither	32.4
Total	100

Q27: Ethnic origin is not about nationality, place of birth or citizenship. It is about the group to which you perceive you belong. How would you describe your ethnic origin?

The overwhelming majority of respondents, 94.4%, were white, with 2.8% of respondents selecting the “prefer not to say” option. 1.2% of respondents indicated that they came from mixed or multiple ethnic groups.

Q28: Do you have a long-term illness, health issue or disability that limits your daily activities or work that you can do?

The majority of respondents (81.8%) stated that their day-to day activities were not limited by a disability or illness, with 13.8% of respondents saying yes and 4.4% of respondents preferring not to say.

Q29. If yes, how does this disability or illness affect you?

Disability or illness	Number
Mental health (e.g. depression, anxiety, bipolar, schizophrenia)	143
Physical disability (e.g. wheelchair-user, artificial lower limbs, walking aids, Musculo-skeletal difficulties)	127
Neurodiversity (e.g. autism, ADD/ADHD, dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia)	103
Prefer not to answer	51

Other	39
Hearing loss: deaf, hearing loss, tinnitus	35
Communication difficulties: speech difficulties, e.g. stammer, slurred speech	16
Learning disability	13
Sight loss: blind, partially sighted	12
TOTAL	539

Q30: Do you have dependants or caring responsibilities for family members or other persons?

- **Yes:** 33.8%
- **No:** 66.2%

Q31: If yes, who do you have caring responsibilities for?

- A child or children: 72.2%
- An elderly person or persons: 27.7%
- A person or persons with a disability: 21.6%

(The survey ended at this point for those responding as an individual).

8. Summary and Comment on Responses

The examination of the data as presented above reveals a number of trends:

- There was a very high level of public engagement with the online survey and an extremely high response rate, not just to the statistical element of the survey but also in terms of written comments.
- This engagement came from a wide range of individuals in terms of age range, gender, community background and disability status, all of whom felt that the draft byelaws could potentially impact them in their leisure time, work time or both.
- Respondents displayed a strength of feeling in written comments for the most part in either positive or negative terms; there was little feedback from respondents who were 'neutral' on the subject.

- In addition to the public comments, there was a high level of engagement from a broad range of groups and organisations who feel vested in the draft byelaws.
- Respondents emphasised a general expression of support of the human rights that are protected under the ECHR.
- Respondents raised specific queries about how the byelaws may operate in practice.

8.1 Summary of Monitoring Data

The consultation monitoring data shows that the majority of respondents were men of White ethnic origin. The majority declared that they came from a Protestant background and were aged 45-59.

9. Conclusions

- This was a wide-ranging consultation for a full 14-week period that generated a very high level of engagement.
- Based on feedback received from groups and individuals, it is clear that further decisions will have to be taken on how to finalise the draft byelaws.
- Further engagement may be required with the CAJ and the Trade Unions for potentially creating an exemption in the byelaws for static protests.

Appendix 1: Draft byelaws



BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

**BYE-LAWS FOR THE GOOD GOVERNANCE OF BELFAST CITY CENTRE
AND FOR THE PREVENTION AND SUPPRESSION OF NUISANCES IN BELFAST CITY
CENTRE**

Made by Belfast City Council :

**Confirmed by Department for
Communities :**

In operation on and from :

**BYE – LAWS
BELFAST CITY COUNCIL
FOR THE GOOD GOVERNANCE OF BELFAST CITY CENTRE AND FOR THE
PREVENTION AND SUPPRESSION OF NUISANCES IN BELFAST CITY CENTRE**

Bye-Laws made the _____ by Belfast City Council pursuant to Section 90 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 for the good rule and government of its City Centre and the prevention and suppression of nuisances in its City Centre at a meeting of the Council held on _____

INTERPRETATION

1. In these Bye-Laws -

‘City Centre’ means the area delineated in [colour tbc] in the map at Schedule One.

‘Council’ means Belfast City Council.

‘Permit’ means a Permit issued by the Council in accordance with these Bye-Laws.

‘Permit Holder’ means a person who holds a Permit issued pursuant to these Bye-Laws.

‘Primary Retail Core’ means the area delineated in [colour tbc] in the map at Schedule One of these Bye Laws.

‘Prohibited Place’ means an area [tbc] [within 100 metres of any place of public worship or public entertainment or other place of public assembly in which person or persons so assembled, after being requested to desist by an authorized Council officer or police officer.

‘Public Place’ means any area open to the public including any street, road, footpath, open space, park, cemetery, green space and amenity areas.

‘Permit’ means a Permit issued by the Council to carry out the activities in the City Centre which are described in these Bye Laws.

General Provisions

2. These Bye-Laws apply to the City Centre as shown in the map at Schedule One.

3. Notice of the effect of these Bye-Laws shall be given by signs placed in such positions as the Council may consider adequate to inform persons of their existence.
4. A person may not conduct or take part in any amplified performance (whether vocal or instrumental), dance, concert or other such performance in a public place in the City Centre (including the Primary Retail Core) without a valid Permit issued by the Council.
5. A person may not use amplification devices in a public place, whether as part of a performance or otherwise, in the Primary Retail Core without a Permit issued by the Council permitting the use of said device.
6. A person may not erect, place, maintain or otherwise be responsible for a stand, stall, or vehicle with promotional literature or information (whether connected to a business, charity, political or any other non-commercial purpose) in a public place in the Primary Retail Core without a Permit issued by the Council. This provision does not apply to those vehicles which are within the said area solely for the purposes of delivery to or collecting goods from business premises.

Application Requirements

7. An application for a Permit must be accompanied by payment of the relevant fee and on the production of evidence of identity and address together with two recent photographs of the applicant.
8. The cost of a Permit will be [tbc].

Permit Conditions

9. The Permit will be subject to such conditions as the Council believes necessary and proportionate.
10. Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (9), the following standard conditions may be specified in a Permit issued by the Council to carry out the activities in the City Centre which are described in these Bye Laws —

- (a) Permits may only be used by the performer named on the permit, and shall not be used by, or transferred to, any other person.
 - (b) A Permit granted by the Council will be valid for one year from date of issue or such lesser period as may be considered appropriate by the Council.
 - (c) A Permit shall not normally be granted for activity between the hours of 11pm and 11am.
 - (d) A Permit will only allow the permitted activity in a specific location for a maximum of TWO hours. After this period the person must re-locate to a different place not within 100 metres of his/her previous location and may not return within 100 metres of any previous location until the following day.
 - (e) A Permit holder is only permitted to perform in the Primary Retail Core for a maximum period of ONE hour. After this period they must relocate to a different place not within 100 metres of their previous location and may not return within 100 metres of any previous location until the following day.
- 11.** The maximum performance periods set out in these Bye Laws shall include any time spent setting up and packing up.
- 12.** The Council may designate areas in which specific types of instruments or amplification is prohibited.
- 13.** A Permit Holder will comply with a request from an authorised officer to cease their activity or move on where in the opinion of the authorised officer the activity is endangering public safety or causing an obstruction.

Behaviour and Conduct of Permit Holders

- 14.** A Permit Holder must not obstruct the public's access to and egress from any premises or interfere with the free and safe movement of pedestrians.
- 15.** A Permit Holder must comply with the standard conditions of Permit and any Code of Conduct issued by the Council, which may be amended and reissued throughout the period of the Permit.

- 16.** The Permit Holder must also comply with any additional special conditions attached to their Permit.

Exemptions

- 17.** These Bye-Laws shall not apply to the following activities:

- (a) Those activities taking place in a public place which are organised by the Council;
- (b) Those activities taking place in a public place with the consent of Department of Infrastructure or the relevant landowner;
- (c) Any procession which has been authorised by the Parades Commission;
- (d) A cash collection in a public place which has been authorised by PSNI pursuant to The Charities Act (NI) 2008.
- (e) An official picket pursuant to Article 98 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (NI) Order 1995

Power to remove equipment, stalls, stand, vehicles etc.

- 18.** Where the Council is unable to identify and/or contact the owner or person responsible for an unattended equipment, stall, stand or vehicle after conducting reasonable enquiries, it may cause the said equipment, stall, stand or vehicle to be so removed.
- 19.** Where the Council has exercised its powers under Paragraph 18 it may recover from the owner and/or the person responsible for the said stall, stand or vehicle the costs reasonably incurred by the Council in removing and storing same.
- 20.** Any charges incurred by the Council in removing and storing the stall shall be payable by the owner before the return of the stall, stand or vehicle.
- 21.** Where it is not possible to contact the owner, the Council may dispose of the item after 28 days from the date of seizure.

- 22.** The provisions of Paragraph 18-21 are without prejudice to the power of the Council to take other enforcement action for any breach of the conditions of Permit arising from the failure to remove the item.

Revocation, Refusals and Appeals

- 23.** The Council may vary or revoke a permit where, in its opinion, a Permit Holder fails to comply with a condition of their Permit or a Code of Conduct issued pursuant to the provisions of this Bye Law.
- 24.** The Council may temporarily revoke a permit or restrict the area to which permits applies in order to facilitate the construction, development, maintenance or repair of a public place or part thereof or for other infrastructural work thereon or such work on adjoining private property or for other operational reasons.
- 25.** Where the Council refuses to grant a permit or revokes an existing permit the applicant may appeal that decision to [tbc] within 14 days of the decision.
- 26.** Where the Council has granted a permit with special conditions imposed upon the applicant, the applicant may appeal such special conditions to the Magistrates Court within 14 days of the granting of the permit.

Offences

- 27.** Any person who contravenes any of these Bye-Laws shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £500.
- 28.** A person who obstructs or impedes or refuses to comply with a request of an authorised person acting in the exercise of the functions conferred on an authorised officer shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £500.
- 29.** Where an authorised officer is of the opinion that a person is committing or has committed an offence under either of the two preceding bye-laws the authorised person may demand the name and address of such a person and if that demand is refused or the person gives a name and address which is false

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The foregoing Bye-Laws are hereby confirmed by the Department of Communities for Northern Ireland this day of 2023.

[job title]

Appendix 2: Copy of CAJ submission

Appendix 3 - Summary of written submissions

Written submissions were received from the following organisations:

- Belfast & District Trades Union Council
- The Committee on the Administration of Justice
- HERe NI
- Free Presbyterian Church
- Northern Ireland Committee – Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- NIPSA
- UNISON NI
- Rainbow Project
- Socialist Party
- Traditional Unionist Voice
- WRDA
- A joint response from People Before Profit on behalf of a range of political parties, activist groups, art collectives, and other organisations.

An overriding theme amongst written submissions is the importance that is attached to the (qualified) human rights afforded by the European Convention on Human Rights; in particular Article 10 relating to freedom of expression and Article 11 relating to freedom of assembly and association. In the context of the draft byelaws, these rights apply most frequently to open air preaching, street performances and static (sometimes spontaneous) protests.

Belfast & District Trades Union Council summary

- Belfast Trades Council would contend that this bye-law approach is over the top and has, intentionally or otherwise, spread the net far too widely and traps others who should not be caught up in its over-extensive scope.
- How would a union, community group or a number of solidarity campaigners, as opposed to one individual be considered as being in compliance with the proposed bye-law?
- Lacks clarity on what impact this bye-law would have on acts of solidarity in respect of protests of industrial action or how distribution of leaflets, fact sheets etc. by a trade union would be treated, or how amplification devices would be dealt with.
- These bye-laws have the potential to penalise citizens for no legitimate purpose and curtail or restrict legitimate activities on behalf of members, workers and the wider community.

- Setting an absolute restriction of two hours in each and every occasion takes no account whatsoever of the varied nature of some of the events which occur in the city. Such an imposition is petty, nonsensical and more than likely unenforceable.
- Belfast Trades Council is concerned that the Equality Screening for this public consultation has a flawed understanding of “political opinion” and this should be revisited and rectified before any further action is taken.

CAJ Summary

- The proposals engage human rights protected under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) relating, in particular, to freedom of assembly (Article 11) and expression (Article 10). ECHR rights are directly legally binding on the Council by virtue of the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA).
- CAJ has concerns that the proposed bye-laws will conflict with the ECHR and related human rights standards. In particular, the bye-laws as presented would risk creating an unprecedented *de facto* ‘authorisation’ regime for any static protest in the designated city centre retail area using any amplification device, and constitute a *de facto* ban, on pain of a fine, on such spontaneous protests. Permits would also limit the scope for protests in the precise area of the City Centre, where the right to protest is most frequently exercised.
- The relevant tests (legal certainty, legitimate aim, proportionality) that would need to be met for interference in ECHR rights to be considered justified and hence lawful.
- No permitted *legitimate aim* is expressly cited as the lawful basis for restrictions.
- The ‘standard conditions’ for permits would constitute a disproportionate restriction on the right to protest (with a loudhailer etc).
- If a particular concern is that some of the expression by preachers or others has included homophobic or other hate expression, the Council may wish to consider alternative interventions eg monitoring for breaches of the criminal law on stirring up hatred on grounds of sexual orientation that can be reported to the PSNI or public awareness campaigns and messaging tackling homophobia.
- Concern expressed that the proposed bylaws as they stand would constitute an unjustifiable restriction on rights to free assembly and expression for the reasons set out above. Should they be implemented, the Council is likely to face legal challenge on attempts to place restrictions on protected expressive activity, and in particular that relating to protest, that could be captured by the bye-laws

HERe NI response summary

- HERe NI is a women focused organisation within the NI LGBTQIA+ sector.
- Primarily concerned about anti-LGBTQIA+ messaging and anti-choice imagery within the primary retail district.
- Endorse the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) suggestion that the council should take further action to enhance the monitoring of street

preachers for breaches of the criminal law on stirring up hatred on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity that can be reported to the PSNI.

- Concerns about the impact that the proposed bye-laws will have on protestors, including infringing on their right to freedom of assembly outlined within Article 11 of the ECHR.
- Suggested amendments:
 - That the council should add static protests to their exemption list (which already includes trade union pickets and parades).
 - That there should be no cost attached to the scheme and that sum of £500 fine for performing without a permit be considerably reduced.
 - Risk impinging on freedom of assembly and the right to protest.

Free Presbyterian Church Response summary

- Concerned that open-air preaching should be seen as a nuisance. It is a long established and noble practice.
- We believe that these draft laws fail to strike the balance between freedom of expression which is enshrined in the European Court of Human Rights as well as freedom of assembly and the alleged nuisance from people using amplification devices which the council professes to be seeking.
- The requirement to obtain a permit will be a hindrance to freedom of expression because there can be no spontaneous open-air.
- Byelaws place an extreme hindrance on the use of amplification equipment or the display of stands of literature outside venues which may be the focal point for a protest or demonstration.
- Note that it is proposed that any permit is to be issued to a person and not for an event. Therefore, if a preacher at an open-air who has the permit goes down sick or cannot come at the last minute nobody would have permission to stand in for him.
- Permit conditions: gives the Council too broad powers; 11am start time is too late; 11 am also applies to distribution of literature - why?; measures in clause 12 are not reasonable or proportionate.

NIC-ICTU summary

- Serious reservations about some of the proposals being made by Belfast City Council (BCC), and echoes concerns made in finer detail from our trade union affiliate NIPSA, and our long-time allies the Committee on the Administration of Justice.

NIPSA Summary

- Notes a failure to address solidarity activity around industrial action / protest
- Belfast City Council needs to make explicit how, in future, it will ensure that its bye-laws do not in any way hinder Trade Union work as regards industrial action and the solidarity/campaigning work of affiliated groups, Trades Councils, and other activist groups (political parties, pressure/solidarity

groups) who might want to support Trade Union sponsored protest/campaigns in and around the city centre area.

- The proposed time limit of 2 hours would have a serious effect on protest(s) and rallies that might be the pattern on a day of industrial/civil society action and could have a serious adverse impact on the right to campaign and organise around a campaign given that “political purpose” is specifically, listed.
- Belfast City Council needs to assess and publicise how it will explicitly exempt such solidarity work
- This exemption will also be necessary for the purposes of its own industrial relations framework – to make clear that a Trade Union protest outside it - in relation to a policy/facility managed by the Council would not be treated as a “nuisance” in the context of these bye-laws.
- Major concerns about their associated Equality Screening. For example, while claims to examine what is the likely impact “in relation to the S75 category of political opinion” it states that this is “not applicable”. This is a serious error as it fails to recognise Trade Unionism as a “political opinion” in the context of anti-discrimination law i.e. on the illegality of discriminating on the basis of “religious or similar philosophical belief and political opinion” and the fact that the latter “is not limited...to Northern Ireland constitutional politics.” This needs to be rectified before the next steps in relation to them are fully considered.
- Questions why existing noise pollution/laws relating to obstruction, hate speech etc., - already available to legally challenge the activities the bye-laws seek to target, are not being used.
- The permit’s “application requirements” treat applications at an individual level rather than organisational level. This therefore begs the question of how this could be operated in the context of Trade Union/solidarity “activity”?

UNISON Summary

- Concerned that as the byelaws are currently drafted they could disproportionately interfere with the rights of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly that are at the core of trade union activity.
- Endorses the CAJ submission.
- UNISON, other trade unions and wider civic society groups regularly hold or attend rallies, protests and demonstrations that may involve the use of amplification devices for public speaking at public places within the areas identified in these proposed bye-laws. We would request clarity from Belfast City Council as to whether the area outside the front gate entrance of Belfast City Hall is included within the ‘primary retail core’ identified in Map 2 of the bye-laws, within which not only performances but the use of amplification devices without a permit is to be prohibited.
- It is unclear from these provisions how far in advance of the use of the amplification device the person seeking the permit must apply for it. This

should be clarified, given that protests and demonstrations can often be organised at very short notice, such as in response to significant events.

- By making the bye-law specific to the individuals involved, rather than the event, the Council opens up the possibility that some individuals who use an amplification device to speak at an event in the City Centre may be liable for breach of the bye-laws whilst others are not.
- We are concerned that the maximum performance periods (two hours or one hour, depending upon the location), particularly if they are to include the periods spent on setting up and packing up, will significantly affect the ability of trade unions to hold such rallies and demonstrations in Belfast City Centre and disproportionately restrict the rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression.
- It is unclear from these provisions the grounds that will be used by the Council to determine whether to approve the granting of a permit in the first place. The route of appeal also appears to be unconfirmed at this point. As with the provisions above, this again raises issues regarding a lack of legal certainty for those seeking such permits.

The Rainbow Project Summary

- The Rainbow Project is a LGBTQIA+ organisation working across Northern Ireland.
- It welcomes Belfast City Council's attempt to address the harassment, graphic imagery and amplified hate expression that has become prevalent and incessant in Belfast city centre, particularly from anti-choice and anti-LGBTQIA+ individuals and organisations.
- It is clear from our engagements within our communities that amplified preaching from those who are seeking to target and cause discomfort to particularly LGBTQIA+ has a direct impact on the ability of LGBTQIA+ residents and visitors to fully engage in the city and freely access the public space in the city centre.
- It is important to recognize and tightly define the issues that these Bye-laws are attempting to address, to ensure that the net is not cast too wide so as to unacceptably restrict ECHR rights including the right to freedom of expression (Article 10) and assembly (Article 11), particularly with regards to engaging in static protests, including those which are organised with short notice or spontaneously in response to a local, national or international event.
- What constitutes a "nuisance" is an extremely subjective question, and clearly and tightly defining this is vital to the compliance of these Bye-laws with the tests set out above.
- Agreement expressed with the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) in their submission insofar as these Bye-laws place restrictions on the freedom of association and assembly that is not proportional and does not meet the legitimate aims as set out in the Convention.
- The Rainbow Project proposes that the Byelaw should be revised to become a negative procedure rather than a proactive obligation placed on all those hoping to use amplification devices in the city i.e. wherein Council was

empowered to issue warnings or notices to quit to those individuals/groups who are amplifying persistent and consistent hostility for members of the public accessing the city centre, namely by occupying public space and loudly spreading hostility multiple times a week and for long periods of time.

- We would encourage a tightening of the scope of the requirement to seek a permit, which could be achieved either by expanding the “exemptions” list included at point 17 of the Bye-laws to include static protests and demonstrations, and/or by tightly defining the ‘nuisance’ these Bye-laws are addressing as individuals/groups who create a hostile and unwelcoming environment through the amplification of anti-LGBTQIA+ messages and/or displaying what is referred to as ‘graphic imagery’ in the consultation.
- We would also support closer monitoring by Belfast City Council of preachers and those occupying City Centre on a persistent basis for breaches of the “stirring up hate” offence, and would support more concrete action by the PSNI when these offences are reported.

Socialist Party

- These bye-laws could also be used to restrict spontaneous action by workers for example in response to health and safety concerns in workplaces, solidarity initiatives such as those organised by Unite last year to support striking workers, or information stalls to encourage workers to join a union. In other words: anything which contravenes the main purpose of the city centre, making money for the retail and hospitality sector.
- In the view of the Socialist Party what is necessary to take on LGBTQ+ phobic speakers or anti-choice groups is not legal restrictions but mobilising against them - as we and others have done on many occasions. Our experience is that protests, particularly those which demonstrate the limited support for these ideas in society, have been what is key in pushing these organisations back.

Traditional Unionist Voice

- Noted the absence of a Code Of Conduct.
- Gross invasion of freedom of expression.
- Permits issued to individuals rather than organisations exposes the real intent of these laws to make it much more difficult and at times impossible for individuals to articulate their views in the public square.
- How can one pass a judgement on these proposed laws and the full impact of their chilling effect on freedom of expression when the issue of cost is left up in the air?
- The proposed hours of 11am – 11pm will prevent someone who wants to hand literature to commuters outside Great Victoria Street station from doing so. TUV sees this as an unwarranted assault on freedom of expression.
- Glaring flaws in the Equality Screening document in terms of ‘anecdotal evidence’ and how there have been zero attempts by the council to constructively engage with those impacted before using the sledgehammer of these draconian laws.

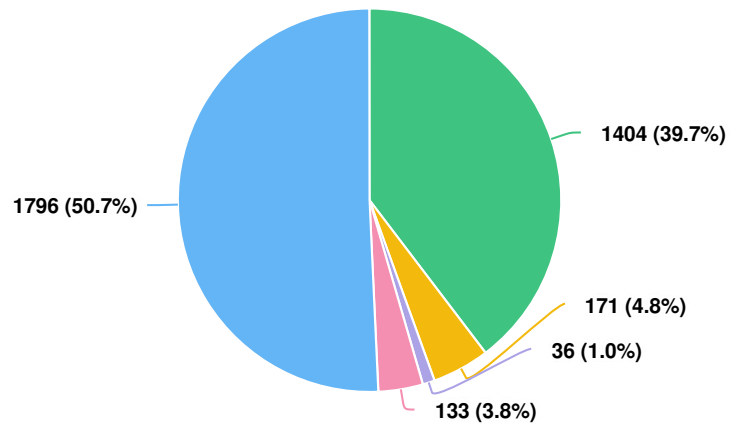
WRDA response summary

- Endorses the CAJ response
- The byelaws would disproportionately harm other city-centre activity and most particularly impact on social justice movements seeking to organise static rallies, most particularly where the rally is organised relatively spontaneously in response to an unexpected incident, atrocity or crisis.
- Concerns around the need to apply for a permit – cost and time to process
- Concerns within the women's movement about the criteria by which such a permit application would be assessed and that some groups would be disproportionately impacted (cited examples of previous interactions with BCC in relation to protests)
- Concerned with breaches of Article 10 and Article 11 ECHR; significant impact on the ability to organise protests because of the way that the by-laws focus on amplification equipment.
- Urges the Council to consider the methods by which permits are granted, and how permits could be granted with a swift turnaround (for example, within 24 hours) in the case of rallies or meetings in response to an emergent situation.

Joint response from People Before Profit on behalf of a range of political parties, activist groups, art collectives, and more

- Proposed byelaws would undoubtedly breach Articles 10 & 11 ECHR.
- Would restrict the basic ability to intervene on issues of the day.
- Imposition of fines and the requirement for payment and proof of address to access permits are exclusionary and potentially discriminatory measures.
- The byelaws represent restrictions on the activity of people in the city in relation to performance, protest, outreach etc.

Q1 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council should introduce rules and regulations around the use of amplifica...



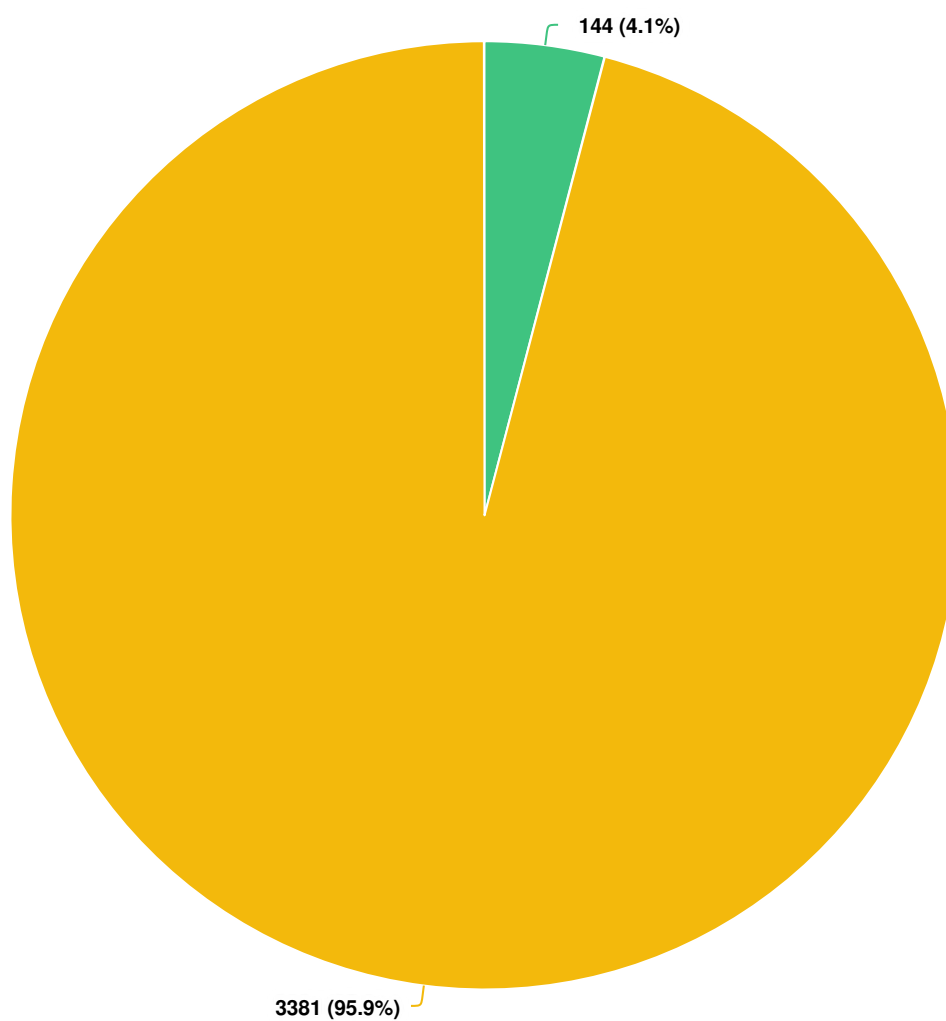
Question options

Definitely agree Somewhat agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Definitely disagree

Optional question (3540 response(s), 31 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

Q3 In the past 12 months have you used an amplification device in the city centre?



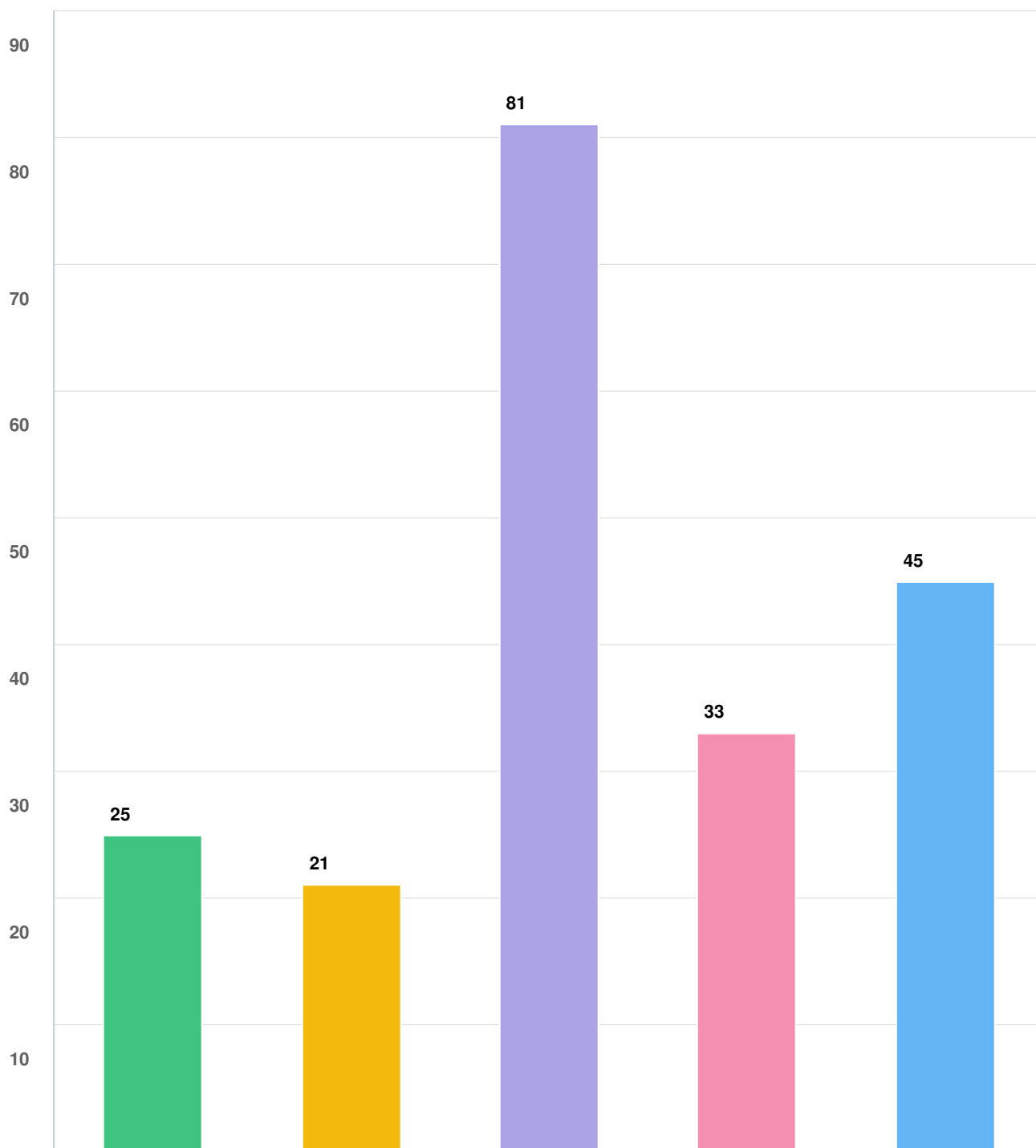
Question options

☒ Yes ☐ No

Optional question (3525 response(s), 46 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

Q4 If the answer is yes, please indicate the activity you were participating in from the list below (select all relevant activities).



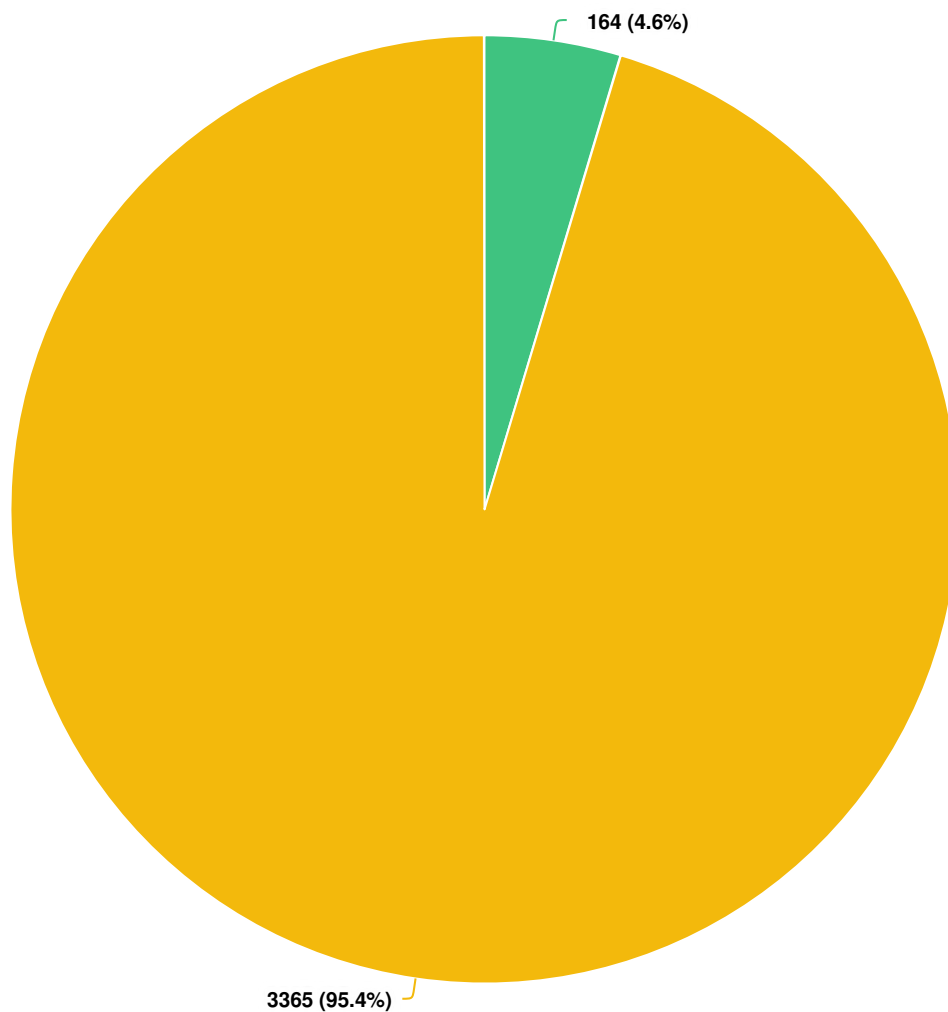
Question options

- Busking ● Street performance ● Street preaching ● Display of promotional literature or other information (including graphic imagery) ● Other (please specify)

Optional question (141 response(s), 3430 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

Q5 In the past 12 months have you displayed promotional literature or other information (including the display of graphic imagery) in the city centre?



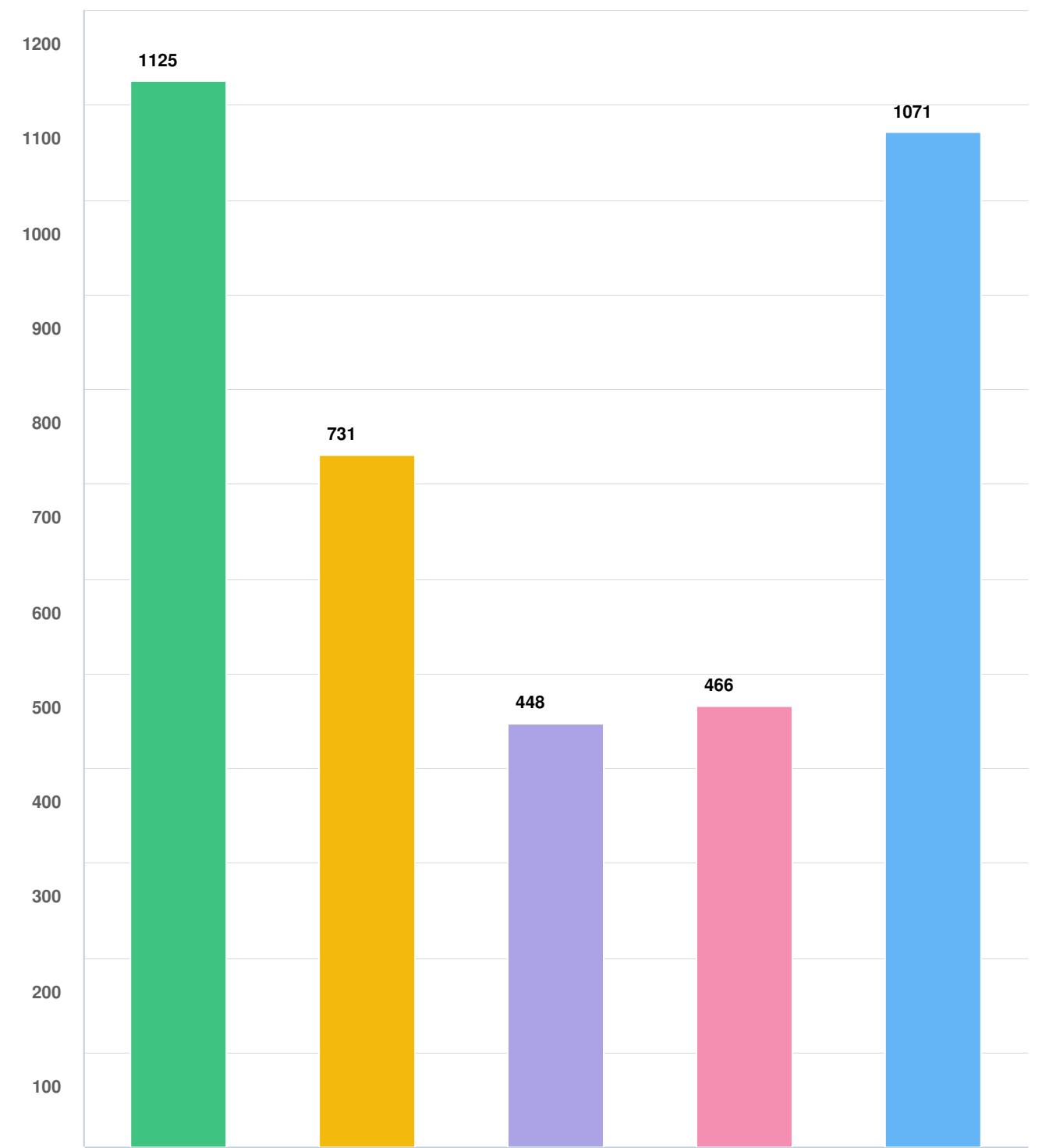
Question options

☒ Yes ☐ No

Optional question (3529 response(s), 42 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

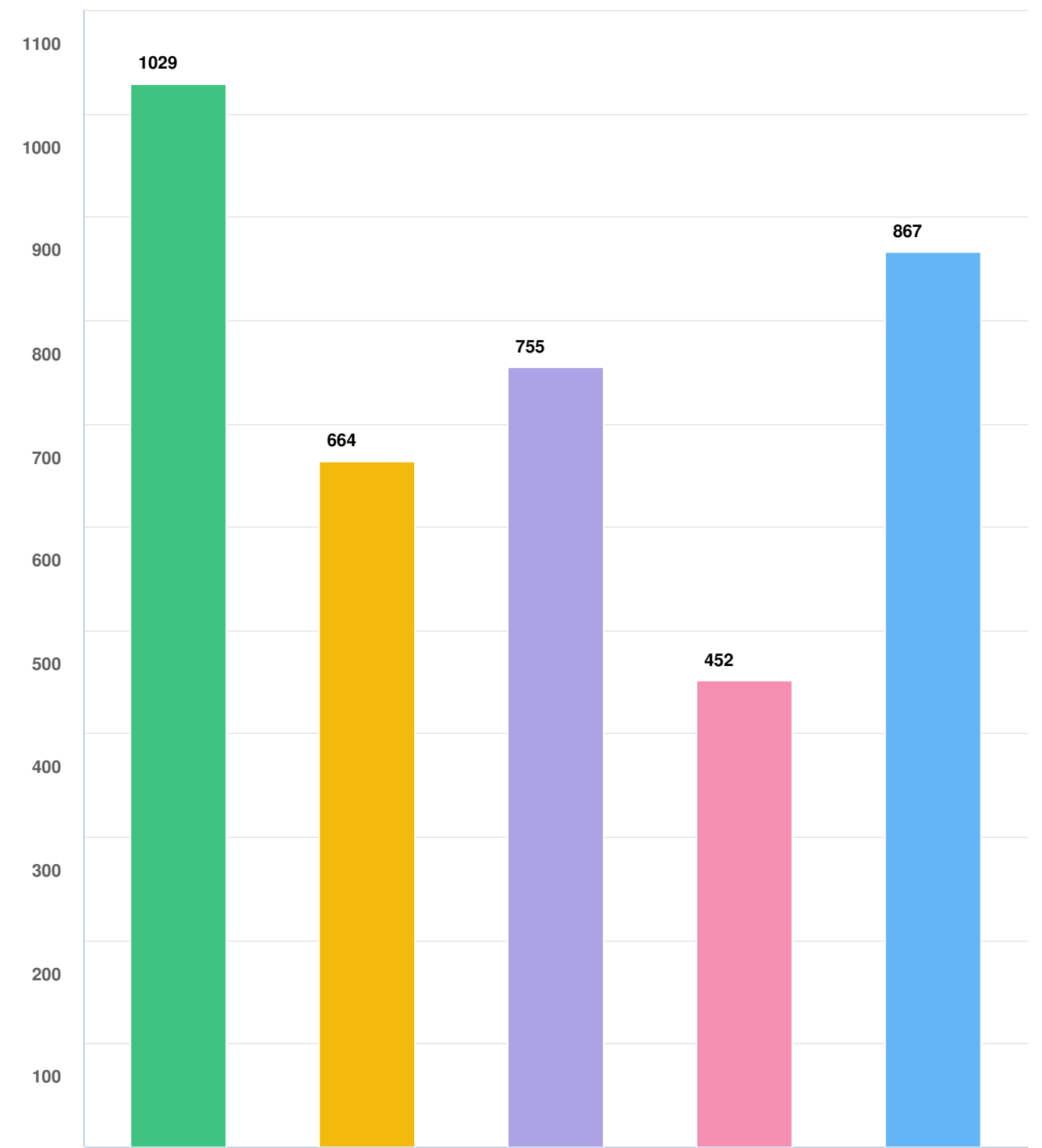
Q7 | What is your experience of the use of amplification devices in the city centre (i.e. speakers, public address system, loudspeaker, megaphone or any electronic device for the amplification of sound)? You may select more than one option.



Question options
Very positive Positive Neutral Negative Very negative

Optional question (3512 response(s), 59 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question

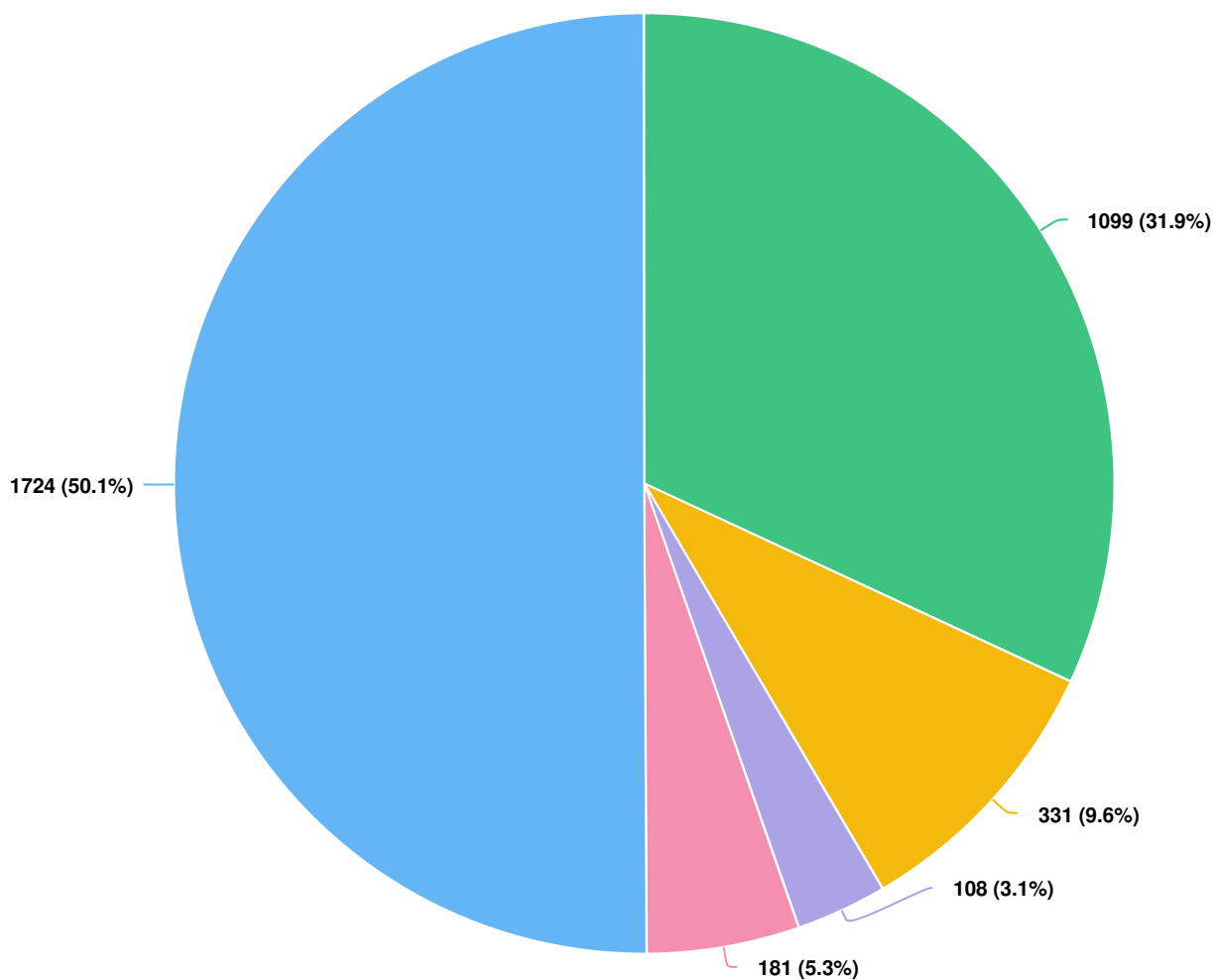
Q9 | What is your experience of the display of promotional literature or other information in the city centre (including the display of graphic imagery)? You may select more than one option.



Question options
Very positive Positive Neutral Negative Very negative

Optional question (3517 response(s), 54 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question

Q11 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council should introduce a permit scheme around the use of amplification devices in the city centre?



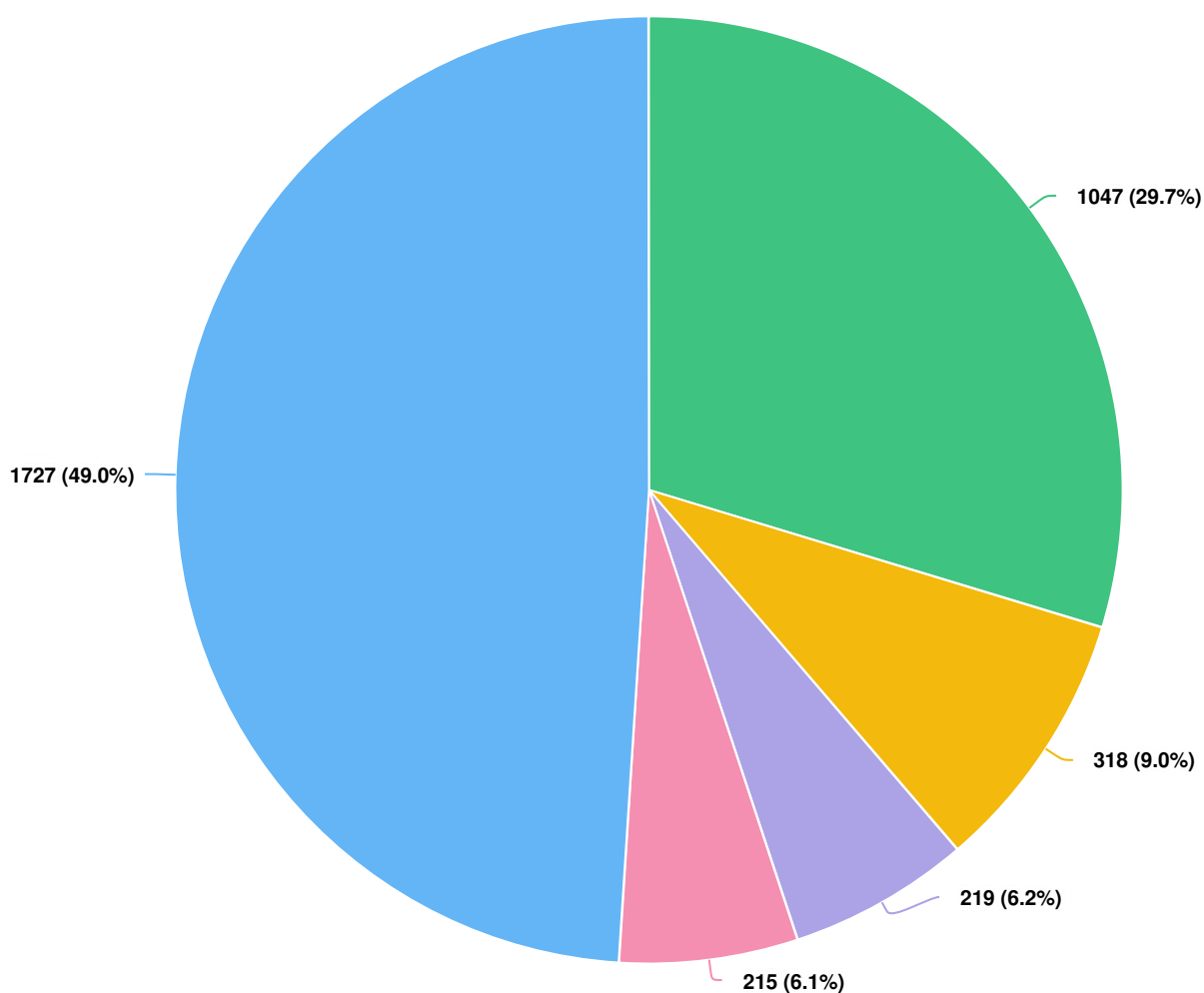
Question options

Definitely agree Somewhat agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Definitely disagree

Optional question (3443 response(s), 128 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

Q13 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council should introduce a permit scheme around the display of promotional literature or other information in the city centre (including the display of graphic imagery)?



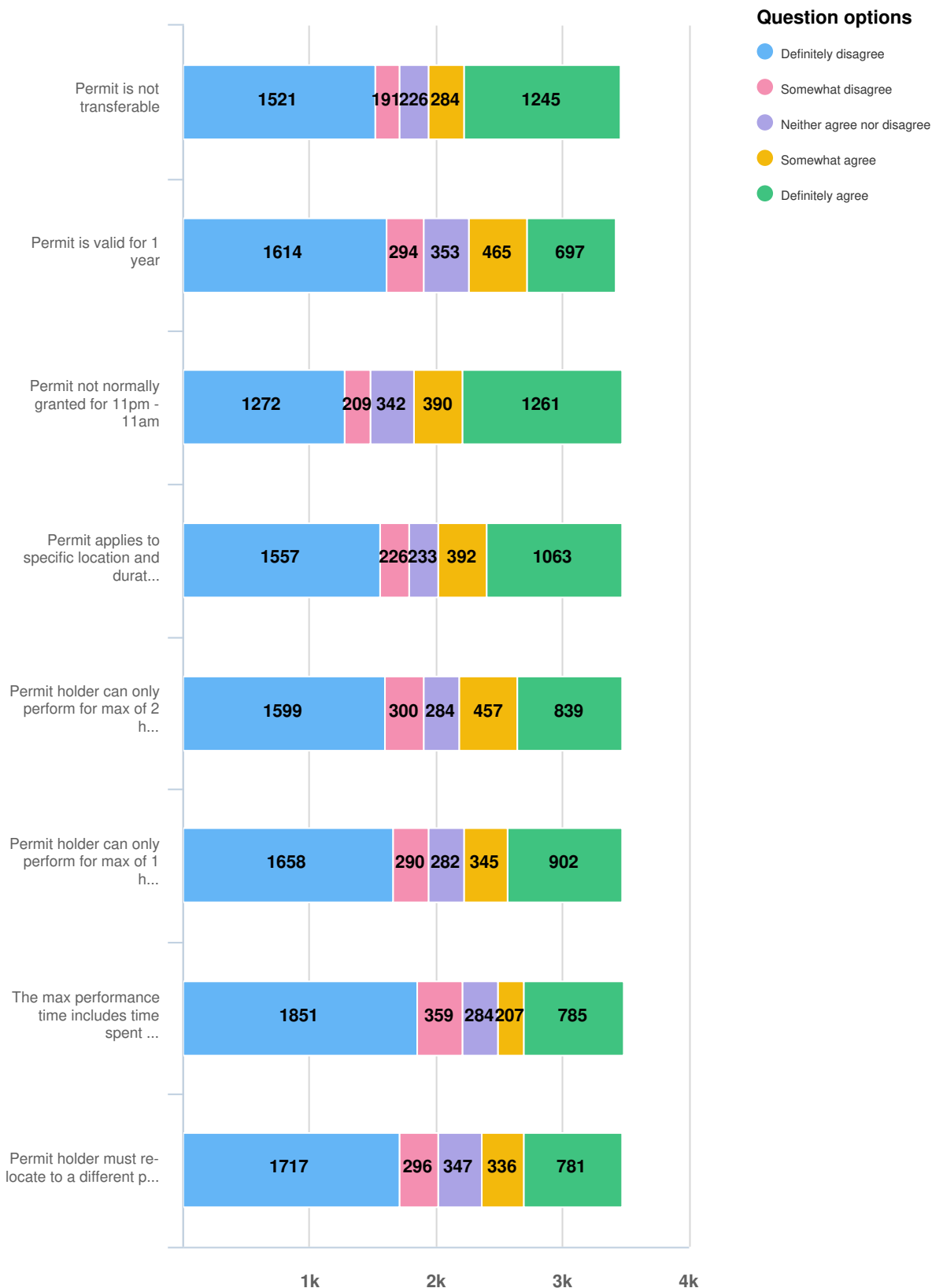
Question options

Definitely agree Somewhat agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Definitely disagree

Optional question (3526 response(s), 45 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

Q15 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the standard conditions listed within the proposed byelaws? (Answers range from definitely agree to definitely disagree)

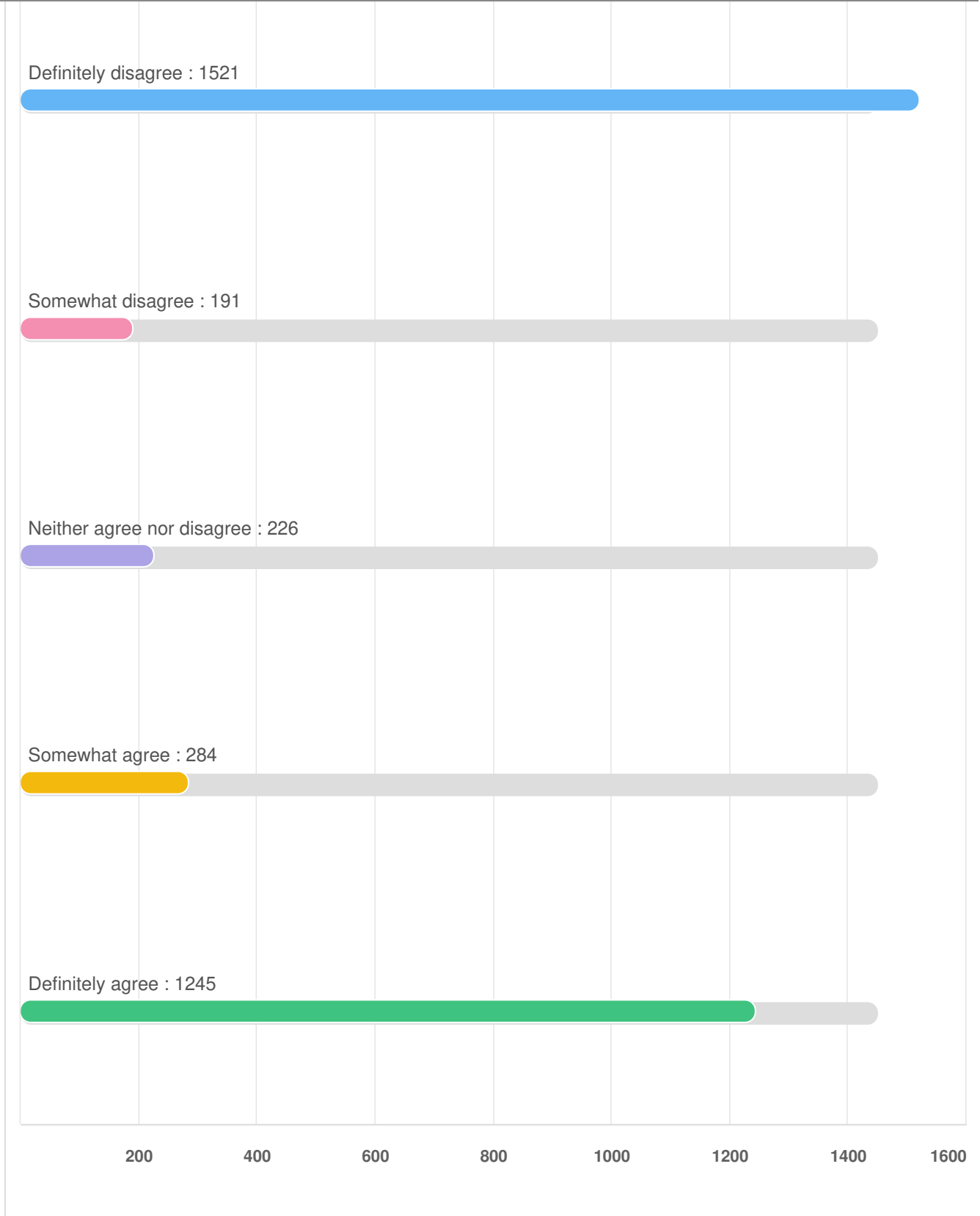


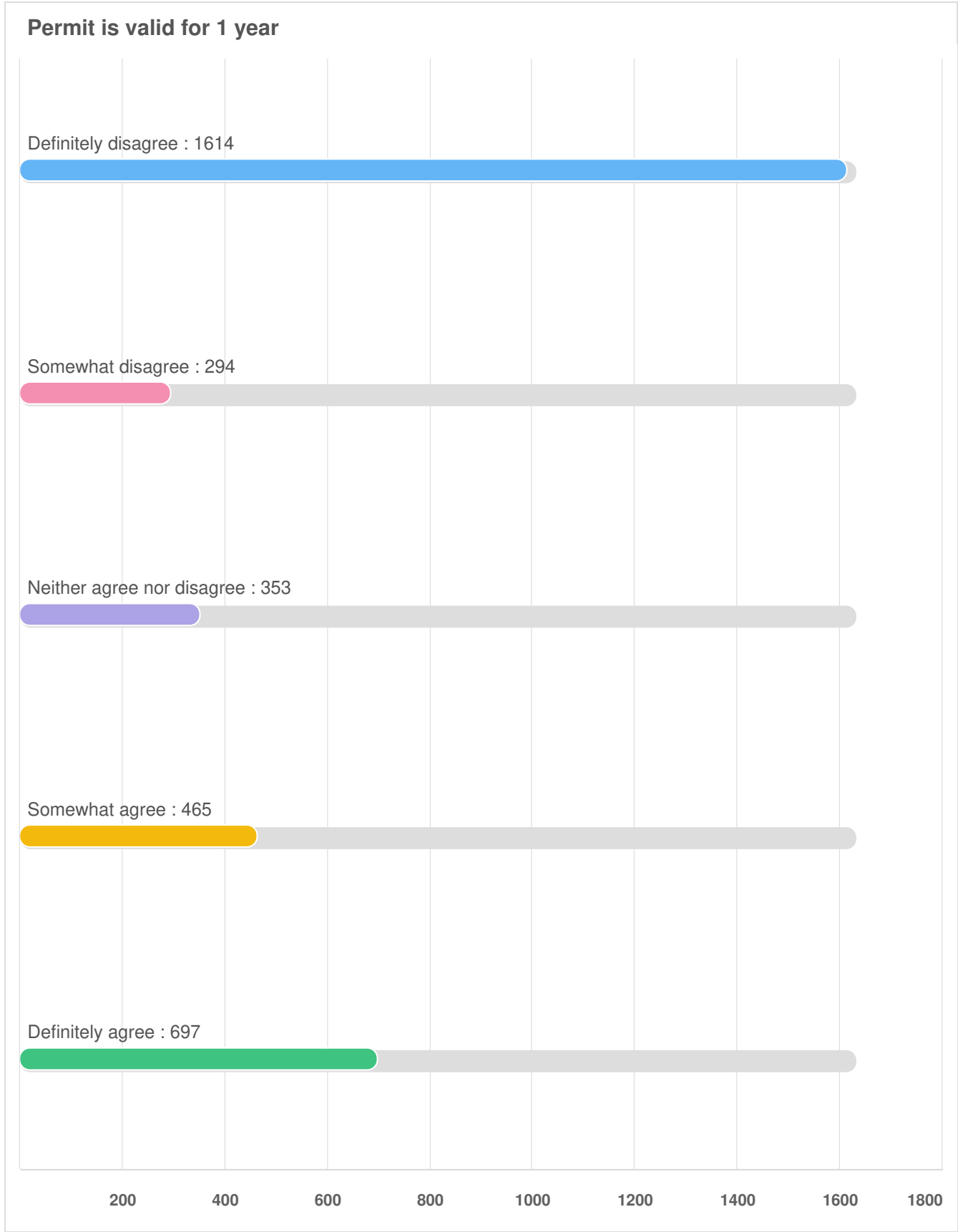
Optional question (3502 response(s), 69 skipped)

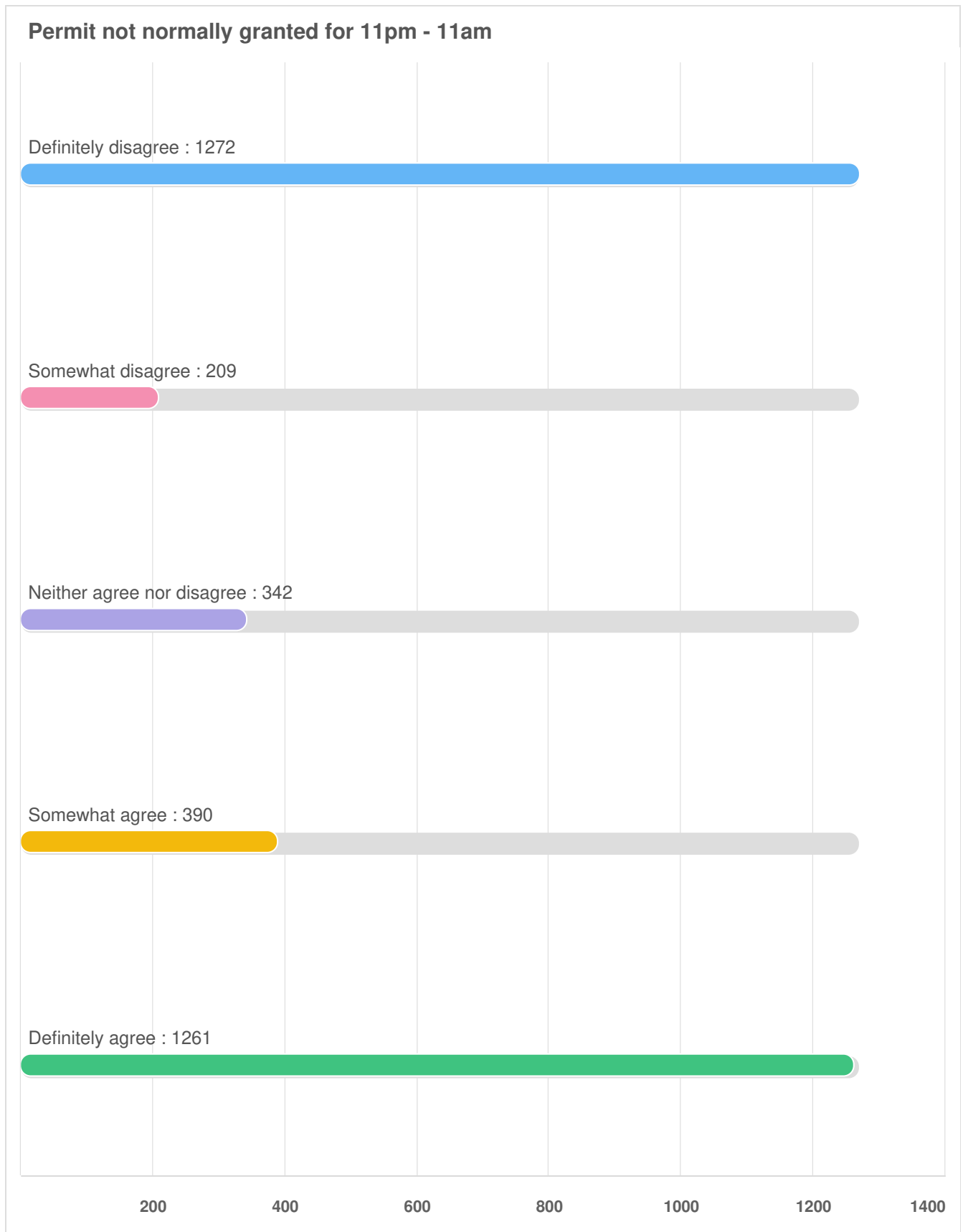
Question type: Likert Question

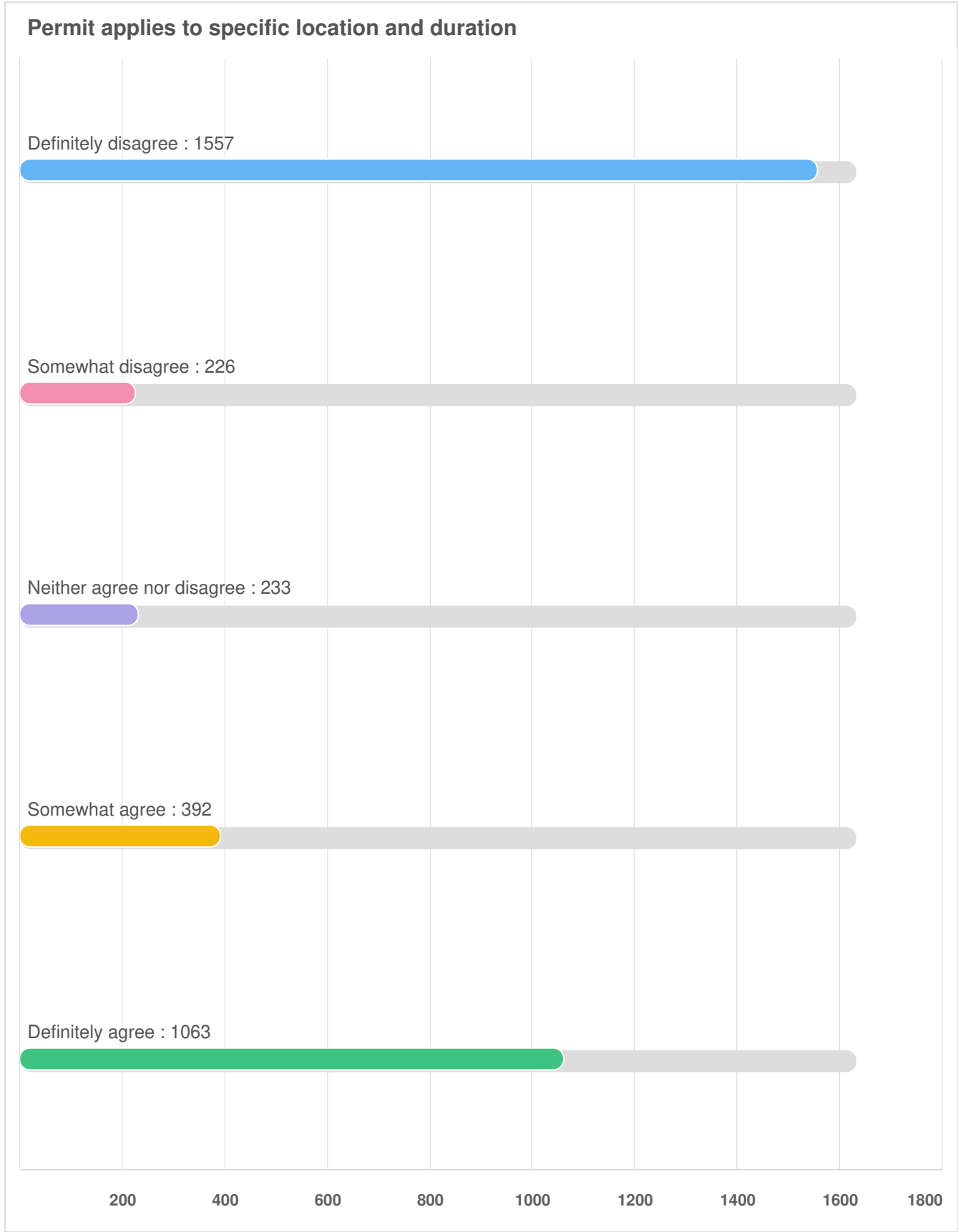
Q15 | To what extent do you agree or disagree with the standard conditions listed within the proposed byelaws? (Answers range from definitely agree to definitely disagree)

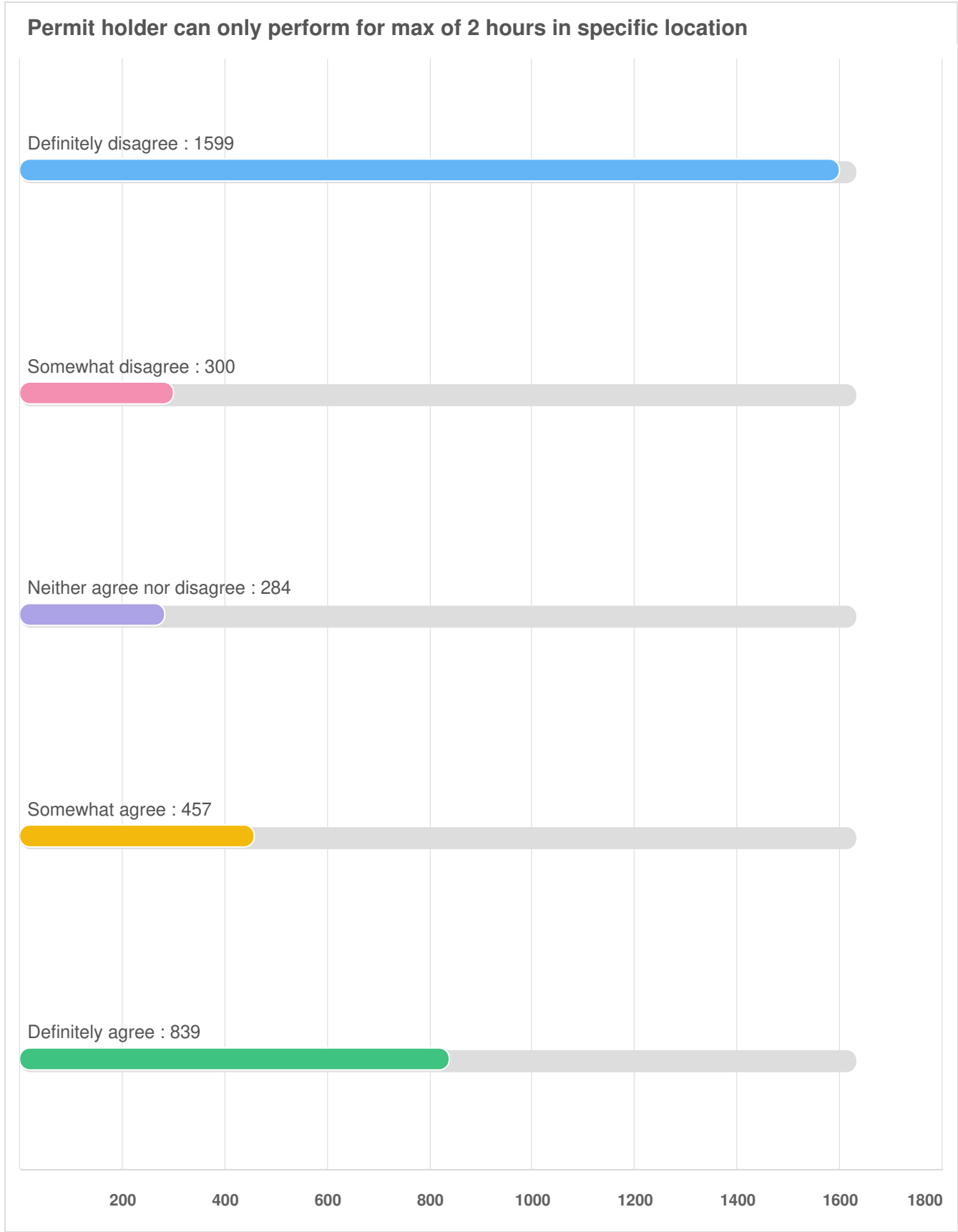
Permit is not transferable





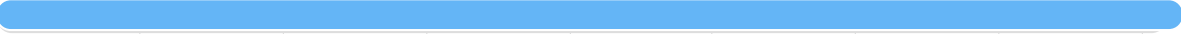






Permit holder can only perform for max of 1 hour in primary retail core

Definitely disagree : 1658



Somewhat disagree : 290



Neither agree nor disagree : 282



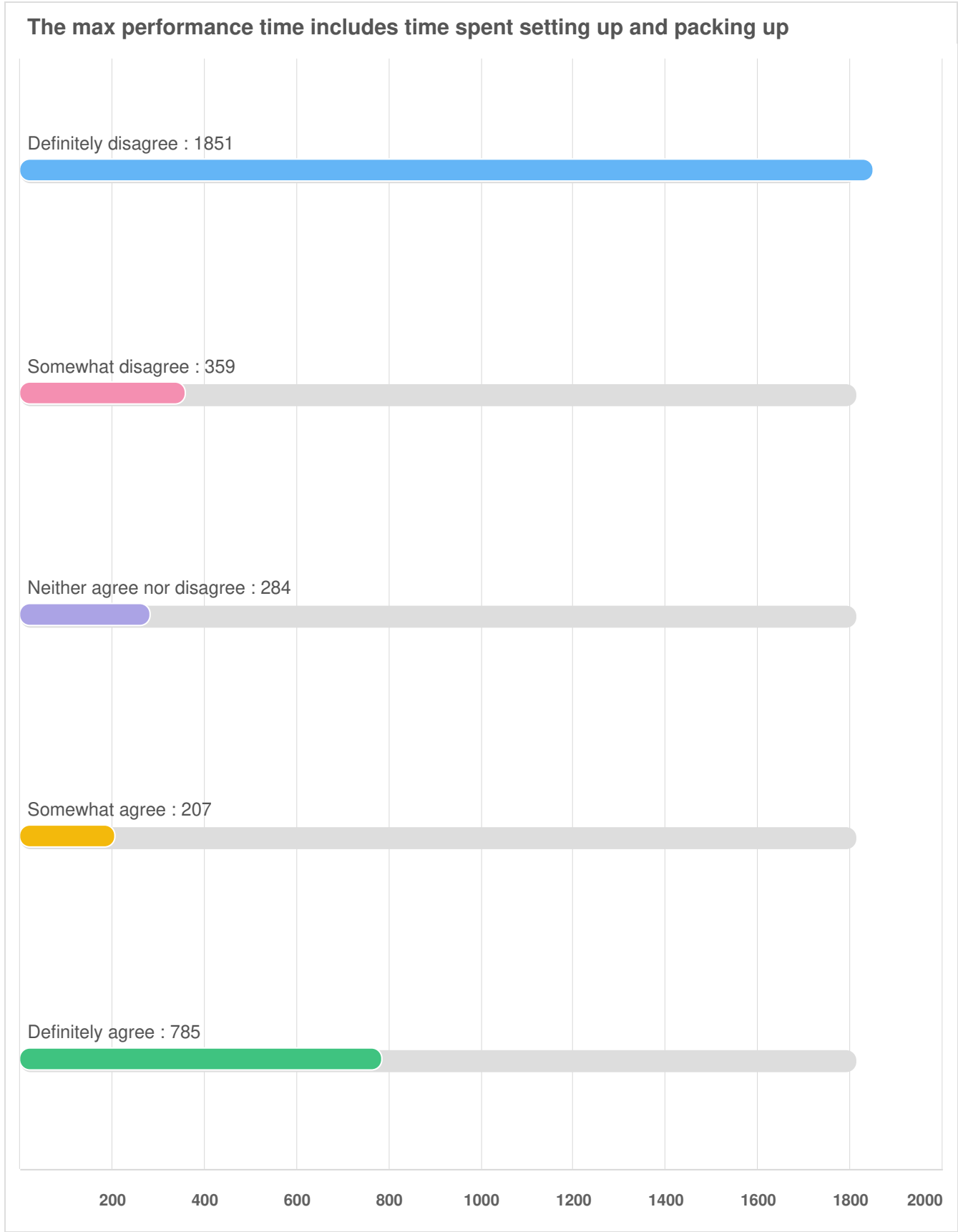
Somewhat agree : 345

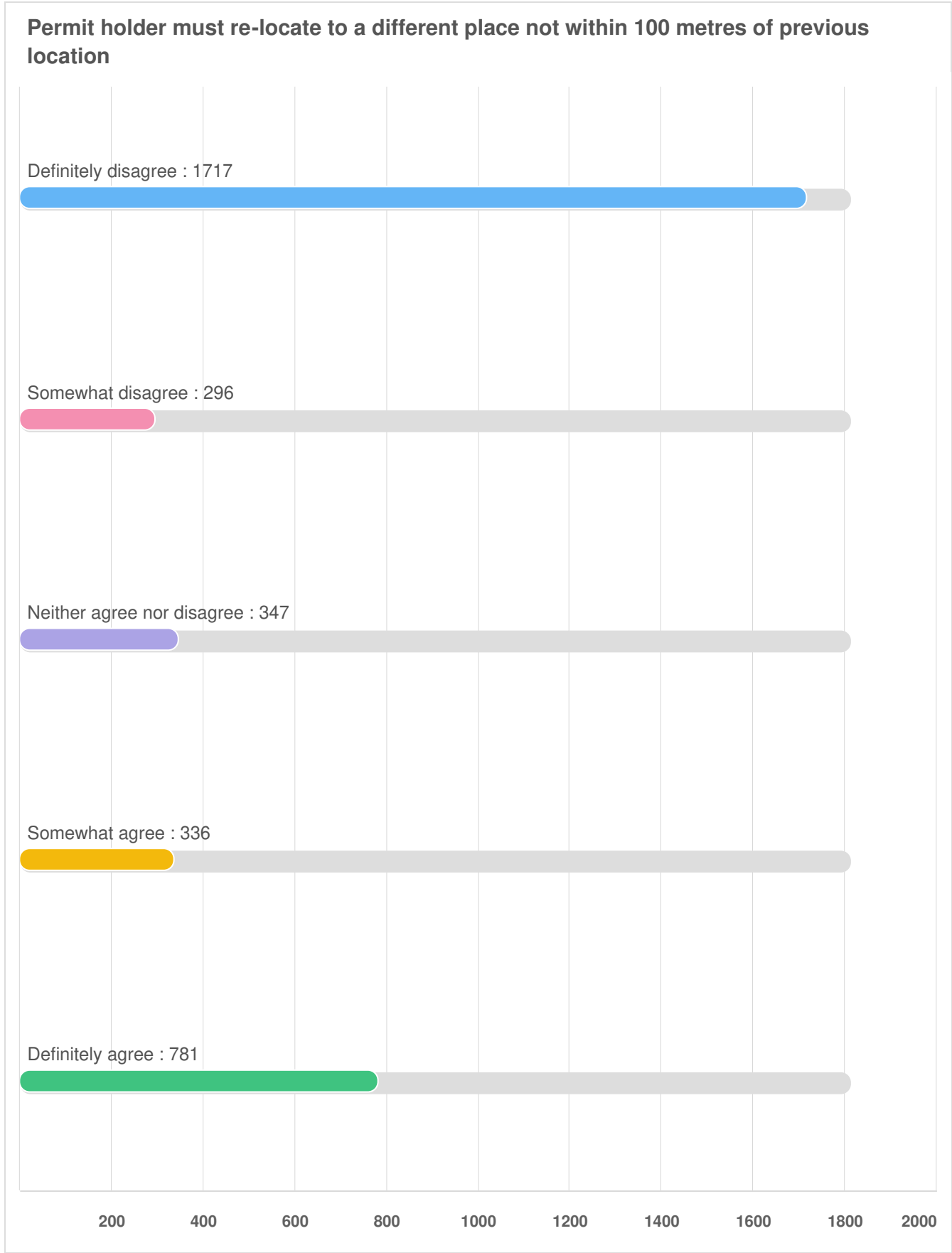


Definitely agree : 902



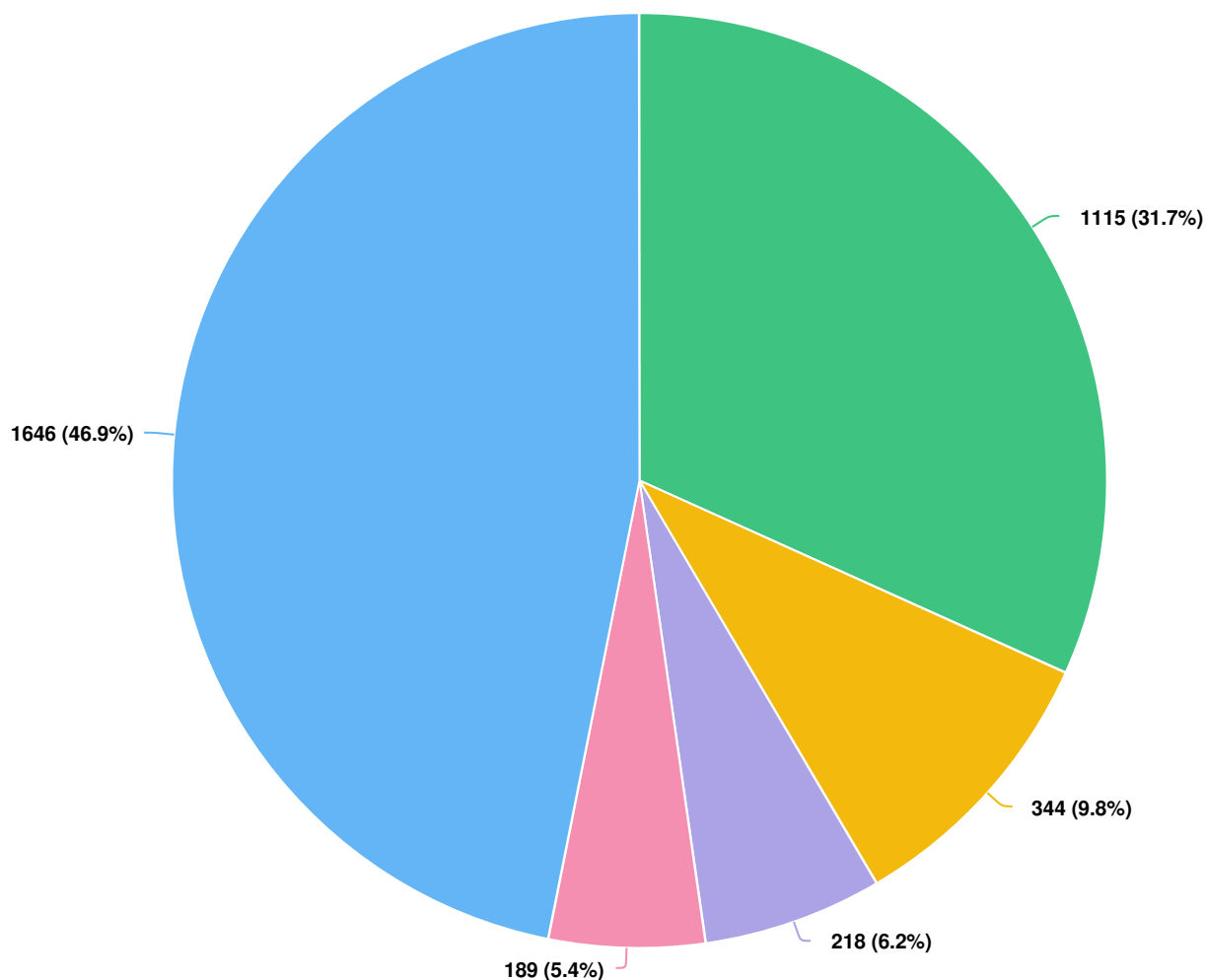
200 400 600 800 1000 1200 1400 1600 1800





Q16 | Please provide any additional comments in the space below.

Q17 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the council may designate areas in which specific types of instruments or amplification is prohibited?



Question options

☒ Definitely disagree ☐ Somewhat disagree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Somewhat agree ☐ Definitely agree

Optional question (3512 response(s), 59 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

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Subject:	Physical Programme Update
Date:	19 December 2025
Reporting Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Property & Projects
Contact Officer:	David Logan, Senior Programme Delivery Manager Shauna Murtagh, Portfolio Manager

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 40px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime 									
<p>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
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After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	<p>The Council's Physical Programme currently includes over 200 capital projects with investment of £150m+ 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 Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. This report presents requests for stage movement approvals under the Capital Programme, approval for best practice site visits to inform the next phase of leisure and an approval to work with DFC to progress the mixed use development at Girdwood.</p>
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is requested to –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital Programme Movements - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ IT Programme—Website Content Management System (CMS) Upgrade and Website Replacement - Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated with a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver ○ City Hall External Christmas Tree provision – Note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £77,500 be allocated. ○ Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26 - Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> with a maximum allocation of up to £500,000. ○ Greening & Growing Project – Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> with a maximum allocation of up to €30,000 funded through the Shared Island Unit. ○ Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme - Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> with a maximum allocation of up to £165,000 funded by the Linen Quarter Bid ○ Depot Charging Scheme - Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted</i> to allow options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course. ○ IT Programme—HR/ Payroll Cloud Migration - Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at <i>Stage 1 – Emerging</i> to allow a business case to be developed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Assembly Rooms Cluster - Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at <i>Stage 1 – Emerging</i> to allow a business case to be developed.○ Public AED Replacement - Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at <i>Stage 1 – Emerging</i> to allow a business case to be developed.● Belfast Stories – note that the Contract for Funding (CFF) has now been received from Department for Economy (DfE) for £65m and is under review prior to acceptance.● Leisure Programme – agree that Member site visits are undertaken in early 2026, to view new products with unique selling points, to consider incorporating within the next phase of leisure.● Girdwood Masterplan – agree that officers work with DfC officials to progress the mixed-use development site at Girdwood with further information to be brought back to Members																								
3.0	Main report <u>Key Issues</u>																								
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 Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange a site visit to any projects that have been completed or are underway.																								
3.2	<u>Capital Programme - Proposed Movements</u> As outlined above Members have 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: <table><tr><th>Project</th><th>Overview</th><th>Stage movement</th></tr><tr><td>IT Programme—Website Content Management System (CMS) Upgrade and Website Replacement</td><td>Phased upgrades, enhancements and full replacements to Council websites</td><td>Move to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i></td></tr><tr><td>City Hall External Christmas Tree Provision</td><td>Replacement of the current Christmas Tree provision in front of the City Hall with an alternative solution</td><td><i>Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £77,500</i></td></tr><tr><td>Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26</td><td>Improvements to pitches</td><td><i>Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £500,000</i></td></tr><tr><td>Greening and Growing Project</td><td>Biodiversity improvement and sustainable food growing development project at the Waterworks, funded through Shared Island programme</td><td>Move to <i>Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of €30,000</i></td></tr><tr><td>Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme</td><td>Feature lighting to exterior of Ulster Hall funded by the LQ Bid.</td><td>Move to <i>Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £165,000</i></td></tr><tr><td>Depot Charging Scheme</td><td>Improvements to electric vehicle (EV) charging provision on Council depots.</td><td>Move to <i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted</i></td></tr><tr><td>IT Programme—HR/ Payroll Cloud Migration</td><td>HR/Payroll System migration to a new cloud-based platform</td><td>Add as <i>Stage 1 – Emerging</i></td></tr></table>	Project	Overview	Stage movement	IT Programme—Website Content Management System (CMS) Upgrade and Website Replacement	Phased upgrades, enhancements and full replacements to Council websites	Move to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i>	City Hall External Christmas Tree Provision	Replacement of the current Christmas Tree provision in front of the City Hall with an alternative solution	<i>Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £77,500</i>	Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26	Improvements to pitches	<i>Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £500,000</i>	Greening and Growing Project	Biodiversity improvement and sustainable food growing development project at the Waterworks, funded through Shared Island programme	Move to <i>Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of €30,000</i>	Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme	Feature lighting to exterior of Ulster Hall funded by the LQ Bid.	Move to <i>Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £165,000</i>	Depot Charging Scheme	Improvements to electric vehicle (EV) charging provision on Council depots.	Move to <i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted</i>	IT Programme—HR/ Payroll Cloud Migration	HR/Payroll System migration to a new cloud-based platform	Add as <i>Stage 1 – Emerging</i>
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	Assembly Rooms Cluster	Redevelopment of Assembly Rooms Cluster	Add as Stage 1 – Emerging
	Public AED Replacement	To replace our current suite of public Automated External Defibrillator (AED) units	Add as Stage 1 – Emerging
3.3	IT Programme—Website Content Management System (CMS) Upgrade and Website Replacement <p>This project aims to upgrade the Council’s CMS platform and to deliver a modern, secure, and accessible set of council websites that meet evolving legislative, user, and business requirements. The Content Management System (CMS) is software that lets the Council’s web editors create, edit, organise, and publish content on the council websites. It acts as the backbone for managing text, images, videos, and other digital assets. The provider of the current CMS has informed the Council that the platform we currently use will no longer be supported after December 2026. This means that there will be no support/ maintenance, patching or security updates from that date onwards. This would represent a significant security and reputational risk to the organisation. The project is now part of the overall IT Programme and a business case has been submitted. Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk, pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated. A contract will be awarded based on the most economically advantageous tender received and full commitment to deliver.</p>		
3.4	City Hall Christmas Tree Provision <p>Members will recall that in August 2025 this project was moved to Stage 3 – Committed and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return. The project aims to replace the current Christmas Tree provision in front of the City Hall with an alternative solution. 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. Given issues with the quality and supply of real trees it is proposed to purchase an artificial tree which will be installed from 2026 onwards. The Installation - City Hall/ City Hall Grounds Working Group at its meeting on 18th November was updated that the procurement process for the artificial Christmas Tree had been completed and a supplier had been appointed. Members are asked to note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £77,500 be allocated.</p>		
3.5	Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26 <p>Members will be aware of the successful completion of pitch improvement works for the financial year 2024/25 as reported in April and October 2025. Officers have since been</p>		

working to identify opportunities to use the recurring annual budget of £500,000 for the 2025/26 financial year and are proposing the following schemes:

Location/ project	Overview
Wedderburn Park*	Perimeter fencing to enclose 2 existing grass pitches.
Falls Park	Spectator fencing and hard standing to existing grass pitch
Marrowbone Millenium Park	Height increase of existing fencing from 5m to 8m
Clarendon	Height increase in fencing at goal ends to 6m
Cl Ladies Hockey Club	Funding Contribution towards Floodlighting
Belfast Met Montgomery Road	Provision of junior goal posts for use by SBYL
Westlands Pitch	Fencing and improved gates

**A concept design to further enhance Wedderburn Park for the benefit of local residents is being drafted from feedback gathered during preliminary engagement. Further engagement will be carried out and any works arising from this will form a second phase of parks improvements and be separately funded.*

Members are asked to agree that the ‘Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26’ is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £500,000. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council as a rolling programme of investment. Members are asked to note that should there be an underspend, this could be utilised for other projects from the existing shortlist subject to Member agreement.

3.6

Greening & Growing Project

This project was moved to the Capital Programme at Stage 2 – Uncommitted in September 2025. This project focuses on biodiversity improvement and sustainable food growing development funded through Shared Island Fund programme. It will be delivered at the GROW NI community garden at Waterworks, in partnership with Belfast City Council and Belfast Healthy Cities. As per the three-stage approval process, the outline business case has been completed and the project can now progress to delivery stage. **Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to €30,000 from Shared Island funding.**

3.7

Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme

This project was moved to the Capital Programme at Stage 2 – Uncommitted in May 2025. The project involves the installation of an LED lighting display on the façade of Ulster Hall capable of changing colour similar to City Hall’s Illuminate scheme and will be in keeping with the building’s listed status. The letter of offer to the Council from Linen Quarter BID for the design phase has been secured. A subsequent letter of offer for the supply and installation is under review. The outline business case has been completed and the project can now progress to delivery stage. **Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £165,000 fully funded by the LQ Bid.**

3.8	<p>Depot Charging Scheme</p> <p>This project was added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging in October 2025, when the SP&R Committee approved the submission of an application for funding under the Government’s Depot Charging System. The Depot Charging Scheme supports the uptake of zero emission HGVs, vans, and coaches by part-funding the installation of charging infrastructure at fleet depots. The scheme covers 75% of eligible costs incurred and 25% will be the Council’s counterpart. The project which aims to improve the EV charging on Council sites will support the fleet transition and overall decarbonisation of Council fleet. The application for funding has been submitted and a decision is awaited. Members are asked to agree that ‘Depot Charging Scheme’ is moved to Stage 2 – Uncommitted to allow the options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course, and update regarding the funding position referred above.</p>
3.9	<p>IT Programme—HR/ Payroll Cloud Migration</p> <p>The Council’s current HR/ Payroll System provider has informed the Council that the platform that it currently uses needs to be migrated to a new cloud-based platform. This includes the ResourceLink system and the Optimum (Time & Attendance) system. Members are asked to agree that the ‘HR/ Payroll Cloud Migration’ project is added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging to allow a business case to be developed.</p>
3.10	<p>Assembly Rooms Cluster</p> <p>At the July 2025 special SP&R Committee meeting, Members agreed that a without prejudice/ conditional offer was made to acquire the Assembly Rooms and adjoining properties – the sale completed on 24 October 2025. The Assembly Rooms Cluster consists of approximately 0.5 acres within the former Tribeca Belfast site located in Belfast city centre. The Cluster is comprised of the following buildings: Assembly Rooms (Grade B1 Listed Building) and including rear extension; part of the Donegall Street carpark site; 5 – 9 North Street (former Laffin Travel building); and the Braddell’s Building, 11 North Street (Grade B1 Listed Building). Members are asked to agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging to allow the business case to be developed with further information to be brought back to Committee.</p>
3.11	<p>Public AED Replacement</p> <p>The project aims to replace the Council’s current suite of public Automated External Defibrillator (AED) units to ensure continuity of service provision. Members are asked to agree that the project is added to Stage 1 – Emerging to allow the business case to be developed.</p>
3.12	<p>Belfast Stories</p> <p>Members will recall that Belfast Stories Outline Business Case (OBC) update was considered by the SP&R Committee in April 2025. Belfast Stories is the Council’s flagship project under</p>

	<p>the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) and is due to open in 2030. Positioned as a tourism anchor, Belfast Stories is set to deliver significant economic and social impact for Belfast and beyond, helping to regenerate the city centre and connect the tourism offer to the neighbourhoods. The Committee also noted the detailed overview of the OBC following the 5-case model, with the total estimated capital cost of the preferred option at approximately £100m with £35m funded by BCC and £65m by BRCD. Furthermore, it was agreed to submit the Business Case to the Department for Economy (DfE) for £65m funding as part of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) and a Contract for Funding (CFF) has now been received. Members will also recall that the project is now at Stage 3 – Committed and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and update regarding the funding position referred above. Members are asked to note that the Contract for Funding (CFF) has now been received from Department for Economy (DfE) for £65m and is under review prior to acceptance.</p>
	Leisure Programme – Site Visits
3.13	<p>Members will be aware that work is underway on the development of the next phase of the Leisure Programme with Party Group briefings held in late Autumn. At these the need to look at USPs for the other sites was discussed and the need to look at where there are gaps in provision across the city. To inform this it is proposed that a two-day site visit is undertaken in late January/early February to leisure sites in and around London focusing on sites which provide facilities not currently within the Belfast leisure model. Details of the final itinerary are currently being finalised. It is proposed that this will be for Party Group Leaders or their nominees. Members are asked to agree that site visits are undertaken in early 2026 to London to inform the next phase of leisure.</p>
	Girdwood Masterplan
3.14	<p>Members will be aware that the Girdwood Masterplan includes several agreed elements, some of which have not yet been delivered. These include the leisure facility, which forms part of the Council's Leisure Transformation Programme; housing at the Oldpark end of the site, which the Department for Communities (DfC) is progressing with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; and the mixed-use development. DfC is leading on the mixed-use site, and officers have been engaging with DfC officials to explore options for progressing its development, including the potential for the Council to act as a development or delivery partner. Members are asked to note these ongoing discussions and to agree that officers continue to work with DfC to identify an appropriate mechanism to deliver the mixed-use site.</p>
3.15	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p><i>Financial Implications –</i></p> <p>City Hall External Christmas Tree Provision – capital budget allocation of up to £77,500.</p>

	<p>Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26 – recurring capital budget allocation of £500,000. The Director of Finance has confirmed that these are within the affordability limits of the Council.</p> <p>Greening and Growing Project – capital allocation of up to €30,000 externally funded via Shared Island Fund. Letter of Offer is in Euro (€).</p> <p>Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme – capital allocation of up to £165,000, externally funded via Linen Quarter BID.</p> <p><i>Resource Implications</i> – Officer time to deliver.</p>
3.16	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None.



Belfast
City Council

Subject:	Asset Management i) Hannahstown Village - Playground & Public Square Sublease ii) Cathedral Gardens - Licence for Works iii) Clement Wilson Park and Barnett Demesne – Lease with DfI iv) Bloomfield Walkway – Licence with DfI v) Sally Gardens Lane – Acquisition of Lands
Date:	19 December 2025
Reporting Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Property & Projects
Contact Officer:	Pamela Davison, Estates Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

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

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
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6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

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

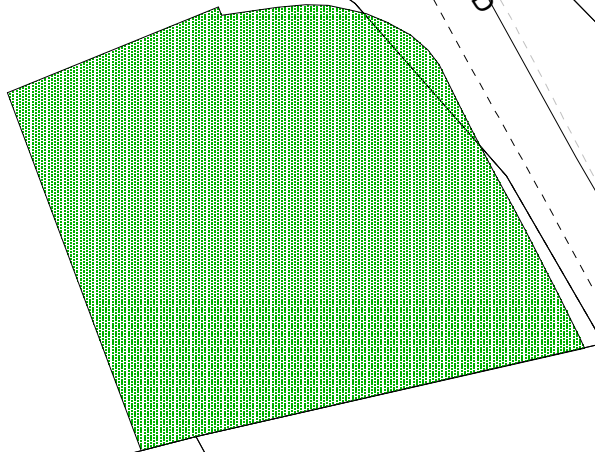
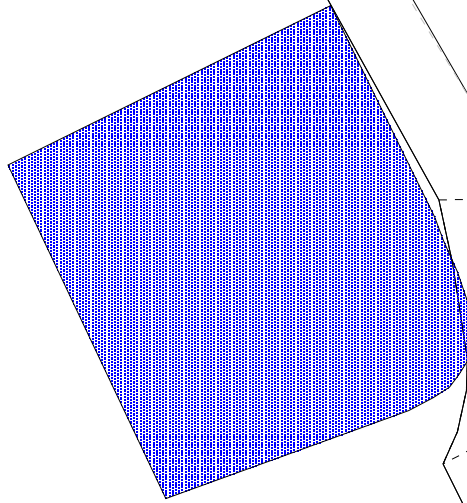
1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Committee on asset related disposal, acquisition and estates matters.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to approve:</p> <p>i) Hannahstown Village - Playground & Public Square Sublease</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approve Council entering a sublease with Hannahstown Community Association for the lands for Hannahstown Village Playground & Public Square situated at Pairc Lamh Dhearg. <p>ii) Cathedral Gardens - Licence for Works</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approve entering into a licence for works with Ulster University for a plot of land adjoining Belfast City Council Lands at Cathedral Gardens. <p>iii) Clement Wilson Park and Barnett Demesne – Lease with DfI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approve entering into a 10-year lease with DfI for the siting of a pontoon at Clement Wilson Park. <p>iv) Bloomfield Walkway – Licence with DfI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approve Council entering a new licence with the Department for Infrastructure for the lands for multi-use games area and playground at Bloomfield Walkway. <p>v) Sally Gardens Lane – Acquisition of Lands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approve the acquisition of lands adjoining Sally Gardens Lane to deliver a footpath.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>i) Hannahstown Village - Playground & Public Square Sublease</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Strategic Policy & Resources Committee at its meeting on the 21st May 2021 approved a licence agreement with Hannahstown Community Association (HCA) for the playground and public square at Hannahstown Hill. The Council had received Rural Development Programme funds on behalf of HCA to improve the quality of the general environment and services available in Hannahstown which included upgrades to the playground and to create a new public square. Despite attempts the Council has been unable to complete the licence agreement due to lack of engagement by HCA's legal representatives. Due to the passage of time Legal Services are now proposing that a sublease between HCA and the Council would</p>

	<p>better protect the Council's interests. HCA's solicitors have re-engaged in the process, and Members are asked to approve the entering into a sublease from the 1st Feb 2024 for a period of 10 years, for the lands at Hannahstown Village Playground & Public Square within Pairc Lamh Dhearg. See Map at Appendix 1 showing Hannahstown Village Playground & Public Square.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The rent will be nominal of £1 per annum (if demanded) and payable by the Council to HCA.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Neds Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.2	<p>ii) Cathedral Gardens – Licence for Works</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Approval is sought to enter into a licence for works for a portion of lands adjoining Belfast City Council lands at Cathedral Gardens with Ulster University. The licence for works will be used for hoarding to secure the site and to install new natural stone paving, kerbs, bollards and associated drainage as part of the redevelopment of Cathedral Gardens. The licence will be for a duration of 53 weeks and then rolling week to week thereafter at a peppercorn rent of £1 per annum. Belfast City Council lands are outlined in red and lands proposed to be included in the licence for works from Ulster University are highlighted yellow in Appendix 2.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Legal Services shall act on the instructions of the Estates Management Unit to agree terms. Council shall if demanded, pay a peppercorn rent.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.3	<p>iii) Clement Wilson Park and Barnett Demesne – Lease with DfI</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Approval is requested to enter into a new 10-year lease with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) for the installation of a pontoon at Clement Wilson Park. DfI has occupied lands at this location since 2000 however the jetty has since fallen into disrepair and is now closed on safety grounds. DfI proposes to replace the jetty with a new floating pontoon and is currently seeking planning permission. Subject to Member approval and the granting of planning consent, it is proposed that the Council enter into a 10-year lease with DfI at a peppercorn rent. The pontoons will provide an additional recreational facility for river users. Council lands are outlined in red and location of new pontoon shaded in blue at Appendix 3A along with plans of the proposed pontoon design at Appendix 3B.</p> <p>In addition, DfI is proposing to install a pontoon at Barnett Demesne. The entrance to this pontoon lies on Council lands, which are already held under Lease between the Council and DfI. Approval is therefore sought to amend the user clause of the existing lease to permit the</p>

	<p>inclusion of the pontoon. Council lands are outlined in red and location of new pontoon shaded in blue at Appendix 3C along with plans of the proposed pontoon design at appendix 3D.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Legal Services will act on the instructions of the Estates Management Unit.</p> <p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.4	<p>iv) Bloomfield Walkway – Licence with DfI</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>DFI has agreed to enter into a new licence agreement with the Council for the lands for multi-use games area and playground at Bloomfield Walkway. The licence will be for a further period of 5 years, commencing 1st February 2026 and the licence fee will remain at £170 per annum. DfI require that a new clause is entered into the licence to enable the DfI to terminate the licence by giving not less than 6 months prior written notice to the Council in the event that the lands should become required for any departmental function or works scheme. C&NS are agreeable to this requirement. See map at Appendix 4 showing the lands for multi-use games area and playground at Bloomfield Walkway.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The Council will be responsible for paying a licence fee of £170 per annum to the DfI. Legal Services shall act on the instructions of the Estates Management Unit.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.5	<p>v) Sally Gardens Lane – Acquisition of Lands</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>As part of Council's citywide Strategic Site Assessment work Council owned lands adjoining Sally Gardens complex has been identified as a strategic site suitable to bring forward a housing-led regeneration scheme, as part of wider land assembly with Department for Communities (DFC) lands. Following engagement with DfI, DFC and the City Regeneration & Development team the Council owned access road into the site has also been identified as having potential to support the servicing of an active travel route. This would link Brians Well Road lying to the north to the Stewartstown Road to the south, while improving access arrangement to the proposed housing site. To deliver on these placemaking objectives, housing and enhancing connectivity, the Council proposes provision of a second footpath along the existing access road. The adjoining landowner, Newpark Developments (NW) Ltd has agreed to transfer the necessary lands to the Council to facilitate a 2.2m wide footpath at a nominal value, supporting the Council's wider placemaking objectives by enhancing connectivity across the site.</p>

	<p>Separately, Newpark Developments (NW) Ltd has submitted a planning application for a housing scheme on their adjoining lands. As part of their own works, they propose to install a retaining structure along the new boundary line. To enable this, the Council would grant access by way of a Licence agreement to undertake these works. Members are asked to approve the acquisition of lands adjoining Sally Gardens Lane and subsequent grant of a Licence to deliver the retaining structure.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The Councils Estates Management Unit will work with Legal Services to draft the necessary transfer Deed. The transfer is subject to a nominal consideration and the Council would cover Newpark Developments (NW) Ltd reasonable Legal fees.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – showing Hannahstown Village Playground shaded green & Public Square shaded blue.</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Map outlining Council land in red, and area to be included in the licence for works from Ulster University highlighted in yellow.</p> <p>Appendix 3a – Map outlining Council lands at Clement Wilson Park in red, and location of proposed pontoon outlined in Blue.</p> <p>Appendix 3b – Proposed pontoon design at Clement Wilson Park.</p> <p>Appendix 3c – Map outlining Council lands at Barnett Demesne in red, and location of proposed pontoon outlined in Blue.</p> <p>Appendix 3d – Proposed pontoon design at Barnett Demesne.</p> <p>Appendix 4 - showing the lands for multi-use games area and playground at Bloomfield Walkway</p> <p>Appendix 5 – Map showing the lands adjoining Sally Gardens Lane outlined red.</p>

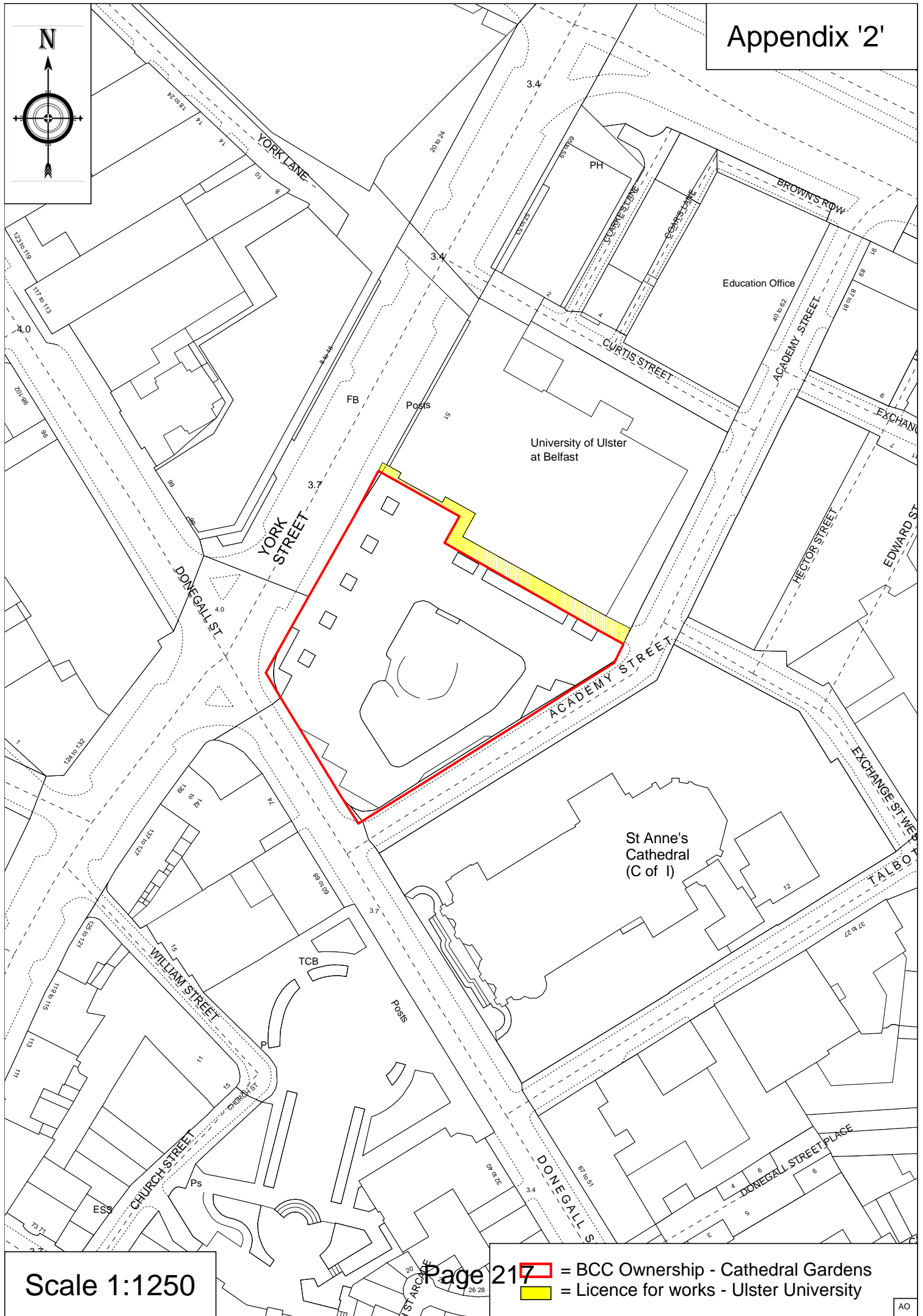
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GLENMEEN CLOSE

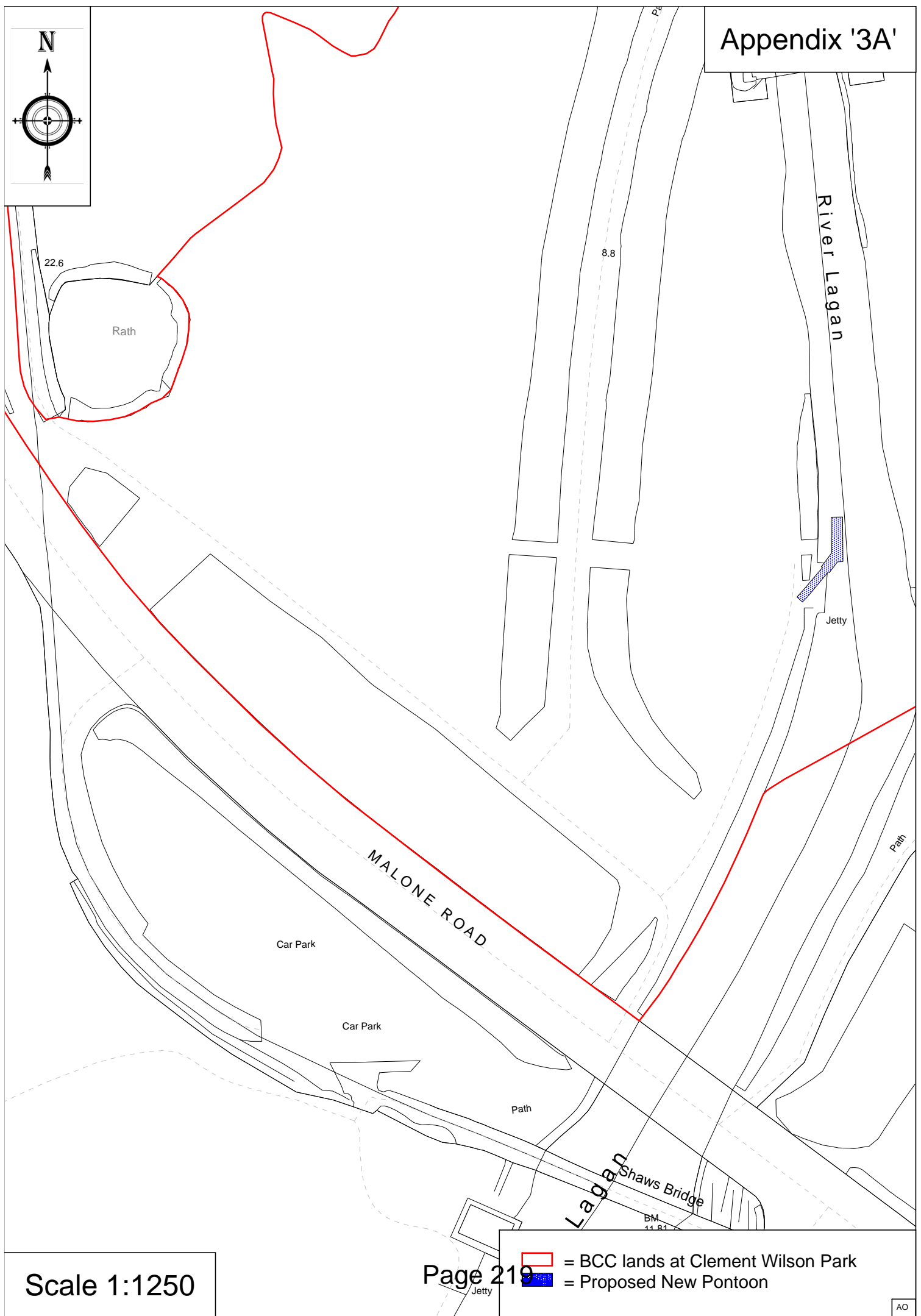
UPPER SPRINGFIELD ROAD

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Min WL Measurement:
Woodsen Jetty L₀ = 4.23m
Measured Gap to Midline 570mm
Calculated min WL on 12000000:
4230mm - 120mm = 270mm = 0.27m

		EDM Advanced CHH Projects PROJECT Bloor's Bridge		(Project Details) (Project Details) (Project Details)	
BUDGET DIAGRAMS		Diagram 1 Day		COMMENTS	
Diagrams Title Proposed Layout		DATE: Feb-2025		Scale: 1:100	
Diagrams NUMBER As Shown (B.A)		SCALE: As Shown (B.A)		Scale: 1:100	

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Car Park

Path

River Lagan

Jetty

Scale 1:500

Page 223

- = BCC lands at Barnet Demesne
- = Proposed New Pontoon
- = Existing Leased area with DfI

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Page 225

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Hall

Community
Centre

Bloc
Bapt

VA STREET

BLOOMFIELD WALKWAY

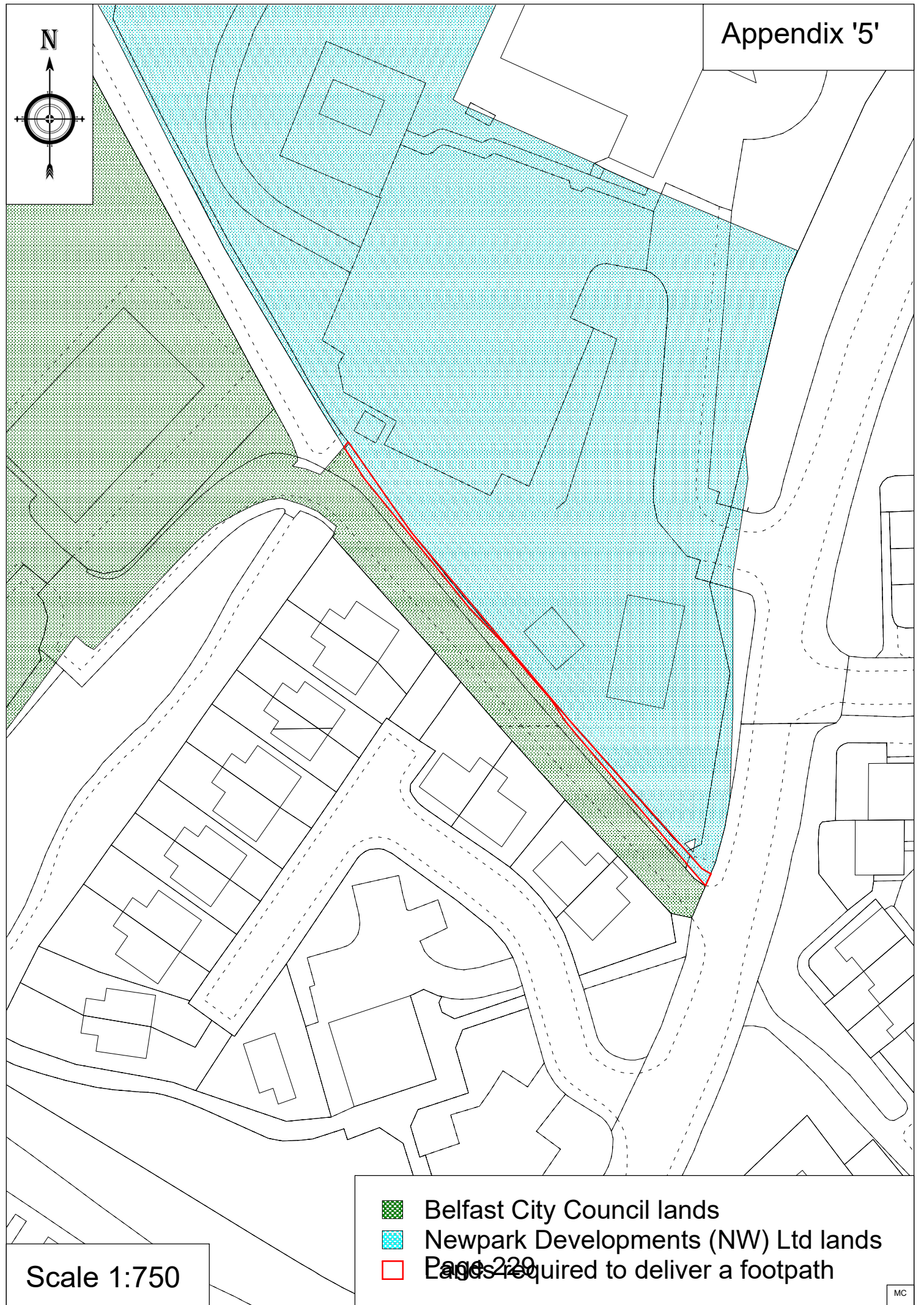
CHOBHAM STREET

BEECHWOOD STREET

Works

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Scale 1:750

-  Belfast City Council lands
-  Newpark Developments (NW) Ltd lands
-  Lands required to deliver a footpath

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Subject:	Update on Area Working Groups
Date:	19 December 2025
Reporting Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Property & Projects
Contact Officer:	David Logan, Senior Programme Delivery Manager Shauna Murtagh, Portfolio Manager

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 40px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime 									
<p>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								

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

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To present to the Committee for approval the minutes of the most recent meeting of the Area Working Groups.

2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the minutes of the meeting of South AWG – 24 November, North AWG – 25 November, West AWG – 27 November, and East AWG – 4 December 2025 as attached.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Area Working Group Minutes</u></p> <p>It was agreed in June 2016 that the minutes of the meetings of the Area Working Groups would be presented to the SP&R Committee for approval going forward, in line with the Council's commitment to openness and transparency and to ensure a consistent approach with other Member-led Working Groups. The Committee is asked to approve the minutes of the most recent meetings, as attached.</p>
3.2	<p>Project Updates</p> <p><i>South AWG</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Memorial at Donegall Road</u> – to note the update on the Memorial at Donegall Road project. <p><i>East AWG</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Bloomfield Community Association (BIF13)</u> – the East Belfast AWG agreed, in principle, to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the Bloomfield Community Association project be relocated from Hyndford Street to Dixon Playing Fields.
3.3	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None</p>
3.4	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None</p>
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 - Minutes – Meeting – South Belfast Area Working Group 24 November 2025</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Minutes – Meeting – North Belfast Area Working Group 25 November 2025</p> <p>Appendix 3 - Minutes – Meeting – West Belfast Area Working Group 27 November 2025</p> <p>Appendix 4 - Minutes – Meeting – East Belfast Area Working Group 4 December 2025</p>

South Belfast Area Working Group

Monday, 24th November, 2025

MEETING OF SOUTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillor Groogan (Chairperson);
Councillors Brennan, Bunting,
McKay and McKeown.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Ms. S. Rafter, Neighbourhood Integration Manager; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was received from The Lord Mayor, Councillor Kelly.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 18th August were approved by the Working Group.

Declarations of Interest

The Chairperson, Councillor Groogan, declared an interest in the Vacant to Vibrant item, in that her employer had applied for funding through the scheme, however, as the item was just an update on the scheme, she was not required to leave the meeting.

Presentation

Hearth Historic Buildings Trust – Update on Riddel's Warehouse

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Working Group, welcomed Ms. R. Campbell-Palmer, Heritage Development Officer, and Mr. M. Patton, Vice Chair, Hearth Historic Buildings Trust to the meeting.

Mr. Patton outlined the history of Riddel's Warehouse, a Grade B+ listed building which had been constructed in 1867 and was a rare example of Ruskinian design and cast-iron construction. Originally part of Riddel & Co, a prominent ironmongery firm, the warehouse held significant historical value, including industrial features like a weighbridge and crane, as well as records and oral histories from former workers. Located in Belfast's historic market area, it represented the legacy of the ironmongery industry and the City's maritime heritage.

Ms. Campbell-Palmer provided the Working Group with an overview of the regeneration plan for the Warehouse, which focused on heritage-led development to create a sustainable, multi-functional space that supported urban renewal. It aimed to

preserve the building's architectural heritage while fostering community engagement, creativity, and economic growth. The project emphasised adaptive reuse, renewable technologies, and urban greenspaces, while providing cultural, social, and learning spaces to benefit Belfast's residents and visitors.

She provided the Members with an overview of the funding for the project, whereby they were aiming to unlock £5.2 million in UK investment. She highlighted that Riddel's Warehouse was envisioned as a flagship regeneration initiative that would enhance Belfast's cultural and economic vibrancy, contributing to the city's long-term development goals.

The Chairperson stated that she wished them well with the project and that it was a striking and unique historical venue which was an asset to the City.

The Working Group thanked the representatives for the information they had provided and they retired from the room.

Local Development Plan (LDP) Update

(Mr. D. O'Kane (Acting Planning Manager (Plans and Policy)), Mr. M. Smithson (Senior Planning Officer), Ms. J. Doherty (Senior Planning Officer) and Mr. M. Whittaker (Senior Planning Officer) attended in connection with this item.)

The Acting Planning Manager presented an overview of housing and environmental planning proposals for South Belfast, focusing on the need for strategic zoning, site utilisation, and policy adjustments to meet housing demands, support economic activities, and preserve environmental assets.

The Senior Planning officers outlined the housing numbers, proposed zones for housing and explained why certain sites had been discounted. The Members were provided with information relating to Housing Management Areas (HMAs) and Inner Housing Needs (IHNs), and Housing Management Order (HMO) policy areas.

In regards to employment and retail designations, they outlined proposed areas for employment land and retail cores. They emphasised the importance of balancing residential, employment, and retail needs to support the area's economic growth and community development.

The environmental assets within South Belfast were highlighted, including proposed Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs), Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs) and Areas of Townscape Character (ATCs).

Overall, the Members were reminded that the proposals aimed to create a balanced and sustainable urban environment which addressed the needs of residents and businesses while protecting the area's natural and built heritage. The Planning Manager explained that the Local Development Plan would go out for public consultation in the new year subject to Members' agreement. He added that any comments should be forwarded to the LDP Team.

The Working Group requested that the slides be circulated to the Members and they thanked the officers for the update provided.

Physical Programmes Update

The Director of Property and Projects presented the following report:

“1. Introduction

The Council’s Physical Programme covers projects under a range of funding streams including the Capital Programme, the Leisure Transformation Programme, the Local Investment Fund (LIF), the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF); in addition, the programme covers projects that the Council is delivering on behalf of other agencies. This report outlines the status of projects under the Physical Programme.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the Physical Programme update for South Belfast including the recently completed projects – Balfour Avenue playground.
- Note the updated list of external capital funding opportunities at Appendix 3.

3. Local Investment Fund (LIF)

Members are reminded that LIF is a £9m fixed programme of capital investment in non-council neighbourhood assets, over two tranches: LIF 1 (2012-2015) - £5m total funding pot, allocated across each AWG area; and LIF 2 (2015 -2019) - £4m allocation.

A summary is provided below.

LIF breakdown – South	LIF 1		LIF 2	
<i>Stage/ Description:</i>	<i>No. Projects</i>	<i>Amount (£)</i>	<i>No. Projects</i>	<i>Amount/ (£)</i>
Number of Projects Completed	13 (100%)	£1,083,600	11 (100%)	£796,000
Total Number of Approved Projects	13	£1,083,600	11	£796,000

The table below shows an overview of the recently completed project.

LIF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
SLIF017	Finaghy Bridge	£30,000	Complete	Artwork on the bridge was	Continue engagement with

				completed in August 2025. Investigating the potential to further the environmental improvements at the bridge with planters and artwork on a number of utility boxes.	partners. Obtain quote for planters and identify owners of the utility boxes on Finaghy Road North.
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All 24 LIF projects in South Belfast have now been completed.

4. **Belfast Investment Fund (BIF)**

Members are reminded that BIF is a £28m investment fund for regeneration partnership projects, with a minimum £250k investment from Council. BIF – South Belfast was allocated £5.5m; with an additional £500k ringfenced for new areas (outer South) that had joined the District area under Local Government Reform. In South Belfast, 6 projects received an In-Principle funding commitment, thereby fully allocating its £5.5m, and £500k pot of funding. Each project is taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place.

Summary of BIF allocated projects.

South	Stage 3 - Lagan Gateway - £2.1m; Lanyon Tunnels - £1.3m; Bredagh GAC - £700k; Arts & Digital Hub - £584k; Coffee Culture - £286k Stage 2 - Sandy Row Open Space project- £479k
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Balmoral DEA	Stage 3 - Knockbreda Parish Church Hall - £250k; Linfield FC/ Boys Brigade and Belvoir FC - £250k
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Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
BIF04	Lagan Gateway Phase 2	£1,428,650 BIF- £579,324 DfI Greenways- £714,326	Stage 3 - Committed	Planning Approval expected end of 2025. External match funding is in place from DfI. The contractor procurement has completed. Awaiting CPD sign off to issue awards letter. Ongoing discussions with neighbouring landowners regarding Right of Way and Land Agreements.	Continue engagement with the public, landowners and key stakeholders.

BIF07	Market Arches	£3.3m <i>BIF -£1.3m UV – £2m t</i>	Stage 3- Committed	Different options costed and OBC completed for submission to The Executive Office (TEO).	Officer engagement with TEO, DfC and DfI as key funders.
BIF48	Sandy Row Arts & Digital Hub	£1,129,023 <i>BIF-£584,167 UV-£706,856</i>	Stage 3- Committed	Planned completion November 2025. Official opening proposed January 2026 to allow new facility to be fully operational. Date to be agreed with BSCR in conjunction with Lord Mayor's Office. <i>Part of Sandy Row Area projects.</i>	Continue engagement with the group.
BIF46	Coffee Culture	£1,149,821 <i>BIF-£286,519 SOF- £100,000 UV- £463,302 DfC-£300,000</i>	Stage 3- Committed	Contractor appointed. Pre-start meeting has taken place with contractor to provide their programme of works. Date for sod cutting will be organised with opening of Arts & Digital Hub. <i>Part of Sandy Row Area projects.</i>	Continue engagement with the group.
BIF33	Linfield FC/ Boys Brigade and Belvoir FC	£250,000	Stage 3- Committed	Belvoir FC has agreed to lease land from NIHE. Updated LPS valuation May 2025 - 25 year lease assessed at £4,500pa, with rent reviews every five years. NIHE will revert back when they have sought internal approval.	Continue engagement with the group and partners.
BIF47	Sandy Row Open Space project	£479,314*	Stage 2- Uncommitted <i>Part of Sandy Row Area projects</i>	Council has proceeded with procurement of Design Team and process is nearing completion. Ongoing issues with Translink in relation to progressing the scheme, taking account the requirements of their licence. <i>*The remaining balance of the ringfenced allocation for the Sandy Row Area projects</i>	Continue engagement with the group.

5. Social Outcomes Fund

SOF is a £4m ringfenced capital investment programme with a focus on local community tourism projects. 3 projects in South Belfast received an In-Principle funding commitment, and 2 have completed. Similar to LIF and BIF, all projects are subject to Due Diligence process prior to any funding award. Members are asked to note the progress update of the remaining project in the table below.

SOF – South Belfast project overview

Project	Award	Status and update	Action/ Recommendation
SOF02 Coffee Culture	£1,149,821 <i>SOF-£100,000 BIF- £286,519 UV- £463,302 DfC-£300,000</i>	Contractor appointed. Pre-start meeting has taken place with contractor to provide their programme of works. Date for sod cutting will be organised with opening of Arts & Digital Hub.	Continue engagement with the group and key stakeholders.

6. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF) is a capital fund with a current overall budget of £10,280,000 to help groups deliver capital projects that will make a real, long-term difference in their communities. The overall NRF allocation for South was £1,978,637, and 5 projects received an In-Principle funding commitment. Each NRF project is taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place. Projects remaining at Stage 2 continue to have the support of a Client Manager for their proposals.

South Belfast – NRF overview

Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
Sólás New Build project	£2.5m <i>NRF- £362,141 COF- £800,000 Various funders and group</i>	Stage 3- Committed <i>Delivery stage</i>	On Ground. Work recently started on site. NRF funding will be used towards the fit-out. Working with Legal Services to finalise funding agreement.	Continue engagement with the group.
GVRT- Branching Out project	£540,000 <i>NRF- £500,000 DfC- £40,000</i>	Stage 3- Committed	DfC funding (£40k) secured to further develop project designs. Design Team procurement to conclude in early	Continue engagement with the group.

			2026. Discussions continue with potential funders.	
Lagan Water Access Activity Hub	£308,248	Stage 3-Committed	Planning application for boathouse submitted and await decision.	Continue engagement with the group.
Redevelopment of former School of Music	£2,308,248 <i>NRF-£308,248 UV- £2m</i>	Stage 3-Committed	Business case being developed by TEO Urban Villages. Approval forecasted in Winter 25/26.	Continue engagement with the group.
Market Heritage Hub	£800,000 <i>NRF- £500,000 COF- £300,000</i>	Stage 3-Committed	Building purchase has been completed via NRF funding and the Community Ownership Fund. Group is preparing for an application to Heritage Fund for restoration of the building and transformation into heritage facility.	Continue engagement with the group. Assist with funding application towards building restoration & transformation into heritage facility.

South Belfast – NRF projects at Stage 3 - Delivery

Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/Recommendation
Sólás New Build project	£2.5m <i>NRF- £362,141 COF- £800,000 Various funders and group</i>	Stage 3-Committed <i>Delivery stage</i>	On Ground. Work recently started on site. NRF funding will be used towards the fit-out. Working with Legal Services to finalise funding agreement.	Continue engagement with the group.
GVRT- Branching Out project	£540,000 <i>NRF- £500,000 DfC- £40,000</i>	Stage 3-Committed	DfC funding (£40k) secured to further develop project designs. Design Team procurement to conclude in early 2026. Discussions continue with potential funders.	Continue engagement with the group.
Lagan Water Access Activity Hub	£308,248	Stage 3-Committed	Planning application for boathouse submitted and await decision.	Continue engagement with the group.
Redevelopment of former School of Music	£2,308,248 <i>NRF-£308,248 UV- £2m</i>	Stage 3-Committed	Business case being developed by TEO Urban Villages. Approval forecasted in Winter 25/26.	Continue engagement with the group.

Market Heritage Hub	£800,000 <i>NRF- £500,000 COF- £300,000</i>	Stage 3- Committed	Building purchase has been completed via NRF funding and the Community Ownership Fund. Group is preparing for an application to Heritage Fund for restoration of the building and transformation into heritage facility.	Continue engagement with the group. Assist with funding application towards building restoration & transformation into heritage facility.
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7. Capital Programme

The Capital Programme is a rolling programme to either enhance existing Council assets or build/buy new assets or facilities. Table below provides an update on current live projects South Belfast area. Members are asked to note status and update.

South Belfast – Capital programme overview

Project	Status and update
Playground Improvement Programme 24/25	Project completed. Works at three sites across the city including Balfour Avenue Playground has been completed.
Strangford Ave Playing Fields Enabling Works	On Ground. Project nearing completion. Enabling works have been completed and the active travel containers have been transferred. New design to be installed on exterior of containers and disability toilet in old pavilion to be re-opened.
Sporting Pitches Investment 25/26	<i>Stage 3 Committed.</i> Options being worked up with CNS.
Alleygating Phase 5 – City wide	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Works progressing. Progress made with the commencement of the installation for Phase 5a. 115 gates remain to be installed and works to be completed by February 2026.
City Hall – Installation of Stained Glass Windows – LGBT and NHS	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Unveiling of new LGBTQ+ window completed. NHS – Procurement process commenced further updates to be provided via City Hall Working Group.
City Hall External Christmas Tree provision	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Procurement concluded with details of successful operator to be reported to City Hall Working Group at its meeting on 18 November 2025.
Communications Boards	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Inclusive communication boards in playgrounds. Progressing – boards ordered, installations due to commence February 2026.
Musgrave Park Sensory Garden	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Upgrade to sensory garden. Design details being worked up.
Basketball Courts	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> The work includes creation or upgrade of basketball courts at five BCC park sites including Victoria Park, Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Park, Ormeau Park, Blacks Road Park and Páirc Nua Chollann. Concept designs being developed. Currently undertaking design team procurement.
Electric Vehicle Charging Network	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Council agreed that officers begin the tender process based on a Concession Operating model and defers consideration of the specific locations of the proposed Phase One sites so that a broader list could be submitted to the Committee.

Historic Cemeteries	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Restoration programme for heritage cemeteries in the city including Friar's Bush, Knock Cemetery, Clifton Street Cemetery and Balmoral Cemetery. Consultants appointed to undertake surveys for the Phase 2 works. The Phase 1 Health & Safety works at Clifton Street have been completed. Successful application to DfC Historic Environment Fund (HEF) Revival Stream fund for a contribution towards design fees for Phase 2.
Historic Tiled Street Signs	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Capital restoration programme for the historic Belfast tiled street signs across the city. Scoping of signs is continuing along with opportunities for external funding.
Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Feature lighting to exterior of Ulster Hall. Design and delivery is to be fully funded by DfC and Linen Quarter BID. Progressing.
Waterfront Hall Chiller Units	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Detailed design of the new chiller system is underway. The structural integrity of the building is being assessed around the areas of the proposed new units and in advance of finalising the designs. In order to avoid potential cooling issues next season, a temporary chiller installation is being considered.
Waterfront Hall Smoke Curtains	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Modelling of the auditorium has been completed. Following this exercise, and with agreement from Building Control & the Fire Service, no major remedial works are required and the Fire Strategy is to be updated accordingly.
Palm House, Botanic Gardens	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> This early-stage Council heritage asset project is being considered as a candidate for partnership working with the Heritage Fund. Consultants are continuing to prepare a Conservation Management Plan to support the application process.
City Hall Preservation	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Programme of works to ensure the preservation of the City Hall building.
City Hall Security Improvements	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Capital works put forward to make City Hall a safer place for visitors, employees and elected Members.
2 Royal Avenue – Landlord Capital works	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Capital works to the ground and first floor to meet its obligation to prospective occupiers and ensure the building is fully fit for purpose. Currently compiling the Outline Business Case as part of Stage 2 development that will involve the production of an updated condition report for the building.
Mobile Changing Places modular facility	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> This facility will be for use across the city. Specification developed and project moving to procurement.
Belfast Bikes Expansion	New provider/ operator has been appointed. New scheme was launched 17 September 2025.

8. Externally funded programmes

The Council is the delivery partner for several government departments on key capital investment programmes, namely Urban Villages (UV) from the Executive Office as well as a number of schemes with DfC and DfI. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to South Belfast.

Urban Villages Initiative

The table below is the status update on UV projects in South Belfast – note the UV programme has a defined South Belfast geography (Sandy Row; Donegall Pass and Markets).

UV – South Belfast projects overview

Project	Status and update
The Lockhouse - Gateway to the River / Walkway	Stalled on site due to NI Water issue. Option to resolve this issue agreed by project board. New planning application submitted in September 2025. Hoping to be onsite in New Year.
Sandy Row Arts & Digital Hub	As above at BIF48. Planned completion November 2025. Official opening proposed January 2026 to allow new facility to be fully operational.
Coffee Culture	As above at BIF46. Contractor appointed. Date for sod cutting will be organised with opening of A&DH.
Market Arches	As above at BIF07. Business case being developed.
Redevelopment of former School of Music	As above at NRF. Business case being developed. Approval forecasted Winter.
Donegall Pass Good Relations Hub	Business case being developed. Approval forecasted by March 2026.

PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan - Capital Project

Members are asked to note the update on PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan capital project in South Belfast. The Letter of Offer has been accepted and returned to SEUPB.

Project	Status and update
Annadale Open Space	Part of the overall Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. Development of a playpark, basketball hoop and a small men's shed. The council is actively seeking funding to develop a 5 aside pitch on the same site. The design team has been appointed, and design is underway, with the view to submitting a planning application in Winter 2025. Stakeholder meetings to include elected Members, will be held on a quarterly basis to provide status updates and to receive community feedback. The second stakeholder meeting will be held on 17 November 2025.

DfC funded projects

Below is the status update on project funded by Department for Communities in South Belfast.

DfC – South Belfast projects overview

Project	Status and update
Holylands Alleygating and Cleansing Project	Link to the citywide Alleygating Phase 5 project.

DfI funded projects

Below is the status update on project funded by Department for Infrastructure in South Belfast.

Dfl – South Belfast projects overview

Project	Status and update
Lagan Gateway Phase 2	As above as BIF04. Planning Approval expected end of 2025. External match funding is in place from Dfl. Contractor procurement has completed. Awaiting CPD sign off to issue awards letter. Ongoing discussions with neighbouring landowners regarding Right of Way and Land Agreements.

9. Capital funding opportunities

Members are asked to note the updated version of the list of external capital funding opportunities at Appendix 2 which may be of assistance to groups and clubs.”

The Working Group noted the update provided.

Citywide Vacant to Vibrant Grant Scheme

(Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager - City Centre Regeneration, attended in connection with this item)

The Senior Development Manager provided the Members with an update on the Citywide Vacant to Vibrant Programme and with a list of proposed engagement sessions planned in the South of the City in January 2026.

The Working Group noted:

- the proposed extension of the Citywide Vacant to Vibrant scheme, subject to the approval by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee; and
- the proposed engagement sessions planned, pending the launch of the city-wide extension.

Memorial at Donegall Road Update

The Director of Property and Projects reminded the Working Group that, at its meeting on 18th August, 2025, it had agreed to the below wording of the plaque memorial to be erected on a Gatepost between 263 - 265 Donegall Road.

***Belfast Workhouse
This was the site of the Belfast Workhouse burial
ground in use from 1848 to 1908.
Tens of thousands of men, women and children were
buried here in unmarked graves.
They all had names.***

The Director explained that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive owned the land where the gatepost was situated and that NIHE had given its consent to install the

memorial plaque on the wall. She also confirmed that no planning permission was required.

She added that there was a graffitied utility box adjacent to the gatepost in question, and that officers were investigating whether there was the potential for this to be painted, subject to ownership checks, approvals etc.

The Working Group considered two illustrative mock-ups of the wording using different materials, together with indicative costs.

After discussion, the Working Group agreed the following:

- that the plaque be made of granite, with white writing on black, if possible;
- that a comma be added after the word “ground”;
- that officers would investigate whether it was necessary to include the Council logo on the plaque; and
- that any proposed street art on the utility box, subject to approvals, adjacent to the gatepost would be in keeping with the burial ground.

The Director of Property and Projects agreed to circulate a final mock-up of the plaque encompassing the above changes.

Chairperson

North Belfast Area Working Group

Tuesday, 25th November, 2025

NORTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillor Bradley (Chairperson);
Alderman McCullough; and
Councillors Anglin, Cobain, Doran,
Magee, Meenehan, Murphy, O'Neill and Whyte.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Mr. D. O'Kane, Planning Manager;
Ms. M. Wilson, Neighbourhood Services Integration
Manager;
Mr. C. McCartan, Regeneration Project Officer; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 26th August were approved by the Working Group.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Doran declared an interest in relation to item 4, Physical Programmes Update, in that he was employed by Westland Community Group Ltd.

Presentation

North Belfast Community Partnership

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. M. Morgan, Ligioniel Improvement Association, Mr. Manus Maguire and Ms. J. Kinnear from Ashton, to the meeting.

The representatives explained how they had worked with the Department for Communities and the Council to develop an area plan and outlined how the North Belfast Community Partnership was working to deliver the plan through the following themes:

- Early Intervention;
- Poverty;
- Community Inclusion;
- Safer Communities;
- Festivals, Sport and Culture;
- Regeneration;
- Health and Wellbeing;
- Economic Prosperity;
- Education;

- Youth; and
- Environment.

Ms. Morgan explained how the themes had been informed by a survey which had been carried out by the Ulster University, and she outlined the main issues which had been raised through the surveys.

She stated that the North Belfast Community Partnership provided representation and a collective voice for the people of north Belfast.

Several Members asked questions with regard to representation and engagement with local community groups. Ms. Morgan explained that there had been extensive community engagement and that the project was both inclusive and transparent, she added that all north Belfast community groups were welcome to become involved in the scheme and that further outreach would be undertaken.

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

Local Policies Plan

(Mr. D. O’Kane (Acting Planning Manager (Plans and Policy)), Mr. M. Smithson (Senior Planning Officer), Ms. J. Doherty (Senior Planning Officer) and Mr. M. Whittaker (Senior Planning Officer) attended in connection with this item.)

The Acting Planning Manager presented an overview of housing and environmental planning proposals for north Belfast, focusing on the need for strategic zoning, site utilisation, and policy adjustments to meet housing demands, support economic activities, and preserve environmental assets.

The Senior Planning officers outlined the housing numbers, proposed zones for housing and explained why certain sites had been discounted. The Members were provided with information relating to Housing Management Areas (HMAs) and Inner Housing Needs (IHNs), and Housing Management Order (HMO) policy areas.

In regards to employment and retail designations, they outlined proposed areas for employment land and retail cores. They emphasised the importance of balancing residential, employment, and retail needs to support the area’s economic growth and community development.

The environmental assets within north Belfast were highlighted, including proposed Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs), Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs) and Areas of Townscape Character (ATCs).

Overall, the Members were reminded that the proposals aimed to create a balanced and sustainable urban environment which addressed the needs of residents and businesses while protecting the area’s natural and built heritage. The Planning Manager explained that the Local Development Plan would go out for public consultation in the new year subject to Members’ agreement. He added that any comments should be forwarded to the LDP Team.

The Working Group thanked the officers for the update provided.

Physical Programmes Update

The Director of Property and Projects outlined the undernoted report:

“1. Introduction

The Council's Physical Programme covers projects under a range of funding streams including the Capital Programme, the Leisure Transformation Programme, the Local Investment Fund (LIF), the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF); in addition, the programme covers projects that the Council is delivering on behalf of other agencies. This report outlines the status of projects under the Physical Programme. Further, a North Belfast Physical Programme map is attached at Appendix 1.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the Physical Programme update for North Belfast including the recently completed project – Historic Cemeteries – Clifton Street at Appendix 2.
- Note the updated list of external capital funding opportunities is attached at Appendix 3.

3. Local Investment Fund

LIF is a £9m fixed programme of capital investment in non-council neighbourhood assets, over two tranches: LIF 1 (2012-2015) - £5m total funding pot, allocated across each AWG areas; and LIF 2 (2015 -2019) - £4m allocation with the North being allocated £1.127m under LIF1 and £800,000 under LIF2.

Each LIF project proposal is taken through a Due Diligence process prior to any funding award. The table below outlines funding to date for each tranche, at key stages of the delivery process: 43 projects in total have received In Principle support under LIF1 and LIF2, of which 38 have been completed; 2 are at delivery stage; 1 is at pre-construction stage, and 1 remains at due diligence/ initial stage.

LIF breakdown – North	LIF 1		LIF 2	
Stage/ Description	Projects	Value (£)	Projects	Value (£)
Number of Projects Completed	23 (92%)	£996,500	16 (89%)	£708,201
Number of Projects On-going Delivery	1 (4%)	£66,000	1 (6%)	£75,000
Number of Projects in Pre-construction				
Number of Projects in Initial Stage (Due Diligence)	1 (4%)	£65,000	1 (6%)	£15,000
Total Number of Approved Projects	25 *	£1,127,500	17 **	£798,201

**This includes additional funding for a LIF 2 project, Ballysillan Youth for Christ.*

*** This includes additional funding for two LIF 1 projects, Marrowbone Parochial Hall and Jennymount Church.*

The table below provides an overview of progress and actions around the remaining live projects. Members are asked to note the status of the current LIF projects and the ongoing actions.

LIF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
NLIF2-22	Sailortown, St. Joseph's Church Refurbishment	£75,000	On Ground	On ground. Construction works on the gallery paused due to resourcing issues with the contractor. BCC officers are assisting the group to resolve this issue.	Continue engagement with group and HED.
NLIF057	Ardoyne Holy Cross Boxing Club (UV – ABC Trust Hub)	£7,317,000 <i>UV- £4,751,000 DfC- £1,300,000 FT - £1,200,000 LIF- £66,000</i>	On Ground	On ground. Partnership project with DfC, DfI, Flax Trust, and UV. Phase 2 of the project is complete. The final phase, installation of sports hall is due to complete Winter 2025.	Continue engagement with Group.
NLIF014	Westland Community Centre - new building	£1,084,172 <i>UV- £1,019,172 LIF- £65,000</i>	Design stage	Partnership project with UV. Letter of Offer has been signed by UV, BCC and Westland. Project approved by Due Diligence in September 2025. Integrated Design Team has been appointed.	Continue engagement with Group and TEO
NLIF2-23	Ardoyne Youth Club and Benview Community Centre	£15,000	Due Diligence stage	Funding agreement with group for signature and return. Benview works planned for early New Year with quotations having been provided for works required at Ardoyne Youth Club.	Continue engagement with Groups.

4. Belfast Investment Fund

Members are reminded that BIF is a £28m investment fund for regeneration partnership projects, with a minimum £250k investment from Council BIF – North Belfast was allocated £5.5m. In North Belfast, 7 projects have received an In-Principle funding commitment under BIF, thereby fully allocating its £5.5m: and 2 projects are on the longer BIF list. Each of the 'In Principle' projects are taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place.

Members are asked to note the status update of these projects provided below. The table provides a summary of BIF allocated projects i.e. project stage; project title; and funding allocated.

Summary of BIF allocated projects.

North	Stage 3 - Cavehill Tennis Club- £71k, Malgrove -£950k, Cultural Community Hub - £350k Stage 1 - Cliftonville Community Forum, Sunningdale Community Centre - no commitment
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BIF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/Recommendation
BIF15	Malgrove	£1,758,607	Stage 3 - Committed	Received approval at June 2025 Planning Committee. Issue of Green Form subject to NIEA and SES responses. Ongoing dialogue between planners, ICT and statutory bodies. Procurement of contractor underway – PQQ complete and ITT to be issued imminently.	Continue engagement with planners and statutory agencies re responses.
BIF43	Cultural Community Hub	£498,000 <i>BIF- £350,000 DfC- £74,000 Cost Risks- £74,000</i>	Stage 3 - Committed	Project signed off at DD. Works Contractor has been appointed and we are awaiting a programme from the contractor. Works period likely to be 10-12 months.	Works to commence on site late 2025, early 2026.

5. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF) is a capital fund with a current overall budget of £10,280,000 to help groups deliver capital projects that will make a real, long-term difference in their communities. The overall NRF allocation for North was £2,503,158. Five projects received an In Principle funding commitment and a contingency sum of £68,179 has also been retained. Each NRF project is taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place.

North Belfast – NRF overview

North	Stage 3— Belfast Orange Hall, Ulster Supported Employment Ltd (USEL), Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum, Sailortown Regeneration Group, Ardoyne Youth Enterprises, Stage 1 (Reserve)— <i>Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain, Indian Community Centre, North Belfast Working Men's Club, North City Business Centre, Quaker Service, Belfast Charitable Society, Sinclair Seamen's Presbyterian Church, Arts for All, Ligoniel Improvement Association</i>
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North Belfast – NRF projects at Stage 3- Delivery

Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
USEL - Green Growth & The Circular Economy	£518,191	Stage 3- Committed	Procurement stage. BCC reviewed comments on funding agreement and continues to liaise with USEL solicitor. Procurement of main contractor complete and will be awarded when funding agreement signed.	Continue engagement with the group.
Cliftonville Community Enterprise	£1,452,700	Stage 3- Committed	Development stage. Land boundary issue being addressed. BCC awaits an update from DfC regarding the vesting of land process.	Continue engagement with the group.
Ardoyne Youth Enterprises – Community Hub (Link to UV Project)	£1,717,763 UV- £1,563,067 NRF- £154,696	Stage 3- Committed	Business case stage. Awaiting supplementary Letter of Offer from UV. Second additional funding application has been successful. Outstanding legal issues are being progressed. Main contractor tender issued.	Continue engagement with the group and finalise due diligence.
Belfast Orange Hall Refurbishment	£154,696	Stage 3- Committed	On Ground. Contractor started works on 29th September with estimated completion w/c 15th December. First Progress meeting held 29th October. Works progressing.	Continue engagement with the group.
St Joseph's Restoration project	£154,696	Stage 3- Committed	Procurement stage. Planning permission is required; group already applied and received HED consent for ongoing works. Works identified that can be carried out with reduced budget. Structural survey finalised. ICT was appointed in February 2025. They are preparing tender for contractor. Surveys complete	Continue engagement with the group.

			and design pack produced. Submitted for Planning in September 2025.	
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6. Capital Programme

The Capital Programme is the rolling programme of enhancing existing Council assets or building / buying new ones. Members are reminded of the 3-stage approval process in place for every project on the council's Capital Programme, as agreed by SP&R Committee. The table below provides an update on current live projects in the North Belfast area.

Members are asked to note the updates on the Physical Programme.

North Belfast – Capital programme overview

Project	Status and update
North Foreshore - Development Sites Infrastructure Works	On ground. Stage 3 Committed. Gas Extraction Pipework contractor is on site. Expected completion of gas ring main installation is January 2026. Foul Pumping Station contractor appointed. NIE upgrade connections to fully service the site development have started (with completion anticipated at end of 2027).
Floral Hall Health & Safety Works	On ground. Stage 3 Committed. Health & Safety works completed. Options now being considered and discussions ongoing with other funders.
Belfast Zoo Improvement Works Phase 2	On ground. Stage 3 Committed. Progressing.
Cathedral Gardens (including Belfast Blitz)	<i>Stage 3 Committed.</i> Technical designs complete. Contractor has been appointed. Contractor currently mobilising and intends to be onsite early January 2026.
Girdwood Hub Health & Safety Works	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Urgent works to the roof of the Girdwood Community Hub building.
Sporting Pitches Investment 25/26	<i>Stage 3 Committed.</i> Options being worked up with CNS.
Alleygating Phase 5 – City wide	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Works progressing. Progress made with the commencement of the installation for Phase 5a. 115 gates remain to be installed and works to be completed by February 2026.
Communications Boards	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Inclusive communication boards in playgrounds. Progressing – boards on order, installations due to commence by February 2026.
Basketball Courts	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> The work includes creation or upgrades of basketball courts at five BCC park sites including Victoria Park, Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Park, Ormeau Park, Blacks Road Park and Páirc Nua Chollann. Concept designs being developed. We are currently out for procurement for a design team to take the project through delivery.

Electric Vehicle Charging Network	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Council agreed that officers begin the tender process based on a Concession Operating model and defers consideration of the specific locations of the proposed Phase One sites so that a broader list could be submitted to the Committee.
Historic Cemeteries – Clifton Street	Project completed. The Phase 1 H&S works to Clifton Street Cemetery are now completed.
Historic Cemeteries	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Restoration programme for heritage cemeteries in the city including Friars Bush, Knock Cemetery, Clifton Street Cemetery and Balmoral Cemetery. Consultants appointed to undertake surveys for the Phase 2 works. A successful application to DfC Historic Environment Fund (HEF) Revival Stream fund for a contribution with design fees for Phase 2 has been made.
Historic Tiled Street Signs	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Capital restoration programme for the historic Belfast tiled street signs across the city. Scoping of signs is continuing along with opportunities for external funding.
Reservoir Safety Programme (links to PEACEPLUS)	<i>Stage 3 Committed.</i> Reservoir improvements at Waterworks and Alexandra Park. SEUPB PEACEPLUS funding of €13.5m to enhance shared space and connectivity. Planning application submitted.
LTP - Girdwood Indoor Sports Facility	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Business case stage. DfC partnership project. Design team continues to develop designs to Planning Stage. Officers continue to respond to queries from DfC regarding the business case.
Relocation of Dunbar Link Cleansing Depot	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Business case stage. RIBA Stage 2 Concept Design complete. However, further discussions ongoing with C&NS to confirm the current requirements & schedule of accommodation for the new facility.
Waste Plan – Waste Transfer Station Upgrade	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Business case stage. Link to Duncrue Masterplan and citywide kerbside scheme.
Greening and Growing Project	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Biodiversity improvement and sustainable food growing development funded through Shared Island programme at the Waterworks. Procurement progressing. Due to be completed by February 2025.
Access to the Hills - Glencairn Park/ Ligoniel Park	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Business case stage. Part of the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan to develop connections to the Hills at Ligoniel, Glencairn and Cavehill. Design team procured. Project steering group and stakeholder engagement ongoing.
Access to the Hills – connections from Cavehill to Divis Mountain and Black Mtn	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Complementary scheme to developing further connections to the Hills at Ligoniel, Glencairn and Cavehill.
Loughside Playing Fields	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Creation of a modular changing and flexible space facility. Early stage design works underway with a view to moving to procurement.
Mobile Changing Places modular facility	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> This facility will be for use across the city. Specification developed and project moving to procurement.
Duncrue Masterplan	<i>Stage 1- Emerging.</i> Redevelopment of the whole Duncrue site which aims to improve the efficiency of the site. Strategic outline case being worked up.
North Foreshore - Giant's Park	A complex development agreement is in place with Giant's Park Belfast Limited (GPBL). This agreement commits GPBL to deliver over 250 acres of phased development over a number of years in four distinct hubs: Adventure Hub, Welcome Hub, Pit Stop Hub, Distributions and Logistics Hub. Adventure Hub - Members have approved at Council in November 2025,

	changes reflecting market conditions and planning advice. Under the MDA programme the first stage is an Adventure Hub which is currently in the planning process. The next stage of the programme is for a Distribution and Logistics Hub and a Pitstop Hub which comprises commercial uses including food and beverage uses and a hotel.
Belfast Bikes Expansion	New provider/ operator has been appointed. New scheme was launched 17 th September 2025.
Little York Street/ Little Patrick Street Public Realm Improvements	This work is under S76 Developer Contributions. Public Realm Improvements scheme. Consultants are continuing to work on the design and a planning application has been submitted.

7. Externally funded programmes

The Council is the delivery partner for several government departments on key capital investment programmes, including Urban Villages (UV) from the Executive Office and PEACE under SEUPB. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to North Belfast.

Urban Villages Initiative

The table below shows the status on UV projects in North Belfast – note the UV programme has a defined North Belfast geography (Ardoyne and Greater Ballysillan).

North Belfast – Urban Villages Initiative overview

Project	Status and update
ABC Trust Health & Leisure Hub (links to LIF programme)	On ground. Partnership project with DfC, DfI, Flax Trust, and UV. Phase 2 of the project is complete. The final phase, installation of sports hall is due to complete December 2025.
Ballysillan Playing Fields	On ground. Partnership project with UV, DfC and DfI. Works progressing, on-site. Pitch, Pump Track and Pavillion design progressing. Stakeholder engagement still ongoing. Project progressing well.
Ardoyne Youth Enterprises (AYE) Social Enterprise Project (links to NRF programme)	Business case stage. Awaiting supplementary Letter of Offer from UV. Additional funding applications have been successful. Outstanding legal issues are being progressed. Main contractor tender issued.
Sunningdale Community Centre (links to BIF programme)	Business case stage. Site for development identified. Group to submit possessory title application in consultation with their solicitor. Full treatment of invasive species required at site. UV to bring forward new business case including cost to treat.
Westland Community Centre (links to LIF programme)	Letter of offer received. Consultant team appointed.

PEACEPLUS – Capital Projects

Members are asked to note updates on capital projects under the PEACEPLUS Programme.

North Belfast – Capital Projects overview

Project	Status and update
Reconnected Belfast - Waterworks and Alexandra Park €13.5m SEUPB PEACEPLUS	Enhancements to shared space and connectivity within and between Waterworks and Alexandra Park. Planning ongoing. Integrated Consultancy Team has been appointed for detailed design stage.
Access to the Hills – Glencairn/ Ligoniel <i>Link to Capital Programme</i>	Part of the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. Plan to develop connections to the Hills at Ligoniel, Glencairn and Cavehill. Design Team has been appointed. Next stage is submission to Planning. Project steering group and stakeholder engagement ongoing.

Dfl funded projects

Below is the status update on project funded by Department for Infrastructure in North Belfast.

Dfl – North Belfast projects overview

Project	Status and update
Under The Bridges Public Realm	Consultants have been appointed to undertake design works and a planning submission is due to be issued November 2025. The works extend to Gamble Street, Tomb Street, Little Patrick Street & several areas under the M3 bridge to create enhanced amenity/urban recreation space.
Sailortown/ Titanic Quarter Bridge	Consultants have been appointed to undertake RIBA Stage 1 & 2 design services for a proposed new cross harbour pedestrian and cycle swing bridge. The bridge could complete the Harbour Loop and provide connections between Sailortown and North Belfast to the economic and educational opportunities on Queen's Island, as well as, providing a critical active travel connection to the newly completed York Street Train Station.

8. Capital funding opportunities

Members are asked to note the updated version of the list of external capital funding opportunities attached at Appendix 3 which may be of assistance to groups and clubs.”

The Director of Property and Projects stated that she would be providing an update on the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund projects to the next Area Working Group meetings and that she intended to hold a future meeting of the Working Group on a project site.

The Working Group noted the content of the report.

Citywide Vacant to Vibrant Grant Scheme

The Regeneration Project Officer provided the Working Group with an update on the Citywide Vacant to Vibrant Programme and highlighted the following key points:

- Recent correspondence from the Economy Minister which outlined that £45m had been committed to Local Economic Partnerships;

- DfC's funding extension of £500k would be subject to confirmation of a contribution from the Council;
- The Director of Finance had identified a further allocation of £200k to the contract extension; and
- Subject to approval processes, it was hoped that the scheme would reopen to applications in December, 2025.

He stated that further detail would be brought to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to agree direction and next steps.

The Working Group noted the content of the report.

Request to present: Community Places

The Working Group acceded to the request from Community Places to present to a future meeting.

Chairperson

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West Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 27th November, 2025

HYBRID MEETING OF THE WEST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillor McCann (Chairperson); and
Alderman McCoubrey;
Councillors Black, Carson, M. Donnelly,
Duffy, Garrett, McCallin and Verner.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Ms. F. Dennison, Neighbourhood Services Integration
Manager; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Beattie and R. McLaughlin.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 28th August were approved and adopted.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Duffy declared an interest in the 'Physical Programmes Update' report in that he was a Board Member of the Lagmore Youth Project. Since the matter did not become subject to debate or discussion, he was not required to retire from the meeting whilst the matter was under consideration.

Glencairn Community Project - Presentation

Further to its meeting of 28th August, the Working Group received a presentation from Jennifer Taylor and Sonia Dickson, representing the Glencairn Community Project, who were in attendance to provide an update on the work of the organisation. The Working Group was informed that the principal aim of the project was the establishment a community hub within Glencairn, an estate which she described as a "forgotten" part of Belfast. The new hub, work on which was scheduled to commence in 2027, would help bring the community together and provide opportunities to local for all age groups. The representatives then outlined the additional benefits that would be realised through the hub, such as the provision of an after schools programme and the use of the building by the local youth club and concluded that the hub would instil a sense of community pride in the area.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Working Group, congratulated the representatives of the Glencairn Community Project on their work and the Members noted the information which had been provided.

Local Policies Plan

(Mr. D. O’Kane (Acting Planning Manager (Plans and Policy)), Mr. M. Smithson (Senior Planning Officer), Ms. J. Doherty (Senior Planning Officer) and Mr. M. Whittaker (Senior Planning Officer) attended in connection with this item.)

The Acting Planning Manager presented an overview of housing and environmental planning proposals for West Belfast, focusing on the need for strategic zoning, site utilisation, and policy adjustments to meet housing demands, support economic activities, and preserve environmental assets. He gave an overview on the current housing numbers, proposed zones for housing. The Members were provided with information relating to Housing Management Areas (HMAs) and Inner Housing Needs (IHNs), and Housing Management Order (HMO) policy areas. With regard to employment and retail designations, an overview was provided of the proposed areas for employment land and retail cores. The importance of balancing residential, employment, and retail needs to support the area's economic growth and community development was emphasised to Members.

It was pointed out that the proposals sought to create a balanced and sustainable urban environment which addressed the needs of residents and businesses while protecting the area's natural and built heritage. The Planning Manager explained that the plan would go out for public consultation in the new year, subject to agreement. He added that any comments should be forwarded to the LDP Team.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

Vacant to Vibrant Scheme – Update

(Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager - City Centre Regeneration, attended in connection with this item)

The Senior Development Manager provided the Members with an update on the Citywide Vacant to Vibrant Programme and with a list of proposed engagement sessions planned in the west of the City in January 2026.

The Working Group noted:

- the proposed extension of the Citywide Vacant to Vibrant scheme, subject to the approval by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee; and
- the proposed engagement sessions planned, pending the launch of the city-wide extension.

Physical Programme Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

1. Introduction

The Council’s Physical Programme covers projects under a range of funding streams including the Capital Programme, the Leisure Transformation Programme, the Local Investment Fund (LIF), the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF); in addition, the

programme covers projects that the Council is delivering on behalf of other agencies. This report outlines the status of projects under the Physical Programme. Further, a West Belfast Physical Programme map is attached at Appendix 1.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the physical programme update for West Belfast including recently completed project – Black Mountain Shared Space Project Phase 2 at Appendix 2.
- Note the awards and recognition for Shankill Shared Women's Centre project which won two prestigious awards. The first is the 2025 REGIOSTARS Award which recognises it as one of the top projects in Europe for promoting inclusion and delivering life changing impact within the local community. The second was the RICS UK Awards 2025 for Community Benefit Project of the Year.
- Note the updated list of external capital funding opportunities is attached at Appendix 3.

3. Belfast Investment Fund

Members are reminded that BIF is a £28m investment fund for regeneration partnership projects, with a minimum £250k investment. The West AWG had a total allocation of £9m comprising £5.5m from the original allocation, an additional £1.2m which was ring-fenced for projects in the Shankill area when this became part of the West AWG following the Council elections in 2015, and £2.5m which was ringfenced for projects in the Colin area following LGR. The table below provides a summary of BIF allocated projects.

Summary of BIF allocated projects

West	Stage 3—Davitt's GAC—£1m; Raidió Fáilte—£950k; St Comgall's- £3.5m; Colin Glen Forest Park—£2.5m; Greater Shankill Community Council - RBL project- £300k, Glencairn Community Project— £700k Stage 2— St Mary's CBS— no commitment Stage 1— An Sportslann; Suffolk Community Forum; Belfast Hills- Black Mountain Access—no commitment
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The table below shows an overview of the remaining BIF project –

BIF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
BIF09	Glencairn Community Project	£900,000 <i>BIF- £700,000; NRF- £200,000</i>	Committed; Due Diligence	<i>Link to NRF project.</i> DfC to provide funding towards project. Designs have been submitted to planning. NIW response has highlighted public foul sewer capacity issues. Sale/	Continue engagement with the group and partners.

				lease of land is being progressed with NIHE. Concerns regarding capacity and sustainability of the group has been raised by Due Diligence.	
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4. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF) is a capital fund with a current overall budget of £10,280,000 to help groups deliver capital projects that will make a real, long-term difference in their communities. The overall NRF allocation for West was £3,446,654 (West - £2,721,133 and Shankill - £725,521) and 6 projects received an In-Principle funding commitment. Each NRF project is taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place.

West Belfast – NRF overview

West	<p>Stage 3— Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre- £684,058; Croí na Carraige - 'The Heart of the Rock' - Phase 1- £537,058; The Mountainview Hotel- £1,500,000; The ACT Initiative Community Hub & Visitors' Centre- £295,000; Glencairn Community Project (Hub)- £200,000, The Road- £210,759; <i>Shankill contingency- £19,762.</i></p> <p>Stage 1— <i>Improving the Environment at Patrick Sarsfield's GAC, Corrigan Park Redevelopment Project, WCC New Purpose-Built Childcare and Family Support Centre, Curam Leanaí na Fuisgeoige, Conway Mill - redeveloping for the future, Westcourt Uplift Project, Lamh Dhearg Renewable Energy & External Lighting Improvement scheme, St. Gall's Milltown Community Development, Colin Glen Eco Air-Cruizer, CNP Regeneration of Cloona House</i></p>
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West Belfast – NRF projects at Stage 3 - Delivery

Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre	£1.1m NRF- £684,058 Group- £463,490	Stage 3- Committed	On ground. Main works contractor due to complete before Christmas 2025. The club's design team is appointing a subcontractor for the heritage interpretative design and fit-out. Sectional handover of the indoor pitch will be considered. Project completion expected by spring 2026.	Continue engagement with the group. Club's Design Team to provide the council with an update, on procurement of Heritage Fit Out subcontractor.
Croí na Carraige - 'The Heart of the Rock' - Phase 1	£787,058 NRF- £537,058 An Ciste- £250,000	Stage 3- Committed	Development stage. Design team is progressing work. At present approx. a further £750k is required to meet the initial business case estimate for Phase 1. Fundraising activities are ongoing along with engagement with other funders. Glór na Móna is planning to use the site for some	Continue engagement with the group.

			meanwhile activities until construction of the main project commences.	
The Mountainview Hotel	£1.5m	Stage 3- Committed	Development stage. New location for project being proposed. Awaiting details.	Continue engagement with the group.
The ACT Initiative Community Hub & Visitors' Centre	£295,000	Stage 3- Committed	On ground. Heating element of project has been completed. Exhibition works due to complete in April 2026.	Continue engagement with the group.
Glencairn Community Project	£900,000 <i>NRF- £200,000</i> <i>BIF- £700,000</i>	Stage 3- Committed	Development stage. <i>As above at BIF09.</i> DfC to provide funding towards project. Designs have been submitted to planning. NIW response has highlighted public foul sewer capacity issues. Sale/ lease of land is being progressed with NIHE. Concerns regarding capacity and sustainability of the group has been raised by Due Diligence.	Continue engagement with the group.
The Road	£210,759	Stage 3- Committed	Development stage. Planning renewal is in process.	Continue engagement with the group.

5. Capital Programme

The Capital Programme is the rolling programme of enhancing existing Council assets or building/buying new ones. The table below provides an update on current live projects on the Council's Capital Programme in the West Belfast area. Members are asked to note status and update.

West Belfast – Capital programme overview

Project	Status and update
Playground Improvement Programme 25/26	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Agreed at P&C Committee in May 2025. Playgrounds selected for refurbishment are White Rise, Ohio Street, Roddens Crescent, and Finvoy Street playgrounds. White Rise playground refurbishment now underway, completion expected by end of January 2026 (weather permitting).
Sporting Pitches Investment 25/26	<i>Stage 3 Committed.</i> Options being worked up with CNS.
Alleygating Phase 5 – City wide	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Works progressing. Progress made with the commencement of the installation for Phase 5a. 115 gates remain to be installed and works to be completed by February 2026.
Access to Hills - Black Mountain/ Upper Whiterock Pathway	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Tender preparation stage. Planning ongoing. The procurement for the design team to take the project through to construction is ongoing, with the PQQ stage completed and ITT to complete in early 2026. Match funding opportunities are still being explored for this project.

Communications Boards in playgrounds	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Inclusive communication boards in playgrounds. Progressing – boards on order, installations due to commence by February 2026.
Basketball Courts	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> The work includes creation or upgrades of basketball courts at five BCC park sites including Victoria Park, Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Park, Ormeau Park, Blacks Road Park and Páirc Nua Chollann. Concept designs being developed. We are currently out for procurement for a design team to take the project through delivery.
Electric Vehicle Charging Network	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Council agreed that officers begin the tender process based on a Concession Operating model and defers consideration of the specific locations of the proposed Phase One sites so that a broader list could be submitted to the Committee.
Historic Cemeteries	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Restoration programme for heritage cemeteries in the city including Friar's Bush, Knock Cemetery, Clifton Street Cemetery and Balmoral Cemetery. Consultants appointed to undertake surveys for the Phase 2 works. The Phase 1 Health & Safety works at Clifton Street have been completed. Successful application to DfC Historic Environment Fund (HEF) Revival Stream fund for a contribution towards design fees for Phase 2.
Historic Tiled Street Signs	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Capital restoration programme for the historic Belfast tiled street signs across the city. Scoping of signs is continuing along with opportunities for external funding.
Colin Active Travel – Phase 1 (formerly Colin Greenway)	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Meetings are continuing between the Council and key stakeholders DfI, DfC and NIHE on the Colin Active Travel Plan. Outline business case prepared and request at November SP&R to move to Stage 3.
Woodvale Park Sensory Garden	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Upgrade to sensory garden. Design team appointed to take scheme to tender stage with a view to appointing a contractor to take works forward.
Access to the Hills - connections from Cavehill to Divis Mountain and Black Mountain	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Complementary scheme to developing further connections to the Hills at Ligoniel, Glencairn and Cavehill. Part of this is included in the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. Plan to develop connections to the Hills at Ligoniel, Glencairn and Cavehill and connecting to the National Trust developments at Divis Mountains.
Mobile Changing Places modular facility	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> This facility will be for use across the city. Specification developed and project moving to procurement.
Lenadoon Greenway	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Procurement of consultant for feasibility study underway and appointment due December 2025.
Fernhill House and Courtyard	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> Consultant appointed for feasibility study following agreement at Committee on 22 November 2024 to explore options.
Belfast Bikes Expansion	New provider/ operator has been appointed. New scheme was launched 17 th September 2025.
Lidl, Stewartstown Road Suffolk 3G Pitch and Lenadoon Park Pitch Improvements	This work is under S76 Developer Contributions for Open Space. <i>Suffolk pitch</i> - Planning application approved. Will require additional funding. <i>Lenadoon Park</i> – Grass soccer pitch improvement works completed. MUGA improvements programmed for Autumn 2025.

Christ the Redeemer, Lagmore Drive Lagmore Youth Project proposal	This work is under S76 Developer Contributions. Discussions have taken place regarding Lagmore Youth Project potential construction of a modular building to replace their existing marquee tent.
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6. Externally funded programmes

The Council is the delivery partner for several government departments on key capital investment programmes, namely Urban Villages (UV) from the Executive Office, PEACEPLUS, DfI, DfC, DoJ as well as schemes with IFI. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to West Belfast.

Urban Villages Initiative

The table below shows the status on UV projects in West Belfast – note the UV programme has a defined West Belfast geography (Colin area).

West Belfast – UV overview

Project	Status and update
Colin Community Health and Wellbeing Hub	Business case stage. Completion of the business case is scheduled for early 2026.

PEACEIV/ PEACEPLUS – Capital Projects

Members are asked to note updates on the capital projects that are related to the PEACE Programmes.

West Belfast – Capital Projects overview

Project	Status and update
Shankill Shared Women's Centre	Awards and recognition. Shankill Shared Women's Centre won two prestigious awards. The first is the REGIOSTARS Award which recognises it as one of the top projects in Europe for promoting inclusion and delivering life changing impact within the local community. The second was the RICS UK Awards 2025 for Community Benefit Project of the Year.
Forth Meadow Community Greenway	Beacons to be installed late 2025 early 2026. Signage package out to tender at present. Tender returned expected mid December 2025 with a view to appointing a contractor.
Distillery Street Redevelopment Project	Part of the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. Design Team has been appointed. Regular meetings with stakeholder group and Design Team. Multiple land ownership in the area discussions ongoing with relevant partners.

Other externally funded projects

Below is the status update on capital projects funded by other partners in West Belfast.

Other external funders – West Belfast projects overview

Project	Status and update
Black Mountain Shared Space Project – Phase 2	<i>Via IFI, DoJ, DfC</i> Project completed. Main building works completed and handed over to BMSS in Summer 2025. Fit-out of units planned to commence in October 2025. BCC assisting management of further funding from DfC, DOJ and IFI to aid the fit-out of the Boys and Girls Clubs units, as they are seen by BMSS as a key tenant. Should be completed in early November 2025.

After discussion, the Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

Chairperson

East Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 4th December, 2025

MEETING OF THE EAST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

HELD IN THE CONOR ROOM AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: The High Sheriff, Councillor McAteer;
Alderman Rodgers; and
Councillors R. Brooks, D. Douglas, de Faoite,
P. Donnelly, Ferguson, Flynn, Long and Smyth.

In attendance: Ms. M. Wilson, Neighbourhood Integration Manager; and
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

Chairperson

In the absence of the Chairperson, Alderman Lawlor, the Working Group agreed that Councillor de Faoite would act as Chairperson for the duration of the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of the Chairperson (Alderman Lawlor), Alderman Copeland and Councillors Abernethy, Bower and S. Douglas.

Minutes

The Working Group agreed that the minutes of the meeting of 4th September were an accurate record of proceedings.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor D. Douglas declared an interest in relation to the item "Physical Programmes Update" in that his children played for Bloomfield Football Club, which was referenced within the report under the Local Investment Fund update. As this project did not become the subject of discussion, the Member was not required to leave the meeting.

Physical Programmes Update

(Mr. D. Logan, Senior Programme Delivery Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Senior Programme Delivery Manager presented the undernoted report to the Working Group:

“1. Introduction

The Council’s Physical Programme covers projects under a range of funding streams including the Capital Programme, the Leisure Transformation Programme, the Local Investment Fund (LIF), the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF); in addition, the programme covers projects that the Council is delivering on behalf of other agencies. This report outlines the status of projects under the Physical Programme. Further, an East Belfast Physical Programme map is attached at Appendix 1.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the physical programme update for East Belfast including recently completed projects – Nettlefield Multi-Sports and Clonduff FC storage facilities, and Lands at Castlehill Manor – Belmont Park Improvements at Appendix 2.
- Agree in principle the change in project location and recommend to SP&R Committee to approve the relocation of Bloomfield Community Association BIF project from Hyndford Street to Dixon Playing Fields.
- Note the updated list of external capital funding opportunities attached at Appendix 3.

3. Local Investment Fund

LIF is a £9m fixed programme of capital investment in non-council neighbourhood assets, over two tranches: LIF 1 (2012-2015) - £5m total funding pot, allocated across each AWG area; and LIF 2 (2015 -2019) - £4m allocation with the East being allocated £1.127m under LIF1 and £1.2m under LIF2.

Each LIF project proposal is taken through a Due Diligence process prior to any funding award. The table below outlines funding spend to date for each tranche, at key stages of the delivery process: 22 projects received In Principle support under LIF1 and LIF2, 19 have been completed, 1 project is at delivery stage and 1 project is at due diligence stage.

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LIF breakdown – East	LIF 1		LIF 2	
Stage/ Description	Projects	Amount/ Value (£)	Projects	Amount/ Value (£)
Number of Projects Completed	8 (80%)	£931,902	12 (100%)	£1,161,589
Number of Projects in Delivery	1(10%)	£30,000		
Number of Projects in Pre-construction				
Number of Projects at Initial Stage (Due Diligence)	1 (10%)	£70,000		
Total Number of Approved Projects	10	£1,031,902	12	£1,161,589

The table below provides an overview of progress and actions around the remaining live projects.

Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action / Recommendation
ELIF31	Bloomfield FC, Clonduff FC, East Belfast FC and Dundela FC, Tullycarnet, Cregagh Wanderers, Nettlefield Multi-Sports and Bredagh GAC – storage facilities	£65,000 (£30k plus £35k reallocation)	On Ground	Bloomfield FC, East Belfast FC, Tullycarnet FC, Cregagh Wanderers, Bredagh GAC – completed. Nettlefield Multi-Sports and Clonduff FC storage facilities delivered/ completed. Dundela FC – Club would prefer that container is delivered after the proposed NRF pitch works complete.	Continue engagement with the groups.
ELIF29	Cycling Ireland	£70,000	Due Diligence	The group have updated the council on their priorities. Officers are waiting for the group to provide more detail on the desired specification for the proposed facilities. A proposal to refresh the feasibility study has been discussed, but there is no funding for it. Group considering possibility of seeking match funding, but no funding has been secured yet.	Continue engagement with the group and key stakeholders.

4. Belfast Investment Fund

Members are reminded BIF is a £28m investment fund for regeneration partnership projects, with a minimum £250,000 investment from Council. In East Belfast, 9 projects have received an In-Principle funding commitment under BIF. There are 5 projects on the longer BIF list. Each of

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the In-Principle projects are taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place. The table below provides a summary of BIF allocated projects i.e. project stage; project title; and the funding allocated.

Summary of BIF allocated projects:

East	<p>Stage 3—Willowfield—£560k; H&W Welders—£2.37m; Strand—£1.5m; Bloomfield—£655k</p> <p>Stage 2—Lagan Village Youth & Community—no commitment</p> <p>Stage 1—East Belfast Mission; Belmont Bowling Club; Bloomfield Presbyterian Church; St. John's Orangefield, Church of Ireland, Tullycarnet Community Support Services—no commitment / on long list</p>
Outer East	<p>Stage 3 —TAGIT- £434k; Hanwood—£396k; Lisnasharragh Community Schools—£398k; Braniel—£390k; Castlereagh Presbyterian Church—£382k</p>

The table below provides an overview of the remaining projects. Members are asked to note the actions and recommendations.

Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
BIF12	Strand Arts Centre	<p>£6,782,069</p> <p><i>LUF- £4,094,000</i> <i>BIF- £1,550,000</i> <i>HF- £255,000</i> <i>(Development Grant),</i> <i>£768,069</i> <i>(Delivery Grant)</i> <i>Several Trusts- £115,000</i></p>	On Ground	On Ground. Works began on site in early January 2025 and are progressing well, with completion due in second quarter of 2026. Discussion ongoing with DfC regarding potential additional funding. Site visit with Councillors took place 4/9/2025.	Continue engagement with the group and funders.
BIF13	Bloomfield Community Association	<p>£715,009</p> <p><i>BIF - £655,000</i> <i>LIF - £60,009</i></p>	Stage 3 - Commitment - In Principle	New project location being proposed – see details below.	AWG is asked to consider/ agree on the change in project location.

Bloomfield Community Association (BIF13)

Bloomfield Community Association (BCA) has been allocated £715k towards demolition of their existing premises at Hyndford Street in East Belfast and creation of a new facility with community spaces, offices, and a multi-use hall. In June 2025, DfC announced plans to contribute funding towards the project. BCA has operated from their premises on Hyndford Street for over 40 years and currently deliver a wide range of activities to support the local community including a

playgroup, after school club, youth programme, detached youth work, yoga classes, senior activities and a musical theatre group. The success of the organisation has outgrown the existing building, and the building's age, condition, size and layout limit the potential for additional activities to take place. Notwithstanding the need for bigger premises, the existing site is confined, and Hyndford Street is a narrow, residential street with no outdoor space or dedicated parking provision.

BCA has approached BCC with a request to relocate to Dixon Playing Fields. As a more spacious site, it is considered that Dixon Playing Fields presents a better opportunity to develop a fit for purpose facility that meets the needs of the organisation and the wider community. The relocation to Dixon Playing Fields would also complement the existing community facilities (pitches and greenway) in the area which in turn would provide open space, greater accessibility and parking provision. Upon approval, officers will commence the due diligence process and designs will be developed further. Engagement will also be undertaken with Estates, Planning and existing user groups.

Members are asked to agree in principle the change in project location and recommend to SP&R Committee to approve the relocation of Bloomfield Community Association BIF project from Hyndford Street to Dixon Playing Fields. Also, Members are asked to authorise officers to explore lease arrangements to facilitate development of Bloomfield Community Association at Dixon Playing Fields.

5. Social Outcomes Fund

SOF is £4m ringfenced capital investment programme with a focus on local community tourism projects. There is one project under SOF for East Belfast - Eastside Visitor Centre – with an In-Principle funding commitment. Similar to BIF, all projects are subject to Due Diligence process prior to any funding award.

Project	SOF Award	Status	Action/ Recommendation
EastSide Hotel & Visitor Centre (links to NRF project)	£2,050,000 <i>Comprising: SOF- £700,000 NRF- £950,000 Group- £400k</i>	Continuing to work with the design team and project promoter to finalise a design which meets the needs of the group and project budget.	Continued engagement with the group.

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6. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF) is a capital fund with a current overall budget of £10,280,000 to help groups deliver capital projects that will make a real, long-term difference in their communities. The overall NRF allocation for East was £2,351,551 and 4 projects received an In-Principle funding commitment. Each NRF project is taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place. Projects remaining at Stage 2 continue to have the support of a Client Manager for their proposals.

East Belfast – NRF overview

East	Stage 3 - Eastside Container Hotel, Portview Exchange, Development of sporting hub at Wilgar Park, Hosford Community Homes: 335 Newtownards Road Stage 2 - Impact Belfast, Nevin Spence Centre Visitor Experience
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East Belfast – NRF projects at Stage 3 - Delivery

Project name	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
EastSide Hotel & Visitor Centre (links to SOF project)	£2,050,000 <i>Comprising: SOF- £700k NRF- £950k Group- £400k</i>	Stage 3 - Committed	Continuing to work with the design team and project promoter to finalise a design which meets the needs of the group and project budget.	Continued engagement with the group.
Portview Exchange	£600,000	Stage 3 - Committed	Linked to UV project. Business case being updated and is at final draft stage. Design team procurement prepared and ready to be issued on receipt of letter of offer.	Continue engagement with the group.
Development of sporting hub at Wilgar Park	£500,000	Stage 3 - Committed	Live planning application is ongoing. The Council and group continue to actively seek alternative funding to cover shortfall, which is estimated of up to £300k. The club were unsuccessful in obtaining the NI Football Fund but are aware DCMS funding will be reopening in the new year.	Continue engagement with the group and design team.
Hosford Community Homes: 335 Newtownards Road	£300,000	Stage 3 - Committed	Application submitted to Wolfson Foundation for funding with decision due in December. Once the full funding package is secured, a design team can be appointed.	Continue engagement with the group.

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7. Capital Programme

The Capital Programme is the rolling programme of enhancing existing Council assets or building / buying new assets. Members are reminded of the 3-stage approval process in place for every project on council's Capital Programme, as agreed by SP&R Committee. The table below provides an update on current live projects in East Belfast. Members are asked to note the status and update.

East Belfast – Capital programme overview

Project	Status and update
New Crematorium	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Technical Design is complete. Procurement exercise for the main contractor has been completed. A review of the business case has been undertaken. In September 2025, a dedicated Members workshop was held to inform a Strategic Analysis and Options Appraisal on the project. An additional report will be brought back to Committee.
Cremated Remains Burial Plots	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> A procurement process to appoint a contractor has started.
Playground Improvement Programme 25/26	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Agreed at P&C Committee in May 2025. Playgrounds selected for refurbishment are White Rise, Ohio Street, Roddens Crescent, and Finvoy Street playgrounds. Progressing.
Sporting Pitches Investment 25/26	<i>Stage 3 Committed.</i> Options being worked up with CNS.
Alleygating Phase 5 – City wide	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Works progressing. Progress made with the commencement of the installation for Phase 5a. 115 gates remain to be installed and works to be completed by February 2026.
Communications Boards in playgrounds	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Inclusive communication boards in playgrounds. Progressing – boards on order, installations due to commence by February 2026.
Basketball Courts	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> The work includes creation or upgrades of basketball courts at five BCC park sites including Victoria Park, Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Park, Ormeau Park, Blacks Road Park and Páirc Nua Chollann. Concept designs being developed. We are currently out for procurement for a design team to take the project through delivery.
Historic Cemeteries	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Restoration programme for heritage cemeteries in the city including Friar's Bush, Knock Cemetery, Clifton Street Cemetery, Balmoral Cemetery and Shankill Graveyard. Consultants appointed to undertake surveys for the Phase 2 works. The Phase 1 Health & Safety works at Clifton Street have been completed. Successful application to DfC Historic Environment Fund (HEF) Revival Stream fund for a contribution towards design fees for Phase 2.

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Historic Tiled Street Signs	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Capital restoration programme for the historic Belfast tiled street signs across the city. Scoping of signs is continuing along with opportunities for external funding.
Sydenham Greenway	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Ongoing discussion with DfI regarding a partnership approach. Suggestion for Council to deliver the 'feeder path' through Tommy Patton Millenium Park with DfI part funding. Business Case has been submitted to DfI Greenways Fund (50% funding). A decision is awaited in December 2025.
Electric Vehicle Charging Network	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Council agreed that officers begin the tender process based on a Concession Operating model and defers consideration of the specific locations of the proposed Phase One sites so that a broader list could be submitted to the Committee.
Mobile Changing Places modular facility	<i>Stage 1 – Emerging.</i> This facility will be for use across the city. Specification developed and project moving to procurement.
Shared Youth and Community Facility Inner East	<i>Stage 1- Emerging.</i> Link to Ballymacarrett Area Masterplan. Education Authority (EA) is continuing to develop a business case for capital funding for youth provision at the council owned Ballymacarrett site. Officers are continuing to liaise with EA on the way forward.
Ballymacarrett Area Masterplan	<i>Stage 1- Emerging.</i> Link to the Shared Youth and Community Facility Inner East project.
Belfast Bikes Expansion	New provider/ operator has been appointed. New scheme was launched 17 th September 2025.
Lands at Castlehill Manor – Belmont Park Improvements	This work is under S76 Developer Contributions for Open Space. Project completed. Belmont Park woodland trail and accessible picnic area completed in Spring 2023. Addition accessible equipment was installed at Belmont Park in September 2025.

8. Externally funded programmes

The Council is the delivery partner for a number of government departments on significant capital investment programmes, namely the Urban Villages Initiative (UV) funded by the Executive Office, and number of schemes with DfC. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to East Belfast.

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Urban Villages Initiative

Project	Status and update
Titanic People Exhibition	<i>Project underway.</i> Due to project delays, handover is expected to take place in early 2026.
Portview Exchange <i>Link to NRF 'Portview Exchange'</i>	<i>Business case stage.</i> Business case being updated and is at final draft stage. Design team procurement prepared and ready to be issued on receipt of letter of offer.

PEACEPLUS – Capital Project

Members are asked to note updates on the capital project under the PEACEPLUS Programme.

East Belfast – PEACEPLUS LAP Capital Project overview

Project	Status and update
Sanctuary Theatre	Part of the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. Refurbishment of the Sanctuary Theatre at Castlereagh Street. Design Team has been appointed. Steering group and design team meeting held and project progressing.

Dfl funded project

Below is the status update on project funded by Department for Infrastructure in East Belfast.

Dfl – East Belfast projects overview

Project	Status and update
Sailortown/ Titanic Quarter Bridge	Consultants have been appointed to undertake RIBA Stage 1 & 2 design services for a proposed new cross harbour pedestrian and cycle swing bridge. The bridge could complete the Harbour Loop and provide connections between Sailortown and North Belfast to the economic and educational opportunities on Queen's Island, as well as, providing a critical active travel connection to the newly completed York Street Train Station.

9. Capital funding opportunities

Members are asked to note the updated version of the list of external capital funding opportunities attached at Appendix 3 which may be of assistance to groups and clubs."

The Senior Programme Delivery Manager highlighted that a request had been received from the Bloomfield Community Association, which had been allocated funds towards the demolition of its existing premises at Hyndford Street and the creation of a new facility, to relocate to Dixon Playing Fields. In response, a Member welcomed the proposed relocation of the project and stated that it would provide the Bloomfield

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Community Association with a better opportunity whilst also benefiting Dixon Playing Fields.

During discussion, the Senior Programme Manager answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to the Local Investment Fund and the Capital Programme projects outlined within the report, including the Historic Tiled Street Signs Programme and the Belfast Bikes Expansion.

In response to a Member's query, the Senior Programme Manager advised that he would provide the Working Group with further information in respect of land adjacent to the Knocknagoney Community Centre within the Knocknagoney Linear Park.

After discussion, the Working Group:

- i. noted the physical programme update for East Belfast including the following recently completed projects:
 - Nettlefield Multi-Sports and Clonduff Football Club storage facilities; and
 - Lands at Castlehill Manor – Belmont Park Improvements;
- ii. agreed, in principle, to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the Bloomfield Community Association project be relocated from Hyndford Street to Dixon Playing Fields; and
- iii. noted the updated list of external capital funding opportunities.

Citywide Vacant to Vibrant Grant Scheme

(Ms. C. Persic, City Regeneration Development Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Working Group considered a report which provided an update on the Citywide Vacant to Vibrant Scheme.

The City Regeneration Development Manager advised the Working Group that funding had been secured from the Department for Communities which, alongside additional Council funding, had enabled the extension of the Citywide Vacant to Vibrant Scheme. It was reported that the extended citywide scheme had reopened for applications at the beginning of December, 2025, and that information sessions to promote the scheme would be held across the city in January, 2026.

The Working Group noted that the Citywide Vacant to Vibrant Scheme had been extended and that information sessions would be held in January, 2026, to promote the scheme.

Presentation

Phoenix Education Centre

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. E. Shaw, Executive Director, Phoenix Education Centre, to the meeting.

Ms. Shaw provided the Working Group with an overview of the Phoenix Education Centre, which had been founded to tackle educational underachievement within East Belfast and provide mentoring, support, education and training opportunities for the local community.

Ms. Shaw outlined the wide range of daytime and evening programmes that the centre currently delivered. She emphasised that the programmes had been co-designed with the community to identify local needs in order to improve the education of children with low school attendance, disengaged youth and disengaged young men. In addition to the programmes being delivered, she pointed out that the centre also provided wraparound support which included meals, uniforms, counselling and referrals.

The Working Group was informed that the education model of the Phoenix Education Centre combined accredited Open College Network Northern Ireland (OCN NI) courses, mentoring and personal development in partnership with schools, Councils, and youth and community organisations, which ensured its work complemented the wider education system.

In concluding her presentation, Ms. Shaw stated that the centre was operating at capacity, and she drew the Members' attention to the challenges it currently faced. In respect of funding, Ms. Shaw explained that the centre operated on short-term project grants which did not provide long-term stability and that, unlike schools, the centre must secure its own funding each year. She highlighted the need for community education to be recognised as part of a more equitable education system.

Following the presentation, the Members thanked Ms. Shaw for the work currently being undertaken by the Phoenix Education Centre to tackle educational underachievement within East Belfast.

During discussion, Ms. Shaw answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to the support for young people to reintegrate back into the school system, the support for neurodivergent pupils and improving accessibility within schools, and the funding challenges faced by the Phoenix Education Centre.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked Ms. Shaw for the presentation and the information provided to the Working Group and she retired from the meeting.

Noted.

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Thursday, 4th December, 2025

Local Policies Plan (Verbal Update)

(Mr. D. O’Kane, Acting Planning Manager, Plans and Policy, Mr. M. Smithson, Senior Planning Officer, Ms. J. Doherty, Senior Planning Officer, and Mr. G. Thornton, Senior Planning Officer, attended in connection with this item.)

The Acting Planning Manager and the Senior Planning Officers provided the Working Group with an overview of the site-specific proposals, designations and land use zonings for the development and use of lands within East Belfast as identified through the draft Local Policies Plan (LPP) as part of the Local Development Plan (LDP).

Housing

The Senior Planning Officers presented an update on the proposed zones and designations for housing, including mixed-use, within East Belfast. The Senior Planning Officers also provided further information in respect of the ‘Call for Sites’ process, which provided an opportunity for individuals, landowners and developers to suggest sites within the Council area for new development, and the policy areas in relation to Housing Management Areas (HMAs) and Housing Management Orders (HMOs).

Employment and Retail

The Working Group was provided with an update in relation to the proposed LPP designations in relation to employment and retail. The Senior Planning Officers outlined proposed areas for employment land, retail cores and mixed-use sites, and emphasised the need to balance residential, employment, and retail to support the area's economic growth and community development.

Environmental

In relation to the environmental assets within East Belfast, the Senior Planning Officers highlighted the proposed Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs), Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs) and Areas of Townscape Character (ATCs) within East Belfast.

During discussion, the Acting Planning Manager and the Senior Planning Officers answered a number of questions from the Members in relation to specific sites outlined within the presentation.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked the officers for the presentation and the Working Group noted the information provided.

Chairperson



Subject:	Contracts Update
Date:	19 December 2025
Reporting Officer:	Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Corporate Services
Contact Officer:	Noleen Bohill, Head of Commercial and Procurement Services

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 40px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime 									
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Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
	<p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek approval from members for tenders, contract modifications to contract term and Single Tender Actions (STA)

	<p>And to ask members to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note retrospective Single Tender Actions (STAs) and non-procurement expenditure • Note the update regarding STA and Contracts <£30k Reporting set out in Section 5.
2.0	Recommendations
	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1) • Approve the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2) • Approve the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 3) • Note the award of retrospective STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 4) • Note the non-procurement expenditure (Table 5)
3.0	Competitive Tenders
	<p>Section 2.5 of the Scheme of Delegation states Chief Officers have delegated authority to authorise a contract for the procurement of goods, services or works over the statutory limit of £30,000 following a tender exercise where the council has approved the invitation to tender.</p> <p>Standing Order 60(a) states any contract that exceeds the statutory amount (currently £30,000) shall be made under the Corporate Seal. Under Standing Order 51(b) the Corporate Seal can only be affixed when there is a resolution of the Council.</p> <p>Standing Order 54 states that every contract shall comply with the relevant requirements of national and European legislation.</p> <p>The Committee is asked to approve the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1).</p>
4.0	Single Tender Actions (STAs)
	<p>The Council's current Single Tender Action (STA) process, which has been in place since 2020, provides assurance that the Council continues to comply with its obligations under the Procurement Act 2023 'the Act' and internal governance arrangements including required controls and approvals. It mirrors the Act setting out the exceptional and specific circumstances when a STA can be used (see STA/ Direct Award Reasons Table in Appendix 1).</p> <p>To support Officers understanding and to build capability, CPS offer support training and guidance on the STA process.</p>

	<p>In line with Standing Order 55 the Committee is asked to approve the award of the STAs in Appendix 1 (Table 2).</p> <p>In line with Standing Order 55 the Committee is asked to note the award of the retrospective STAs Appendix 1 (Table 4).</p>
5.0	Modification to Contract
	The Committee is asked to approve the following modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a as set out in Appendix 1 (Table 3) .
6.0	Tender pipeline
	<p>To support transparency and assist supplier planning, Members should note that Future Tendering Opportunities are published bi-annually on the Councils website. The current update Tendering opportunities covers future tendering opportunities up to 31st March 2027.</p> <p>Note: CPS consult with Departments to help populate this procurement pipeline and are reliant on Departments sharing their available procurement plans.</p>
7.0	Financial & Resource Implications
	The financial resources for these contracts are within approved corporate or departmental budgets.
8.0	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
	None
9.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table 1 - Competitive Tenders • Table 2 - Single Tender Actions • Table 3 - Modification to Contract • Table 4 – Retrospective Single Tender Actions • Table 5 – Non-Procurement Expenditure

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Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Renewal of Eploy online recruitment system	Up to 4 years	£124,800	S McNicholl	Required to maintain the provision of the online recruitment system for the Council	N	N	N
Online security awareness training and provision of phishing tests	Up to 3 years	£69,000	P Gribben	Increasing need to ensure staff awareness and help reduce the risk of security events	N	N	N
Procurement of annual insurance contracts	Up to 1 year	£1,262,000	T Wallace	Annual insurance premiums covering employer's liability, public liability, crime, environmental legal liability, property (excess of loss city hall) and motor fleet. Current annual policies expire on 31st March 2026.	N	Included in annual financial estimates	N
Procurement of the Cisco Secure Connect Service	Up to 5 years	£130,410	S McNicholl	The Belfast WiFi service requires a secure DNS facility to protect users and devices. Cisco Secure Connect is a security product with a focus on DNS-layer security which will add layered protection to all Public Belfast WiFi users and devices and protect BCC from possible reputational damage.	N	N	N
The provision of a new regulatory case management solution for	Up to 10 years	£2,162,000	S McNicholl	The objective is to replace our current systems (APP/Flare, IDOX – Public Protection Portal – NIHMO and Animal Welfare (IDOX) with a single modern and	N	Outline business case previously approved	N

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
City & Neighbourhood Services				<p>intuitive case management solution designed to embed mobile technology and digitally transform how we plan, manage and monitor our service delivery across the core areas.</p> <p>This project aligns with the CNS Transition & Improvement Programme by improving customer service, removing duplication, making long-term cost savings, services more sustainable, empowering staff and to improve decision-making. Furthermore, it fits with the strategic themes Customer and Performance in the CNS Business Plan. We also have alignment with the Digital Strategy in terms of Digital Transformation, improved Data & Analytics and reduction of cyber security risk.</p> <p>The existing contracts for current systems will be aligned to the go live date of the new case management system.</p> <p>Capital Year 1: £665,000 & Revenue Years 2-10: £1,497,000</p>		through the Capital Programme - Physical Programmes update, S,P&R June 2024	
Hire of Grounds Machinery with Operator	Up to 3 years	£130,000	D Sales	To complete flail arm work, fraise mowing, overseeding and herbicide application and spiking across the OSS Estate. This supports in house teams/ operations.	N	N	N

Appendix 1

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason	Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Hire of Ulster University Belfast Campus (York Street) for use during Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026 inclusive of setup and de-rig.	Up to 8 days	£200,000	D Martin	Ulster University Belfast Campus has been designated as a central competition and educational hub in the Fleadh operational plan, developed jointly by Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and Belfast City Council. It provides the only feasible location capable of supporting the complex requirements of Scoil Éigse and All-Ireland competitions	Ulster University Belfast Campus	3	Fleadh budget agreed at S,P&R	N
Hire of the MAC Arts Centre, Belfast, as a core competition and cultural venue for Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026	Up to 8 days	£45,000	K Forster	The MAC is uniquely positioned as the Irish Language and Cultural Hub within the Fleadh 2026 delivery plan and was identified through joint planning with Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (CCÉ) and Belfast City Council as a core competition and programming venue	The Mac	3	Fleadh budget agreed at S,P&R	N
Hire of The Belfast SOS Bus for Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026	Up to 8 days	£49,000	K Forster	The Belfast SOS Bus provides a mobile, non-judgemental safe space on the streets, offering a range of support including first aid, mental health intervention, and harm reduction. It offers practical assistance like refreshments, transport home, and referrals to	The Belfast SOS Bus	3	Fleadh budget agreed at S,P&R	N

Appendix 1

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason	Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
				other services. There is no other provider of this service for Belfast.				
Upgrade and contract extension of the Content Management System (CMS) which supports all CC websites	Up to 4 years	£350,000	S McNicholl	<p>There has been an urgent, unforeseen and essential need to upgrade the current CMS platform to ensure continuity of service. This can only be actioned by the existing supplier.</p> <p>A longer-term procurement strategy to procure a new CMS will be developed to align with the expiry of this requirement.</p> <p>£200k- Capital & £150k - Revenue</p>	Simply Zesty	7	N	N
Hire 2 x 7.5T Glass Collect vehicles	Up to 8 months	£21,333	S Leonard	<p>Stewart Commercial are the only supplier within N. Ireland to supply the hire of these specialist glass collect vehicles. These 2 vehicles will ensure continuity of supply until the new vehicles are delivered in August 26.</p> <p>The current T2048 contract expired on 31.05.25 therefore retrospective</p>	Stewart Commercials	1	N	N

Appendix 1

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason	Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
				STA approval is required – see below.				

Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Duration	Modification	SRO	Description	Supplier
Provision of Drama, Puppetry and Script writing CNS 2412	Up to 1 year	Additional £1,584 Original quotation value - £30k	J Girvan	Additional cost for writing a new script for anti-litter/ waste roadshow to be performed in primary schools 2025/26. The supplier was the only respondent to the original quotation process. Being reported as quotation value now exceeds £30k.	Cre8 Theatre Ltd

Table 4: Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Title of Contract	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason	Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Hire 2 x 7.5T Glass Collect vehicles	Up to 7 months	£18,667	S Leonard	Further to STA request above this is retrospective STA approval to cover hire of these vehicles 01 June 2025 to 31 st December 2025.	Stewart Commercials	1	N	N

Table 5: Non-Procurement Expenditure

Title of Contract	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier
Hire of the ICC Belfast, Waterfront Hall and Ulster Hall	Up to 7 days	£400,000	D Martin	The spaces available across three sites were identified during the initial planning and bid for Fleadh 2026 in conjunction with the Comhaltas team. Given occupancy of all other viable sites across the city centre there are no other venues available that offer the same level of occupancy/production support required to successfully deliver Fleadh core events alongside multiple competition and performance spaces.	Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall

STA/ Direct Award Reasons

STA Number	Full description
1. Switching to a Direct Award	Switching to a Direct Award: No response or no suitable response following advertised procurement exercise.
2. Single Supplier for Art or Artistic Performance	Single Supplier for Art or Artistic Performance: the creation or acquisition of a unique work of art or artistic performance
3. Single Supplier Absence of Competition for Technical Reasons	Single Supplier Absence of Competition for Technical Reasons: only a particular supplier can supply the goods, services or works required and there are no reasonable alternatives to those goods, services or works
4. Single Supplier Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)	Single Supplier Intellectual Property Rights (IPR): only particular supplier can supply the goods, services or works required due to that particular supplier having IPR or other exclusive rights and there are no reasonable alternatives to those goods, services or works.
5. Urgency	Urgency: Where the goods, services or works to be supplied under the public contract are strictly necessary for reasons of extreme and unavoidable urgency which is not attributable to any act or omission of and could not have been foreseen by the council, and as a result the public contract cannot be awarded on the basis of a competitive tendering procedure using the reduced 10 day period for 'urgent procurements'
6. Prototypes and Development	Prototypes and Development: the production of a prototype, or supply of other novel goods or services (i.e. goods or services designed or developed at the request of BCC), for the purpose of testing the suitability of the goods or services, researching the viability of

Appendix 1

STA Number	Full description
	producing or supplying the goods or services at scale and developing them for that purpose, or other research, experiment, study or development.
7. Additional or Repeat Goods Services or Works	Additional or Repeat Goods Services or Works: Extension or Partial Replacement concerns the supply of goods, services or works by the existing supplier (includes supplier that the council no longer has a contract with) which are intended as an extension to, or partial replacement of, existing goods, services or works in circumstances where a change in supplier would result in the council receiving goods, services or works that are different from, or incompatible with, the existing goods, services or works, and the difference or incompatibility would result in disproportionate technical difficulties in operation or maintenance.
8. Commodity	Commodity: Supplies quoted and purchased on a commodity market
9. Advantageous time-limited	Advantageous time-limited: Supplies or services on particularly time-limited advantageous terms e.g. supplier winding up its business activities
10. Additional or Repeat Goods Services or Works	Additional or Repeat Goods Services or Works: Similar to Existing Goods Services or Works, concerns the supply of goods, services or works by the existing supplier (includes supplier that the councils no longer has a contract with) that are similar to existing goods, services or works where the existing goods, services or works were supplied under a public contract that was awarded following a competitive procedure within the period of five years ending with the day on which the transparency notice is published, and the tender notice or any tender document in respect of the earlier contract set out the Council's intention to carry out a subsequent procurement of similar goods, services or works in reliance on this direct award justification, and any other information specified in Section 95.
11. Other	Other: Reason not in line with Procurement Act 2023
12. To Protect Life	To Protect Life: where a Minister of the Crown has by Regulations provided that specified contracts may be awarded to protect human animal or plant life or health or protect public order or safety
13. Schedule 2– Exempted Contract	Schedule 2– Exempted Contract: Requirement not considered procurement spend but use of STA process to document and approve spend. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/54/schedule/2



Belfast
City Council

Subject:	Audit & Risk Panel Report and Minutes of Meeting of 2 December 2025
Date:	19 December 2025
Reporting Officer:	Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive / Strategic Director of Corporate Services
Contact Officer:	Claire O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS)

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 40px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime 									
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After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								

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

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a summary of the key issues that were considered and discussed by the Audit & Risk Panel at its December 2025 meeting and present the minutes of the last meeting of the Panel for approval.

2.0	Recommendation
2.1	That the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee notes the key issues arising at the meeting and approves the minutes of the Audit & Risk Panel of 2 December 2025 at appendix A.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO)</u>
3.1	The Statement of Accounts are a fundamental part of the councils overall corporate governance framework and provide assurance to Members and ratepayers on the stewardship of the council's finances and its financial position.
3.2	The Panel received an update on the audit of the accounts for the year-end 31 March 2025 by Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) which remains ongoing with one priority one issue highlighted so far relating to bank reconciliation. The NIAO have requested that a new significant governance issue is added to the Annual Governance Statement and the Audit and Risk Panel have agreed the wording of this issue.
3.3	The Panel were updated on several measures that Finance have implemented to prevent reoccurrence of the bank reconciliation issue, including the establishment of a process for escalation of unallocated income queries to departments. The delay in completing the audit has meant that the accounts have not been published on the council's website by the legislative deadline of 30th September.
3.4	When the audit is complete the revised set of financial statements, including the updated Annual Governance Statement and Report to Those Charged with Governance (which outlines the system / control issues arising from the NIAO audit) will be presented to Strategic Policy and Resources committee for approval and sign off.
	<u>Key reports</u>
3.5	The Panel noted the progress being made against the annual audit plan , with the following three assignments finalised in the period September - November 2025; Agency; Performance Management and the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund. The Panel also received a management update report on Asset Management.
3.6	The Panel considered the corporate risk dashboard which provided an analysis and update on the progress being made to manage the 23 risks that are considered to present the greatest threat to the delivery corporate priorities and / or compliance with key statutory requirements. The Panel noted the quarterly assurances provided by directors regarding

	the arrangements in place for the management of risk (including formal departmental risk management arrangements) and the implementation of agreed audit actions.
3.7	Regarding business continuity management , the Panel agreed for the critical services; to complete their annual exercise, review and update of their BCM plans.
3.8	The Panel received an update on the National Fraud Initiative , which is nearing completion.
3.9	The Panel noted the quarter 2 reports on corporate health and safety and absence management and received the mid-year an update on the performance Improvement plan which is report is available to members on request.
3.10	The Panel agreed the initial assessment of how the Panel complies with the NIAO 'Effective Audit & Risk Assurance Committees – A Good Practice Guide' and the recommendations to further improve the effectiveness of the Panel, which mainly relate to the development of a training programme and update of the Panels terms of reference. The Panel also agreed their 2026 programme of business .
	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
3.11	None
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.12	None known at this time.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix A - Minutes of Audit & Risk Panel 2 December 2025

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Audit and Risk Panel

Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025

MEETING OF AUDIT AND RISK PANEL

Members present: Councillor R. McLaughlin (Chairperson);
Alderman Rodgers,
Councillors Hanvey, Groogan
and Verner; and
Mr. D. Wilson (External Member).

In attendance: Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Strategic Director
of Corp Services;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Ms. C. O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk
Services;
Ms. E. Eaton, Corporate Health and Safety Manager;
Ms. H. Lyons, Corporate Finance Manager;
Ms. J. Graffin, Principal Auditor; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

Also attended: Mr. P. Barr, Northern Ireland Audit Office.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 9th September, 2025, were approved by the Panel.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025**

Absence Rates Q/E September 2025

The Director of Human Resources provided the Panel with an overview of the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Audit Panel of the Council's performance in managing absence at the end of quarter two, April to September 2025.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Audit Panel is asked to note the contents of this report.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Key corporate indicators:

At the end of quarter two:

- The Council's average sickness absence rate stands at 7.60 days, an increase of 0.57 days compared to absence for the same period last year (7.03 days).
- A total of 17232.86 working days were lost due to sickness absence. This accounted for 6.76% of the total working days available.
- The table below provides a summary of how departments performed against the target. Two departments did not meet the corporate target of 7.29 days for quarter two.

End of year target	14.58					
Q2 target	7.29					
Department	Total days lost (FTE)	Number of Employees (FTE)	Actual absence per FTE	Variance	% of workforce	% of absence
City and Neighbourhood Services	12089.45	1302.6	9.28	1.99	57.46%	70.15%
City and Organisational Strategy	445.36	97.06	4.59	-2.70	4.28%	2.58%
Corporate Services	389.42	132.09	2.95	-4.34	5.83%	2.26%
External Affairs, Marketing and Comms	41	26.08	1.57	-5.72	1.15%	0.24%
Finance	44.62	46.95	0.95	-6.34	2.07%	0.26%
Human Resources	20.63	34.38	0.60	-6.69	1.52%	0.12%
Legal and Civic Services	1123.65	164.59	6.83	-0.46	7.26%	6.52%
Place and Economy	2194.38	349.2	6.28	-1.01	15.40%	12.73%
Property and Projects	884.35	114.08	7.75	0.46	5.03%	5.13%
Totals	17232.86	2267.03	7.60	0.31		

3.2 Additional Absence information:

- There was a slight increase in the number of staff with no absence this year (62.40%), compared to last year (61.66%).
- There has been a significant increase of 1278.31 days in absence classified as long term (20+ days) this year (12287.12 days) compared to the same time last year (11008.81 days).
- The number of days lost per FTE decreased in quarter two (3.79 days) when compared to quarter one (3.81 days), see figure 1.
- Depression/anxiety/stress (36.61% of total days lost) and Musculo-skeletal (26.33% of total days lost) continue to be the top two reasons for absence. Refer to figure 2 for further information.
- From 1 July to 30 September 2025, 641 employees (750 spells) were off due to sickness absence (accounting for 8615.48 days). Of the cases where the use of discretion was recorded, it was applied to 123 employees (19.2%) and their absence accounted for 2810.29 days (approximately 32.6% of the total absence for quarter two).
- Issues were identified in how absences were being managed in 250 cases. These were discussed in detail with departments during quarter two. Refer to figure 4 for further information.
- Approximately 12.6% of absence (2176.74 days) is recorded as disability related. Approximately two thirds (66%) of disability related absence were managed as long term. Employees who reported absence with Depression / Anxiety / Mental Health (42.68%) accounted for over one third of all disability related absence. Refer to figure 5 for further information.
- 18 employees met the trigger for a Stage4/FAH in quarter two.
 - Two employees resigned prior to their absence hearing.
 - Discretion was applied to 12 of these cases not to progress to a Stage 4/FAH.
 - Three employees were off due to cancer / treatment.
 - One employee was off due to an industrial injury.
 - One employee was off due to significant personal stressors.
 - Four employees returned to work at month seven.

- Two employee's required additional medical information.
- One employee did not progress due to their absence being disability related.
- One employee progressed to a final stage meeting however they were afforded a final opportunity to improve their attendance.
- Three employees met the trigger in late September and case reviews are currently being arranged.

Departmental improvement plans and Absence reporting to DMT:

- 3.4 CHR has reviewed all of the departmental improvement plans for quarter two. All departments provided a progress report for quarter two. In general, meaningful information and updates were provided by the departments.

All of the departments returned absence dashboards for July, August and September.

Health and Wellbeing Strategy and initiatives:

- 3.5 CHR continue to focus on delivering the actions as set out in the Health & Wellbeing Strategy.

Between 1 July – 30 September 2025, the H&WB programme delivered 16 events attended by 303 staff.

CHR was supported by the Internal Communications team to help promote and increase awareness to all staff including those at frontline locations. A quarterly Wellbeing and Development email is sent to all staff directly and a 'Wellbeing Wednesday' Interlink article promotes topics and events each week, which are also displayed on 'big screens' across various council locations. Activities are also promoted via a team of Wellbeing Champions. The programme and wellbeing hub 'Staywell' is also promoted via posters on staff noticeboards. Activities included:

- Positive Mental Health training
- Stress Awareness for Managers
- Cancer Focus Keeping Well Van - Dunbar Link
- Money Helper Pension Webinar
- Dementia Awareness
- Suicide Awareness & Prevention - Duncrue
- Managing your Inner Critic
- Mental Health Awareness
- 15 Minute Desk Yoga
- Pension Awareness

- Pension Scheme Benefits
- 3 Stop Smoking Awareness Events
- Healthier You - Eat Well Work Well, Nutrition for Busy People and other webinars with a focus on musculoskeletal issues.

The Stop Smoking Awareness event supported by Cancer Focus had ten people sign up to a 12 week stop smoking programme. Cancer Focus promoted the initiative with attendance at three stands at various sites - Alexander Park Avenue, Agnes Street and Prince Regent Road as part of their Stoptober event.

Pension awareness week was used to promote webinars through NILGOSC for staff and were well attended. Promotion of different wellbeing themes such as World Heart Day, World Suicide Prevention Day and World Alzheimer's Month were used to specifically promote certain events.

CHR will continue to focus on addiction support and mental health in quarter three and promote Belfast Leading the Way and Active Travel events as we continue to work with Sustrans and partners to introduce active travel initiatives.

4.0 Resource Implications

4.1 Directors are asked to ensure that:

- Resources are in place to ensure that adequate monitoring and review is in place at department level.

5.0 Equality and Good Relations Implications

5.1

- Approximately 12.6% of absence (2176.74 days) is recorded as disability related and 66.09% of disability related absence was managed as long term."

Figure 1:

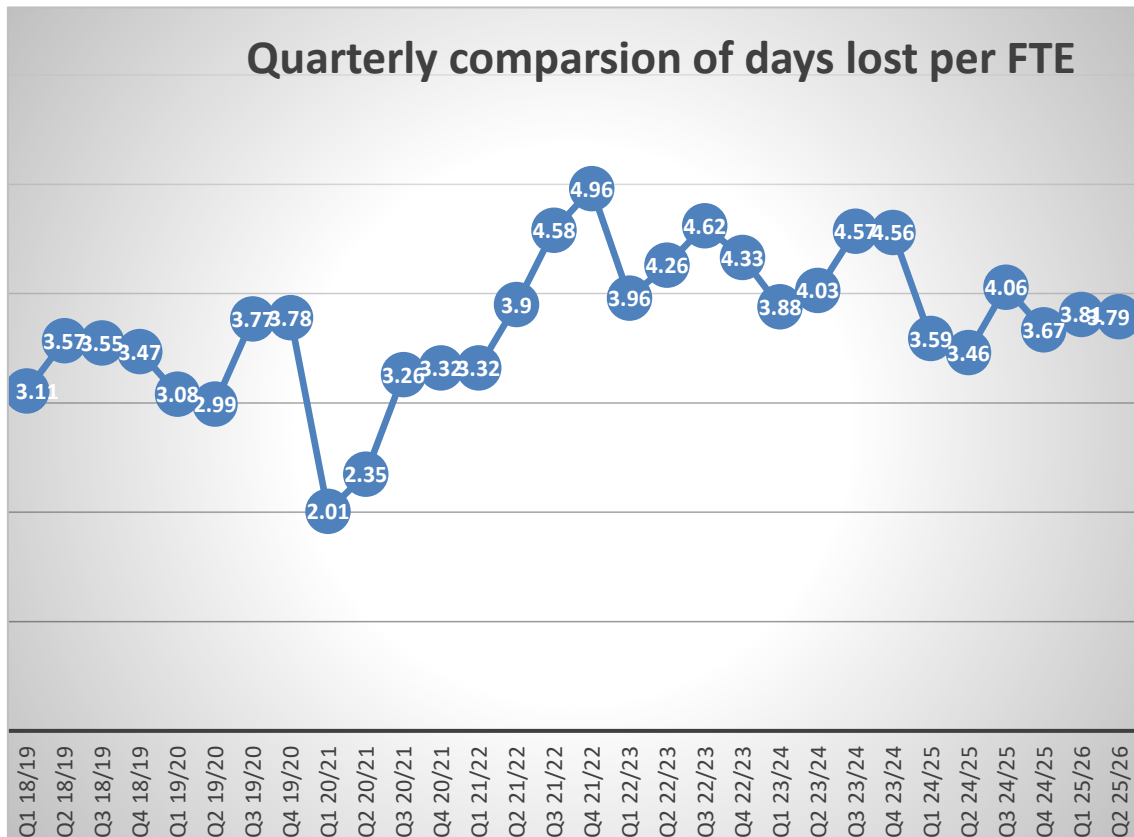


Figure 2:

Reason for Absence	Total Days	% of total days
Stress, depression, anxiety	6309.46	36.61%
Musculo-skeletal	4536.97	26.33%
Stomach, digestive, etc	1667.61	9.68%
Infections, inc colds & flu	1126.26	6.54%
Neurological, inc headaches	677.55	3.93%
Heart, blood press, circ, etc	673.51	3.91%
Other	592.34	3.44%
Chest and respiratory	566.55	3.29%
Genito-urinary, inc menstrual	461.12	2.68%
Eye, ear, nose & mouth/dental	437.34	2.54%
Infections, Covid19	143.28	0.83%
Pregnancy related	40.87	0.24%
Totals	17232.86	

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025**

Figure 3:

Reason for Discretion	Total Days	% of total
Mental Health	634.19	22.57%
Underlying medical condition/disability	625.68	22.26%
Hospitalisation	245.90	8.75%
Bereavement	241.05	8.58%
Industrial Injury	203.86	7.25%
Unresolved ER Issue	193.97	6.90%
Planned surgery and recovery	179.37	6.38%
Emergency domestic responsibilities	147.02	5.23%
Previous long service and clear record	88.24	3.14%
RTC	74.06	2.64%
Deferred pending OH	69.13	2.46%
Violence at work	42.03	1.50%
Maternity	27.87	0.99%
Personal stressors	26.00	0.93%
Infectious disease	8.92	0.32%
Persistent absence; after a period of long-term absence where an underlying condition has been identified	3.00	0.11%
Total	2810.29	
total days lost in Q2	8615.48	
% of total days lost where discretion applied in Q2	32.62%	
average days off per occurrence in Q2	22.85	

Figure 4:

Department	Total
City and Neighbourhood Services	144
City and Organisational Strategy	9
Corporate Services	11
External Affairs Comms & Marketing	0
Human Resources	0
Finance	0
Legal and Civic Services	26
Place and Economy	38
Property and Projects	22

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025**

Totals	250
---------------	------------

Figure 5:

Actual disability	Total days	% of total disability related absence
Depression / Anxiety / Mental health conditions	929.11	42.68%
Fibromyalgia	265.00	12.17%
Cancer	148.78	6.83%
Chronic heart condition	117.87	5.41%
PTSD	100.00	4.59%
Heart attack	93.00	4.27%
Polymyalgia Rheumatica	85.00	3.90%
Parkinsons	82.77	3.80%
Chronic back condition	67.84	3.12%
Chronic hip condition	56.96	2.62%
Osteoarthritis	54.68	2.51%
Chronic neurological condition	38.00	1.75%
Chronic respiratory condition	35.81	1.65%
Other*	101.92	4.68%
Total disability related absence in Q2	2176.74	
Total absence end of quarter two	17232.86	
% If absence lost due to disability	12.63%	
% of disability related absence managed as LTA	66.09%	

In response to a question from a Member with regards to concern around stress, depression and anxiety related absences, the Director of HR outlined the mitigations in place to address stress related absence and stated that she would aim to provide a breakdown of stress, depression and anxiety related absences, in so far as if the absences were work related or personal in addition to available benchmarking information, to the next meeting of the Panel.

The Panel noted the report.

Corporate Health and Safety Performance Report

The Corporate Health and Safety Manager provided the Panel with and update on the corporate health and safety performance and activities for the quarter ending 30th September, 2025.

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025**

She outlined the progress against the following health and safety key performance indicators for the quarter:

- Agreed Health and Safety and fire safety recommendations implemented;
- Health and Safety service requests responded to within five days;
- Fire risk assessment inspections;
- Number of RIDDOR accidents; and
- Number of workplace accidents.

She provided the Panel with an overview of employee and non-employee accidents/incidents which had been reported during quarter two and a three-year trend analysis.

The Corporate Health and Safety Manager reported that there had been six enquiries received from the Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI) and she outlined the correspondence and the actions which had been undertaken in response.

The Panel commended the improvement in implementation rates and noted the report.

**Northern Ireland Audit Office –
Report to Those Charged with Governance**

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. P. Barr, Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO), to the meeting.

Mr. Barr explained that there were no outstanding issues and NIAO was in a position whereby the report could be finalised within two weeks.

In response to a question from a Member, the Director of Finance stated that the meeting dates of the Panel in 2026 would be considerate of the timeline for the Report to Those Charged with Governance.

The Panel noted the update.

**Bank Reconciliations - NIAO request for disclosure
in Annual Governance Statement**

The Corporate Finance Manager explained that, following the implementation of the new finance system, several issues had arisen around the clearing of unreconciled items on the Council's bank reconciliations for 2024/25. Subsequently, the NIAO had requested a reperformance of those bank reconciliations to clear and match unreconciled items in 2024/25.

She stated that the income team had worked across Council departments to clear unmatched items in the bank reconciliation and ensured that income was recognised in the bank balance in 2024/25 accounts.

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025**

She outlined the following actions which had been taken to address the bank reconciliation issue:

- Configuration of bank rules had been addressed to ensure automatic clearing had been implemented to reduce the volume of uncleared items;
- Teams were being trained in the new system to ensure correct reconciliation codes and coding to allow transactions to be matched and cleared;
- Regular meetings with Digital Services to address any issues with interface journals; and
- Process for escalation of unallocated income queries issued to departments.

She explained that the above actions would be monitored and that a monthly bank reconciliations report would be provided to management.

The Corporate Finance Manager reported that the NIAO had suggested that the issue be included in the Annual Governance Statement for 2024/25 and she provided the Panel with the proposed wording for the statement.

The Panel noted the report and agreed with the revised wording for the Annual Governance Statement, to be agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

AGRS Progress Report November 2025

The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services and the Principal Auditor provided the Panel with an update on three assignments which had been finalised during the period from September to October, 2025 relating to: Agency; Performance Management; and the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund.

She provided the Panel with an overview of progress against delivery of the 25/26 audit plan and pointed out that 45% of planned activity was either underway or completed.

She summarised the current work in progress that included advisory and an update on the AGRS review of the process for raising and closing health and safety actions.

The Panel received a high-level overview of fraud and raising concerns cases as well as the National Fraud Initiative.

In line with a request from the Panel's meeting in June, the Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services provided an update on the current position regarding the matters that had given rise to the requests for deferral of the following audits

- Management of the corporate risk on Health and Safety;
- Community Services Provision; and

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025**

- Management of the corporate risk on Bereavement Services.

She advised the Panel that the first two audits would be included in the audit plan for 26/27 and the last audit was currently in progress.

In response to a request from a Member, the Head of Human Resources agreed that an update report on agency resources would be brought back to a future meeting of the Panel.

The Panel noted the AGRS Progress Report for the period September to November 2025 and agreed to defer the internal audit of recruitment and selection and the external review of the Raising Concerns arrangements to 2026/27.

Corporate Risk Management

The Deputy Chief Executive/Strategic Director of Corporate Services provided the Panel with an overview of the Corporate Risk Dashboard summarising the key updates from the risk review for the Quarter Ending (QE) September 2025.

She provided an update on compliance with the Risk Strategy, based on the assurance statements for QE September 2025, completed by senior management and on business continuity management arrangements.

The Panel:

- Noted the corporate risk management dashboard and agreed the updates for QE September 2025;
- Noted the assurances from senior management regarding compliance with the Risk Strategy, based on the assurance statements for QE September 2025; and
- Noted the current position regarding the review and update of business continuity plans for the critical services.

Performance Improvement Q2 Update

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy provided the Panel with a mid-year progress update on the performance indicators that contribute to the performance improvement objectives of the Performance Improvement Plan 2025/26.

He reported that the year-to-date position of the Corporate Delivery Plan had been presented to the CMT Oversight Board on 12th November and that the Corporate Management Team had been addressing areas which were already at risk or behind, through their respective Departmental Management Teams.

He summarised agreed changes made by Chief Officers to the Performance Improvement Plan 2025/26 that had emerged during the reporting process and advised the Panel that a mid-year progress report would be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee via the Audit and Risk Panel minutes on 19th December, 2025.

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025**

The Panel noted the report and approved the Quarter 2 Performance Improvement Plan 2025/26 Performance Dashboard Report.

Place and Economy - H&S / Audit Actions Update

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy explained that the end of Quarter 2 there were 51 open recommendations across the Department of Place and Economy, 33 of which had been categorised as new.

He summarised the following key updates:

- Developer Contributions - four of six open recommendations had been fully implemented, one partially implemented and one outstanding;
- Intelligent Client Function - three recommendations had been implemented and two partially implemented;
- Markets – of three recommendations, two had been fully implemented and one partially implemented.
- Planning Applications - of six open actions, two had been fully implemented and three partially implemented; and
- Building Control – 8 open recommendations that could not be closed until the new building control system was fully implemented and operational.

He explained that the Corporate Health and Safety Team had dedicated significant staff resources, supplemented by specialist external Health and Safety advice, regarding improvements at Belfast Zoo.

He informed the Panel that Audit Governance and Risk Services regularly attended Place and Economy Departmental Management Team meetings with regard to governance issues, that included audit recommendations.

The Panel noted the report.

**Assessment of Compliance with the Good Practice Guide for
Effective Audit and Risk Assurance Committees**

The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services provided the Panel with an overview of an initial assessment of compliance with the NIAO's Good Practice Guide for Effective Audit and Risk Assurance Committees completed on behalf of the Panel for its consideration.

She explained that the Comptroller and Auditor General had encouraged committees to complete the checklist, at least annually and that AGRS had completed an initial assessment.

She reported that eight recommendations for improvement had arisen from the assessment in relation to training for the Panel, updates to the terms of reference for the Panel and providing the Panel with information on innovation, assurance maps and risk to

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025**

support the Panel in their role. She added that the initial assessment found the Panel to be broadly in compliance with best practice and that AGRS would arrange training for the Panel in 2026.

The Chairperson advised the Panel to contact the Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services directly with suggestions for areas of improvement or training.

The Panel noted and agreed the recommendations to further improve its effectiveness.

Schedule of Meetings for 2026 / Programme of Business

The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services provided the Panel with an overview of the indicative programme of business and proposed the following meeting dates for 2026:

Proposed dates for Audit Assurance Board

- Tuesday 3rd March 2026;
- Tuesday 2nd June 2026;
- Friday 4th September 2026; and
- Tuesday 1st December 2026.

Proposed dates for Audit and Risk Panel

- Tuesday 10th March 2026;
- Tuesday 9th June 2026;
- Friday 11th September 2026; and
- Tuesday 8th December 2026.

The Panel approved the indicative programme of business for 2026 and agreed to the proposed meeting dates for 2026. The Audit and Risk Panel agreed for the Chairperson to write to the NIAO with a request for them to bear in mind the timing of the Panels meeting in September when they are scheduling their audit of BCC accounts.

Asset Management

The Director of Property and Projects provided the Panel with an update on the progress towards adopting a best-practice Strategic Asset Management approach.

She highlighted the positive steps which had been undertaken in respect of asset management and provided a summary of the following next phase of actions to ensure a strategic approach to asset management:

- Governance - the establishment of a Strategic Asset Management Group within the Council to provide a multi-disciplinary approach and provide a 'challenge' function to assets to be chaired by the Chief Executive;

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025**

- Framework - the development of an overarching Asset Management Framework, including a Corporate Asset Management Strategy, thematic Asset Management Plans linked into the Strategy and the finalisation of asset management policies as a key workstream of the Strategic Asset Management Group;
- System – that procurement of a new Corporate Asset Management System, designed to support the implementation of a strategic asset management approach was underway; and
- Maintenance Programme- note that a programme of condition surveys and energy audits of Council assets was currently underway which would enable the development of a costed planned maintenance programme.

She explained that adopting a strategic approach would require a change in attitudes and culture towards assets within the organisation and the development and embedment would include ongoing engagement with Elected Members and officers from across the Council, and she summarised the proposed timelines for development and implementation.

The Panel noted the report.

Date of next meeting

The Panel noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 10th March, 2026.

Chairperson



Belfast
City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	Belfast City Council Statement of Accounts 2024/25
Date:	19 December 2025
Reporting Officer:	Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance
Contact Officer:	Helen Lyons, Corporate Finance Manager

Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 40px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime 									
<p>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Call-in									
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?									
Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>									

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to present to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, the Statement of Accounts of the Council, including the Annual Governance Statement, for the period ending 31 March 2025.
1.2	The Statement of Accounts are an important element of the council's overall corporate governance framework as they provide assurance to Members and ratepayers on the stewardship of the council's finances and its financial position.
1.3	The Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025, as attached, have been prepared in line with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2024/25 based on International Financial Reporting Standards and the Department for Communities Accounts Direction, Circular LG 10/2025 dated 26 February 2025.
1.4	The Chief Executive in his role as Chief Financial Officer can confirm that the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025 has been prepared in the form directed by the Department for Communities and in his opinion the Statement of Accounts give a true and fair view of the income and expenditure and cash flows for the financial year and the financial position as at the end of the financial year.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to approve the Council's Statement of Accounts and incorporated Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2025.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Key issues</u>
	Normal Approval Process
3.1	The Committee will be aware that the normal approval process allows for the Statement of Accounts to be presented to the Audit and Risk Panel to allow them to review the annual statement of accounts. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the council prior to this report going to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
3.2	The Audit and Risk Panel was presented with the draft Statement of Accounts at the meeting on 9 September and a verbal update on the status of the draft Report to those charged with Governance (RTTCWG) for 2024/25 was also provided. The Statement of Accounts have been updated for the audit adjustments requested by Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO). The updated Statement of Accounts and draft Report to those charged with Governance (RTTCWG) for 2024/25 have been circulated to the Audit and Risk panel members for consideration. NIAO have identified nine audit recommendations. The verbal update from the Panel Chair following review of the annual Statement of Accounts and the draft RTTCWG is that the Audit and Risk Panel recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approve the Council's Statement of Accounts and incorporated Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2025.

	Audit Opinion																				
3.3	<p>It is the Local government Auditors' opinion that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the financial statements give a true and fair view, in accordance with relevant legal and statutory requirements and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2024-25, of the financial position of Belfast City Council as at 31 March 2025 and its income and expenditure for the year then ended; and the statement of accounts have been properly prepared in accordance with the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and the Department for Communities directions issued thereunder; and the part of the Remuneration Report to be audited has been properly prepared in accordance with the Department for Communities directions made under the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015; and the information given in the Narrative Report for the financial year ended 31 March 2025 is consistent with the financial statements. 																				
	Reserves																				
3.4	<p>General Fund</p> <p>The credit balance on the General Fund has increased to £64.6m (of which £50.1m relates to specified reserves). The movement on the reserves balance is summarised in Table 1 below:</p> <p>Table 1: Summary of Reserves Position</p> <table> <tr> <td>Opening Balance</td><td>£59.3m</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>In year movement in reserves</td><td><u>£5.3 m</u></td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Closing Balance</td><td>£64.6m</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Specified Reserves at year end</td><td><u>£50.1m</u></td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Balance Available</td><td><u>£14.5 m</u></td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	Opening Balance	£59.3m			In year movement in reserves	<u>£5.3 m</u>			Closing Balance	£64.6m			Specified Reserves at year end	<u>£50.1m</u>			Balance Available	<u>£14.5 m</u>		
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Balance Available	<u>£14.5 m</u>																				
3.5	<p>Capital Fund £16,607,146</p> <p>The Capital Fund is made up of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belfast Investment Fund (£5,872,462) -created to support key partnership projects to regenerate Belfast and help lever substantial funds from other sources Local Investment Fund (£304,937) to fund smaller local regeneration projects City Centre Investment Fund (£9,508,497) to support the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Investment Plans 																				

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social Outcomes Fund (£921,250) to support City Centre projects which might not generate a direct financial return but would enhance the overall City Centre offer and support the attraction of investment.															
3.6	Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund £9,906,334 This fund is to support neighbourhood regeneration and tourism projects in local neighbourhoods.															
3.7	Leisure Mobilisation Fund £534,521 This fund is to support the Leisure Transformation Programme and will cover programme level costs including communications, engagement and procurement costs.															
3.8	Capital Receipts Reserve £4,139,224 These are capital receipts which have originated primarily from the sale of assets and which have not yet been used to finance capital expenditure.															
3.9	Other Fund Balances and Reserves £1,999,580 This relates to the Election Reserve (£225,397) which has been set up to smooth the cost of running council elections, the BWUH Subvention Fund (£1,102,648) to support national and international organisations in bringing their conferences to Belfast and the BWUH Sinking Fund (£671,535) to support planned maintenance and future capital works at the new exhibition centre.															
3.10	Debt The overall level of trade debtors had decreased this year from £5m at 31 March 2024 to £4.7m at 31 March 2025. An analysis of trade debtors, inclusive of VAT, for the last two years is shown below: Table 2: Analysis of Trade Debtors <table><tr><td></td><td>31 March 2025</td><td>31 March 2024</td></tr><tr><td>Less than three months</td><td>£3,683,053</td><td>£2,962,988</td></tr><tr><td>Three to one year</td><td>£785,792</td><td>£1,158,399</td></tr><tr><td>More than one year</td><td>£262,985</td><td>£918,640</td></tr><tr><td>Total</td><td>£4,731,830</td><td>£5,040,027</td></tr></table>		31 March 2025	31 March 2024	Less than three months	£3,683,053	£2,962,988	Three to one year	£785,792	£1,158,399	More than one year	£262,985	£918,640	Total	£4,731,830	£5,040,027
	31 March 2025	31 March 2024														
Less than three months	£3,683,053	£2,962,988														
Three to one year	£785,792	£1,158,399														
More than one year	£262,985	£918,640														
Total	£4,731,830	£5,040,027														
3.11	Creditors The Department for Communities has set councils a target of paying invoices within 30 days. During the year the council paid 69,124 invoices totalling £180,851,764.															
3.12	The average time taken to pay creditor invoices was 19 days for the year ended 31 March 2025. The Council paid 53,191 invoices within 10 days, 61,691 invoices within 30 days, and 7,433 invoices outside of 30 days. The council endeavours to process invoices as quickly as possible and has an improvement plan to support this process.															

3.13	Annual Governance Statement (AGS) <p>The Statement of Accounts include the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for the year 2024/25, which has been prepared in line with the Accounts Directive provided by the Department for Communities, NIAO guidance and is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework ‘Delivering Good Governance in Local Government’. Specifically the AGS sets out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scope of responsibility • the purpose of the governance framework • the governance framework in place • review of effectiveness • update on the significant governance issues declared last year • significant governance issues for current year
3.14	The AGS is approved by the Chair of the Strategic Policy and Resources committee and the Chief Executive. It is subject to review by the LGA (NIAO) as part of their annual audit.
3.15	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> None
3.16	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Detailed Statement of Accounts titled “Belfast City Council Statement of Accounts 2025”

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Belfast City Council

Statement of Accounts 2025



**Belfast
City Council**

BELFAST CITY COUNCIL
Statement of Accounts
For the year ended 31 March 2025

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Narrative Report

Introduction

Organisational overview and external environment

Belfast City Council remains the largest of Northern Ireland's 11 local authorities, serving a population of 348,005 residents, as well as the thousands of people who travel to the city to work, study and visit each day.



With a net budgeted expenditure of £206.1m in 2024/25 Belfast City Council's 2,376 employees, led by 60 councillors across 10 electoral areas, carry out six principal roles:

- i. a civic leadership role to ensure a better quality of life for our citizens;
- ii. provision of a number of services and facilities including planning, parks and leisure, refuse and recycling and community services;
- iii. promoting the arts, tourism, community and economic development;
- iv. regulating and licensing activities relating to environmental health, consumer protection, building and public safety;
- v. a representative role on a number of bodies and boards, including education and health; and
- vi. a consultative role in relation to functions conducted by other government bodies and agencies on issues such as planning, water, roads and housing.

With our role in leading community planning in Belfast we have published the Belfast Agenda, outlining our priorities for the City which will require collaboration with key partners to ensure delivery of these ambitions for the City.

The key services delivered by the Council are outlined below under our Operational Model and the key objectives of the Council are outlined below under Strategic Performance. The key deliverables for year ended 31 March 2025 reflect the priorities articulated by local people and relate to the council's functions as both a civic leader and service provider.

Operational Model

Each year, the Council must ensure it has the resources it needs to deliver services to the standard expected by its ratepayers. Budget plans are submitted to the relevant committees for approval regarding what the Council hopes to do and how much it will cost. This helps the Council understand how much money is required and, taking account of other sources of income, what 'rate' needs to be set for the city to raise the required money.

Throughout the year the Council reports to the relevant committees on the financial performance against agreed budget for each committee. The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement shows the accounting cost in the year of providing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices, rather than the amount to be funded from taxation. Councils raise taxation to cover expenditure in accordance with statutory requirements; this may be different from the accounting cost. The taxation position is shown in both the Expenditure and Funding Analysis (Note 2) and the Movement in Reserves Statement.

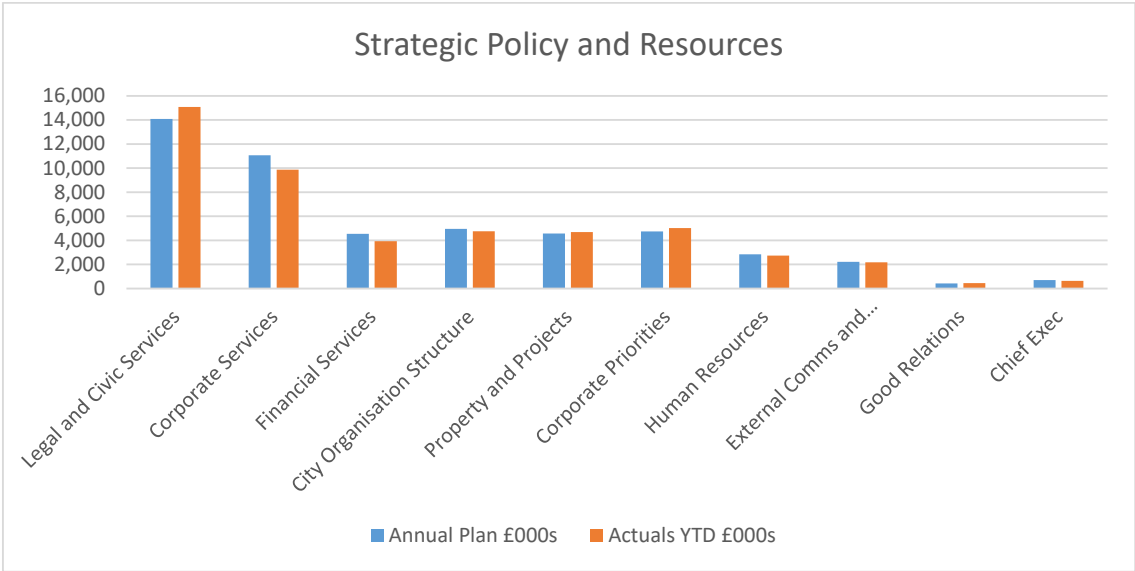
The majority of the variance between budget and actual expenditure is disclosed in the Expenditure and Funding Analysis and is mainly due to accounting adjustments that are required for the purposes of preparing the financial statements, such as depreciation and impairments, fair value adjustments on investment properties and IAS 19 accounting adjustments. There are also variances due to reclassification of income and expenditure to other income and expenditure for financial accounting purposes such as rental and financing activities.

Each committee is responsible for the delivery of key services to the Council and the main services included in each committee is as follows:

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

This committee is responsible for setting the strategic direction of the Council through the development of its Corporate Plan and other key corporate and cross cutting strategies and policies. The net expenditure of this committee includes Legal and Civic Services, Corporate Services, Financial Services, City Organisation Structure and Property and Projects with Corporate Priorities, Human Resources, External Comms and Marketing and Good Relations. The total net expenditure budget for this committee for these services in 2024/25 was £50.1m, with actual net expenditure for the year amounting to £49.3m.

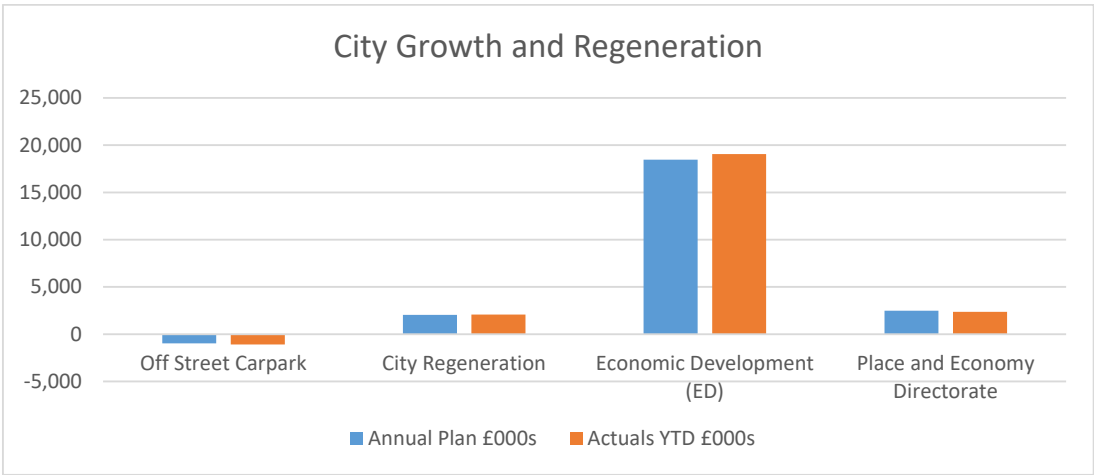
The graph below outlines the services delivered within this committee and performance against budget. These amounts do not include the accounting adjustments that are required to be included in the net expenditure for this committee in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account. The net expenditure of £56.2m reported in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for this Committee includes the accounting adjustments that are required for preparing the financial statements.



City Growth and Regeneration Committee

This committee is responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects directed to the regeneration and growth of the City in the context of outcomes agreed in the Community and Corporate plans and other corporate strategies. The net expenditure of the committee includes Economic Development including City Events and Venues such as the Zoo, City Regeneration, Off-Street Car Parking and Place and Economy Directorate. The total budget for net expenditure for this committee for these services was £22m and actual net expenditure was £22.4m

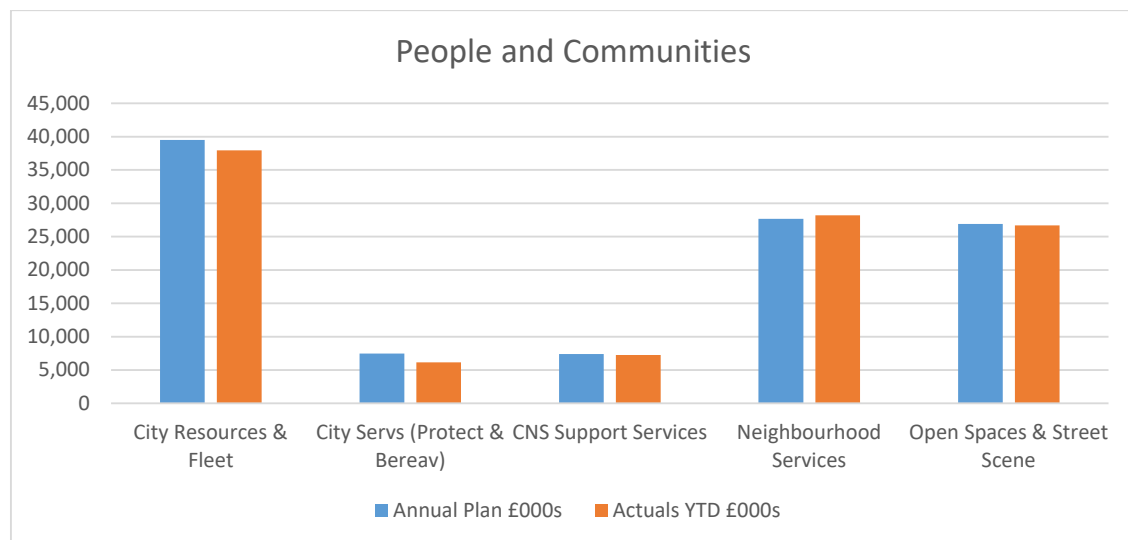
The graph below outlines the services delivered within this committee and performance against budget. These amounts do not include the accounting adjustments that are required to be included in the net expenditure for this committee in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account. The net expenditure of £32.6m for this Committee reported in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement includes the accounting adjustments that are required for preparing the financial statements.



People and Communities Committee

This committee is responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects aimed at improving life at a local level in the context of the outcomes agreed in the community and corporate plans and other corporate strategies. The net expenditure of the committee includes City Services such as Environmental Health and Bereavement, City Resources and Fleet (including waste collection and management), Neighbourhood Services, such as Community services and Leisure Centres, and Open Spaces and Street Scene, such as parks, street cleansing and City and Neighbourhood Support Services. The total budget for net expenditure for this committee for these services was £108.9m and actual net expenditure was £106.3m.

The graph below outlines the services delivered within this committee and performance against budget. These amounts do not include the accounting adjustments that are required to be included in the net expenditure for each committee in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account. The net expenditure of £124.3m for this Committee reported in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement includes the accounting adjustments that are required for preparing the financial statements.



Planning and Licensing Committee

These two committees are responsible for delivery of all of the Council's planning functions and policy and legislation in relation to licensing issues. The net expenditure includes Planning and Building Control services. The total budget for net expenditure for this committee for these services was £2.7m and actual net expenditure was £3.2m.

The graph below outlines the services delivered within this committee and performance against budget. These amounts do not include the accounting adjustments that are required to be included in the net expenditure for each committee in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account. The net expenditure of £3.2m for this Committee reported in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement includes the accounting adjustments that are required for preparing the financial statements.



Further information regarding the variances between budgeted (planned) and actual expenditure is included in the individual committee reporting for 2024/25. Total net expenditure budget of £206.1m includes the above committees budgets totalling £183.7m and the capital financing budget of £22.3m.

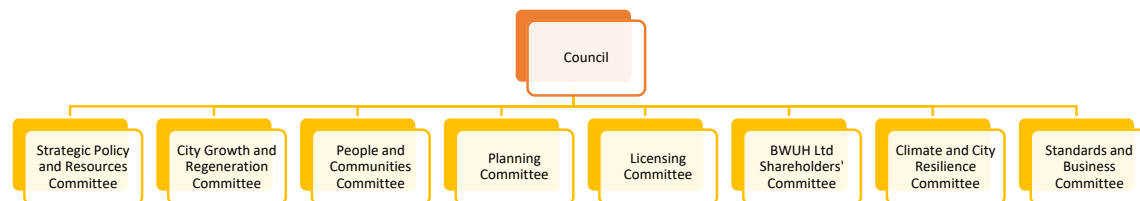
Financial Outlook

Despite the challenging financial position faced by the Council going into 2024/25, departments worked to deliver the financial strategy for 2024/25. The departmental underspend at the year end was an underspend of £2.55m. The main drivers to this underspend were the savings realised on new contracts and vacant posts related to the turnover of staff.

Going forward, the savings realised by new contracts have been reallocated to growth areas in order to meet priorities in 2025/26. As ratepayers begin to fully recover from the cost of living crisis, uncertainty in global trade agreements means that the Bank of England now predicts inflation increases of up to 3.7% in the coming year. The delivery of priorities including regeneration, climate and Fleadh Cheoil will require significant investment at a time when businesses face uncertainty. Although investment continues throughout the city to grow the rate base, setting budgets over the medium term will be challenging and is likely to require the realignment of existing budgets to Member agreed priorities.

Governance

The work of Belfast City Council is overseen by the committee structure outlined below and detailed further in our Governance Statement on pages 16 - 29. This Annual Governance Statement for 2024/25 highlights the Council's governance arrangements during the year and how significant governance issues are being addressed and actions implemented. A programme management framework is in place to manage both revenue and capital streams of activity for the Council. Directors and Members have oversight in accordance with the terms of reference for the relevant Committee as well as finance reports covering all aspects of Council expenditure being presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on a quarterly basis. The Committee structure, which is based on the full council and eight standing committees, is illustrated and described below.



Strategic Performance

We have an extensive network of plans and strategies that comprise our strategic planning and performance management framework. At a City level, the Belfast Agenda outlines the Council's ambitions for Belfast by 2035 and our immediate priorities to:

- Our people and communities: making life better for all of our residents
- Our economy: creating inclusive and sustainable growth, learning and opportunity
- Our place: creating a liveable and connected, vibrant and competitive city
- Our planet: creating a sustainable, nature-positive city

- Compassionate city: making Belfast a welcoming, caring, fair and inclusive city – leaving no one behind.

Cascading from these longer term objectives, are our medium term objectives set out in the Corporate Plan 2025-28. All of our priorities are based upon extensive external and internal analysis, including key socio-economic data, analysis of the plans and strategies impacting the city and its communities, performance information and political engagement.

An annual Corporate Delivery plan defines our objectives, sets out our in-year deliverables and the KPIs and targets we will achieve, which are all set against the priorities agreed as part of the four-year corporate plan. Our Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26 sets out Council's key priorities for improvement during the year, which are as follows:

- i. We will continue to adapt and improve our services to better meet the needs of our residents and stakeholders.
- ii. We will improve our local areas and provide opportunities to support our residents to become healthier and engaged.
- iii. We will create a more vibrant, attractive, and connected city (including the city centre).
- iv. We will champion climate action; protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast.
- v. We will stimulate inclusive growth and innovation, help businesses to start-up and grow and create opportunities for more and better jobs and employment.
- vi. We will support our most vulnerable people to make Belfast a more caring, safe and inclusive city.

We have extensive arrangements in place to monitor and manage strategic performance. As part of these robust performance management arrangements, we undertake an annual self-assessment of our progress against these performance improvement objectives, including how we are delivering on the statutory performance indicators set out in the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Financial Statements

The Council's financial performance for the year ended 31st March 2025 is as set out in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and its financial position is as set out in the Balance Sheet and Cash Flow Statement.

These financial statements have been prepared in line with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom for the year ended 31st March 2025 (the Code) and the Department for Communities Accounts Direction, Circular LG 10/2025. It is the purpose of this foreword to explain, in an easily understandable way, the financial facts in relation to the Council.

This Statement of Accounts explains Belfast City Council's finances during the financial year 2024/25 and its financial position at the end of that year. It follows approved accounting standards and is necessarily technical in parts.

The annual accounts for 2024/25 have been prepared on the assumption that the Council will continue in existence for the foreseeable future.

Group Accounts

The Code requires Local Authorities to consider all their interests and to prepare a full set of group financial statements where they have material interests in subsidiaries, associates or joint ventures. Belfast City Council have prepared group financial statements for the financial year ended 31 March 2025 to include Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Limited (BWUH) and Belfast City Council's contribution to Beltel LLP in relation to the redevelopment of the Belfast Telegraph Building. The results of Beltel LLP are included in the group financial statements. The results of Belfast Gasworks Management Co Ltd for the year ended 31 March 2025 are not deemed material to Belfast City Council accounts and as such are not included in the group financial statements.

The Movement in Reserves Statement

This statement, as set out on page 43, shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Council, analysed into 'usable reserves' (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce local taxation) and unusable reserves. The 'Surplus or (Deficit) on the Provision of Services' line shows the true economic cost of providing the Council's services, more details of which are shown in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES). These are different from the statutory amounts required to be charged to the General Fund Balance for Local Tax purposes. The 'Net Increase/Decrease before transfers to Earmarked Reserves' line shows the statutory General Fund Balance before any discretionary transfers to or from earmarked reserves undertaken by the Council.

The group Movement in Reserves Statement on page 103, includes the reserves of BWUH Ltd, contributing to an increase of £11.0k on the Group General Fund.

The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

This statement, as set out on page 44, shows the accounting cost in the year of providing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices, rather than the amount to be funded from taxation. Councils raise taxation to cover expenditure in accordance with regulations; this may be different from the accounting cost. The taxation position is shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

The group Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on page 104, includes the consolidated income and expenditure of BWUH Ltd.

The Balance Sheet

The Balance Sheet, as set out on page 45, shows the value as at the Balance Sheet date of the Council's assets and liabilities. The net assets of the Council (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Authority. Reserves are reported in two categories:

- The first category of reserves are *usable reserves*, i.e. those reserves that the Council may use to provide services, subject to the need to maintain a prudent level of reserves and any statutory limitations on their use (for example the Capital Receipts Reserve that may only be used to fund capital expenditure or repay debt).

- The second category of reserves are *unusable reserves* i.e. those that the authority is not able to use to provide services. This category of reserves includes reserves that hold unrealised gains and losses (for example the Revaluation Reserve), where amounts would only become available to provide services if the assets are sold; and reserves that hold timing differences shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement line 'Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations'.

The group Balance Sheet on page 105, includes relevant balances for BWUH Ltd and Beltel LLP.

The Cash Flow Statement

The Cash Flow Statement, as set out on page 46, shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Council during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Council generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of the extent to which the operations of the Council are funded by way of taxation and grant income or from the recipients of services provided by the Council. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Council's future service delivery. Cash flows arising from financing activities are useful in predicting claims on future cash flows by providers of capital (i.e. borrowing) to the Council.

The group Cash Flow Statement on page 106, includes the cash and cash equivalents of BWUH Ltd, Gas Pension Fund and the Council's interests in Beltel LLP.

Expenditure and Funding Analysis

The resourcing of the Council's activities is outlined in the Annual Report, demonstrating the funding available and what services this funding provided for 2024/25.

The objective of the Expenditure and Funding Analysis is to demonstrate to ratepayers how the funding available to the Council (i.e. government grants, rates, fees and charges) for the year has been used in providing services in comparison with those resources consumed or earned by the Council in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices. The main services provided under each committee are summarised in this note and performance against budget is summarised in the Narrative Report. The main variances from the results as reported in the Narrative Report will arise due to the accounting cost of providing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices, such as depreciation charges and IAS 19 pension adjustments which are not funded from taxation. These charges are summarised per committee in Note 2a and Note 2b.

The Expenditure and Funding Analysis also shows how this expenditure is allocated for decision-making purposes between the Council's committees. Income and expenditure accounted for under generally accepted accounting practices is presented more fully in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Financial Performance

For the year ended 31 March 2025, the Council increased its General Fund to £64.6m. The Budget plans form part of the Revenue Estimates and in 2024/25 the total net expenditure budget for the Council was set at £206.1m.

The Council reported a £2.55m underspend on service delivery at the year end. Performance against budget for each of the Committees is continuously monitored throughout the year. This performance is reported to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on a quarterly basis as agreed at Strategic Policy and Resources on 19th February 2021. The overall position for the year ended 31 March 2025 is mainly due to underspends in capital financing and employee budgets.

The Cost of Services on Continuing Operations of £216.3m as reported in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, also includes the accounting cost of providing services in addition to the amount to be funded from taxation. The total net expenditure reported in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is (£0.9m) being net surplus on the provision of services.

Borrowings

For the 2024/25 year the Council has an authorised borrowing limit of £145m. This is based on the Council's forecast capital expenditure plans over the medium to long term. In conjunction with the Council's Capital Financing Requirement of £118.5m, this ensures that the Council only borrows for capital purposes. During the year, the Council repaid external loans of £5.38m with Department of Finance. At 31 March 2025, the total amount outstanding on external loans was £33.1m.

Capital Expenditure

Expenditure on capital projects during the year amounted to £17m (excluding IFRS 16 Right of Use Asset amount). The most significant expenditure was on: Templemore Leisure Centre £4.2m; Belfast Stories £2.5m and Fleet Replacement Programme 2024/25 £2.2m.

Strategy and Resource allocation

Members agreed to a district rate increase of 5.44% when setting the revenue budget for 2024/25,

When setting the district rate increase for 2023/24, Members agreed to defer an estimated funding gap of £12.5m into 2024/25. A review of the gap was undertaken as part of the 2024/25 budget setting process and the revised gap, in addition to pay and other inflationary pressures resulted in uncontrollable cost increases of almost £14.6m for 2024/25. Additional proposals for growth totalling £6m were also submitted for consideration by departments.

Subsequent meetings between Members and Chief Officers resulted in revised growth proposals, budgetary realignment and efficiencies resulting in a district rate increase of 5.44% for 2024/25.

Outlook

The Council is fully aware that it is operating in a continually challenging environment with the ongoing cost of living crisis and inflationary pressures. The Council is committed to delivering business as usual where possible and will continue with our ambitions for the City under the Belfast Agenda and City Deal.

The Council strives to deliver at the highest of standards and these efforts have been recognised in the many awards achieved by the Council in the year ended 31 March 2025, including:

















- Belfast Castle awarded Green Tourisms Green Meetings Bronze award.
- Six Belfast Venues and Visitor experiences recognised for their work to support disabled visitors at the City's inaugural Inclusive Tourism Awards.
- Digital Services, Resource and Fleet Collections and the Customer Hub achieved the Gold Winner ranking in this year's Contact Centre Network NI Awards (CCNNI Awards) for their innovative Report-It app.
- The Parks team secured an impressive 20 Green Flags at the Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful Green Flag Awards. They also clinched the overall Pollinator Award, with Musgrave Park taking first place and Falls Park second, highlighting our staff's work to protect the environment and our local biodiversity.
- Over fifty local organisations have now signed up to the Belfast Business Promise, an accreditation scheme developed and supported by Belfast City Council to deliver fair pay, good jobs and secure contracts.
- Colleagues in Resources and Fleet were recently conferred with the award of Ambassador by the Waste Industry Safety and Health Forum Northern Ireland (WISHNI) for their work on road risk management.

The Council seeks out opportunities to pursue additional funding streams for the City, adopting innovative approaches to delivering services and working in partnership to ensure the City optimises its resources to deliver on its six key objectives. A few of the current initiatives the Council is currently developing are outlined below:

- Smart Belfast – The City Innovation Office continued to deliver its Smart Belfast urban innovation programme that seeks to foster collaborative innovation between the public, private and academic sectors with the aim of addressing urban policy challenges while also contributing to economic growth by stimulating investment in innovation. During 2024/2025 the Office completed the final year of the €8 million Horizon 2020 funded, five-year 'Hubs of Innovation' programme with Belfast Maritime Trust. Phase Two of the £900,000 Augment the City Challenge competition was successfully delivered with six participating companies developing immersive prototypes. The Office also successfully delivered Phase One of the £3.8m million Belfast 5G Innovation Regions which supported eleven use cases delivered by city partners. Following this, the Office successfully bid for a further £1.3 million for a second phase of the programme aimed at public sector innovation. Finally, the Office has also developed two major businesses cases with City Deal partners that include plans for a

£5 million regional SBRI programme and a £5 million AI Adoption programme for the public and private sectors.

- Belfast Region City Deal – By the end of March 2025 - with 16 Outline Business Cases (OBCs) and three Full Business Cases (FBCs) approved (at a combined project value of £620m) 13 Contracts for Funding signed, two projects already operational, two in construction or fit-out stage, 12 projects at design phase, five with planning approvals, and four skills assessments completed - it is clear that the programme of investment is firmly in delivery phase, reflecting significant momentum over the last year.

4 	16 	13 	2 	0 	3 	21	14	10,935	3,238
OBC / addendum drafting	OBC approved	CfF & FA signed	FBC drafting	FBC submitted	FBC approved	No. of contracts awarded with SV included	BRCD SV reporting to SIB commenced	No of SV points committed in SIB portal	No of SV points delivered in SIB portal
3 	16 	12 	3 	5 	4 	2 	2 	4 	1 
ICT Procurement ongoing	ICT awarded	Design stage	Planning submitted	Planning approved	IST Procurement ongoing	Construction/ Fit-out	Operational	Skills Assessments complete	Skills Assessments drafting

- PEACEPLUS - The Council is delighted to have secured €17.4million (£15.1m) for the delivery of the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan which comprises of 16 projects, delivered across 3 themes of Community Regeneration & Transformation, Thriving and Peaceful Communities and Celebrating Cultures and Diversity. The Action plan will engage over 17,000 people across the city in a range of activities, which aim to develop Belfast as a compassionate, culturally vibrant, and inclusive city.

A further €13.5million (£11.7m) of PEACEPLUS funding has been secured for transformation plans to regenerate Alexandra Park and the Waterworks in North Belfast. This Reconnected Belfast project will bring communities together and enhance connectivity between the Waterworks and Alexandra Park. The project will develop the parks and surrounding area to create a functional shared space engaging over 7,000 local people.

Both projects are supported through PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

Through 2025/26 the Council will continue to adopt a pro-active approach to ensure that it responds to the emerging needs of residents and businesses to support communities, businesses and vulnerable people.

In line with all other councils in Northern Ireland and the wider public sector, Belfast City Council is still facing a number of challenges. Public finances are under increasing pressure as a result of ongoing tightening of government spending agendas, inflationary pressures, amongst other challenges. The Council will continue to develop its approach to financial planning to support performance, aligning corporate and service plans with financial plans.

Statement of the Council's and Chief Financial Officer's Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts

The Council's Responsibilities

Under Section 1 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 a council shall make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs. A council shall designate an officer of the council as its chief financial officer and these arrangements shall be carried out under the supervision of its chief financial officer.

Under Regulation 7 of the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 the Council, or a Committee, is required by resolution, to approve the accounts.

These accounts were approved by the Chief Finance Officer on

The Chief Financial Officer's Responsibilities

Under Regulation 8 of the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015, the Chief Financial Officer is responsible for the preparation of the Council's Statement of Accounts in the form directed by the Department for Communities.

The accounts must give a true and fair view of the income and expenditure and cash flows for the financial year and the financial position as at the end of the financial year.

In preparing this Statement of Accounts, the Chief Financial officer is required to:

- observe the Accounts Direction issued by the Department for Communities including compliance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom
- follow relevant accounting and disclosure requirements and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis, and
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.

The Chief Financial Officer is also required to:

- keep proper accounting records that are up-to-date, and
- take reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Annual Governance Statement 2024/2025

The Council's Annual Governance Statement (AGS) follows the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK 2024/25 and comprises the following sections:

- Scope of responsibility
- The purpose of the governance framework
- The governance framework
- Review of effectiveness
- Update on the significant governance issues that were declared last year
- Significant governance issues for the year-end 2025

Scope of responsibility

Belfast City Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and is used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Council also has a duty under Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 to make arrangements for continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of strategic effectiveness, service quality, service availability, fairness, sustainability, efficiency and innovation.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

The Council has prepared an Annual Governance Statement, which is consistent with the principles of the new CIPFA/SOLACE Framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016 edition)*. This statement explains how the Council has complied with the code and meets the requirements of regulation 4 of the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland 2015) in relation to the publication of an annual governance statement.

The purpose of the governance framework

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the Council is directed and controlled and the activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads its communities. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate services and value for money.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The governance framework continues to be in place at Belfast City Council for the year ending 31st March 2025 and up to the date of approval of the Annual Governance Statement

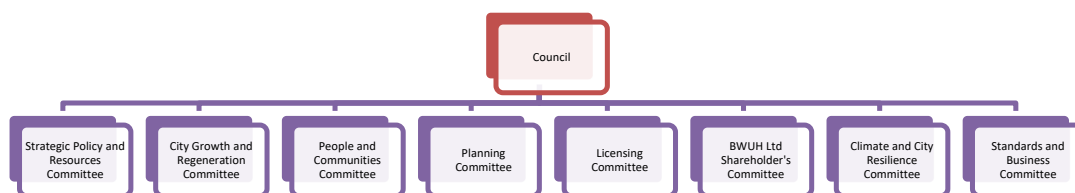
and statement of accounts. The following section sets out the key elements of the governance framework.

The governance framework

Following the expiration of the Coronavirus Act 2020 (Extension of Provisions Relating to Local Authority Meetings) (No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2023 members were required to be physically present at Council and Committee meetings from 7th March 2024 in order to take part in debates and to vote on any issues which may be raised. The Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 were approved by the NI Assembly and became operational from 25 June 2024 which required councils to put in place standing orders governing remote attendance at meetings of council. Belfast City Council approved the Supplement to the Standing Orders, Remote Meetings Protocol and Procedure Rules, on 2nd September 2024. The first remote meeting under the new legislation was Strategic Resources and Policy committee on 20 September 2024.

As working groups and workshops are not decision-making bodies and are not subject to the same legislation, these continue to be held as hybrid meetings.

Our committee structure, which is based on the full council and eight standing committees is illustrated and described below.



Through the work of committees, our Members oversee the work of the council. All committee decisions need to be ratified by the full council except where committees have been granted delegated authority to make decisions.

The full council, which consists of all 60 elected representatives, is the overarching decision-making body.

The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is responsible for setting the strategic direction of the Council through the development of its corporate plan and other key corporate and cross cutting strategies and policies. It will also ensure effective use of resources and value for money for ratepayers and oversee the Council's relationship with a number of key agencies and partners.

The City Growth and Regeneration Committee is responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects directed to the regeneration and growth of the city in the context of the outcomes agreed in the community and corporate plans and other corporate strategy.

The People and Communities Committee is responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects aimed at improving life at a local level in the context of the outcomes agreed in the community and corporate plans and other corporate strategy.

The Planning Committee is responsible for all the Council's planning functions, except those matters, which are delegated to officers or reserved to full Council.

The Licensing Committee is responsible for the consideration of all matters pertaining to policy and legislation in relation to licensing issues.

The Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd Shareholders' Committee is responsible for making the decisions required by the Shareholders' Agreement and ensure that the company complies with the contract for the operation of the venues.

The Climate and City Resilience Committee is responsible for political oversight of the resilience strategy for Belfast, liaising with Belfast Resilience and Sustainability Board who are responsible for monitoring and delivery with the support of Belfast Climate Commission, supporting a targeted approach through existing structures to those issues which pose the greatest risk to the city, its economy and its people. This includes considering the potential implications of climate change for the city of Belfast and for making recommendations to the Council on Belfast City Council's approach to addressing the climate crisis and Council's role and responsibilities at city level.

The terms of reference of the Standards and Business Committee are to: promote, sustain and safeguard the conduct of Councillors within the Council; promote a collaborative working relationship between senior officers and Members; ensure the probity of all the council's proceedings; and review and improve processes in relation to bringing business before the Council, including review of all Notices of Motion, any review of Standing Orders and the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

In addition to the Committees listed in the diagrams above there are 19 Working Groups established which include the Audit & Risk Panel and four Area Working Groups. In addition, there is a Party Leaders' Consultative Forum.

The Audit & Risk Panel provides an independent assurance on the adequacy of the Council's risk management framework and associated control environment. It provides an independent scrutiny of the Council's financial and non-financial performance, which is relied upon by the Council, to the extent that it exposes it to risk and weakens the control environment. The Panel reports to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. The Audit & Risk Panel met four times during 2024/25.

The Council's Code of Governance is based on the seven core principles set out in the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework (2016 edition). How we meet these seven core principles is reviewed and updated annually. A summary of the key elements of our governance framework are set out in the following table:

Our seven principles of good governance

A: Behaving with integrity

- Shared values communicated via corporate plan, community plan and key strategies
- Codes of conduct for Members and staff
- PDP / appraisal process for Members & staff
- Gifts and hospitality and conflicts of interest policies and registers in place
- Fraud and Raising Concerns policies
- Good Relations Unit
- Equality and Diversity Framework
- Council constitution, standing orders & scheme of delegation
- Expert professional advice
- Partners and contractors required to comply with relevant policies
- Achieving Through People Framework
- Standards and Business Committee
- Accessibility Statement for the updated website
- Social Value Procurement Policy

B: Ensuring openness

- Council / committee meetings open to the public and agendas / minutes on website
- Belfast Agenda developed via extensive consultation and engagement.
- Corporate plan and annual improvement plan are subject to consultation before agreement
- Statement of Community Involvement for production of the Local Development Plan
- Ongoing consultation and engagement with staff and trade unions
- Corporate communications
- Annual financial report published on the BCC website
- Equality Screening Outcome reports available through the BCC website
- Formal Partnership arrangements with GLL, Active Belfast, arc21, BWUH Ltd, Visit Belfast, Innovation City Belfast
- “Your Say” consultation hub
- Working with Belfast Region City Deal partners

C: Defining outcomes

- Belfast Agenda outlines long term economic, social and environmental benefits and is refreshed every 4 years
- Belfast Region City Deal Investment Plan
- Cultural Strategy
- Corporate plan outlines the annual contribution to the Belfast Agenda
- City Centre Regeneration & Investment strategy
- Physical Investment Programme
- Grant funding processes
- Equality Impact Assessments

D: Optimising the achievement of outcomes

- Corporate plan aligned to delivery of Belfast Agenda
- Adoption of the Belfast Local Development Plan (LDP) - Plan Strategy
- Key partner in the Belfast Region City Deal
- Consultation and engagement processes
- Strategic financial management and reporting framework in place.
- Performance management framework
- Regular reports on progress of our performance improvement plan to CMT and SP&R
- Risk management strategy & framework

E: Developing capacity & capability

- People Strategy
- Achieving Through People Framework
- Benchmarking activity
- Efficiency programme
- Regular performance monitoring of the delivery of improvement objectives
- Learning and development policy
- Health and wellbeing strategy
- Appraisal scheme in place for Chief Officers, Operational Directors / Heads of Service and Senior Managers
- PDPs for officers and Members
- Member capacity building / training
- Continuing Development Programme for members
- Party group briefings

F: Finance, performance and risk management

- Annual Rate Setting process
- Financial Strategy
- Compliance with CIPFA Financial Management Code
- Performance management framework
- Treasury Management Strategy
- Capital Strategy
- Risk management strategy
- Corporate risk management framework
- Regular reporting of finance, risk and performance
- Audit and Risk Panel
- Internal audit function / annual internal audit strategy and plan in place
- Recommendations Monitor process
- Data protection policy and procedures
- Corporate Fraud Risk Assessment
- Increased data security controls

G: Transparency, reporting & effective accountability

- BCC website regularly updated
- Publication of key reports including the annual financial report; annual governance statement and; performance improvement report
- Committee support framework to approve papers prior to submission to Members
- AGRS (internal audit) annual assurance statement within the annual governance statement
- Internal Audit effectiveness annually reviewed against relevant internal audit standards, with an independent external review every five years
- Internal / external audit recommendations followed up as part of recommendations monitoring process every six months
- Key governance arrangements in place for the Council's Accountable Body role for the Belfast Region City Deal

The Chief Executive is the Council's designated Chief Financial Officer under the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, responsible for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs.

The Council's financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016).

We have re-assessed our compliance with the principles of the CIPFA Financial Management Code and work ongoing to improve compliance in three areas:

- Governance - the City Solicitor and Director of Legal Services is leading on the update of the Council's Scheme of Delegation and Financial Regulations.
- Integrated Planning – a cross departmental working team is reviewing the current financial and corporate planning processes so that Corporate, Departmental and Service Plans will be aligned with approved estimates for the start of the 2026/27 financial year.
- Investment Planning – the new 8-10 year capital programme should be integrated with the annual rate setting process.

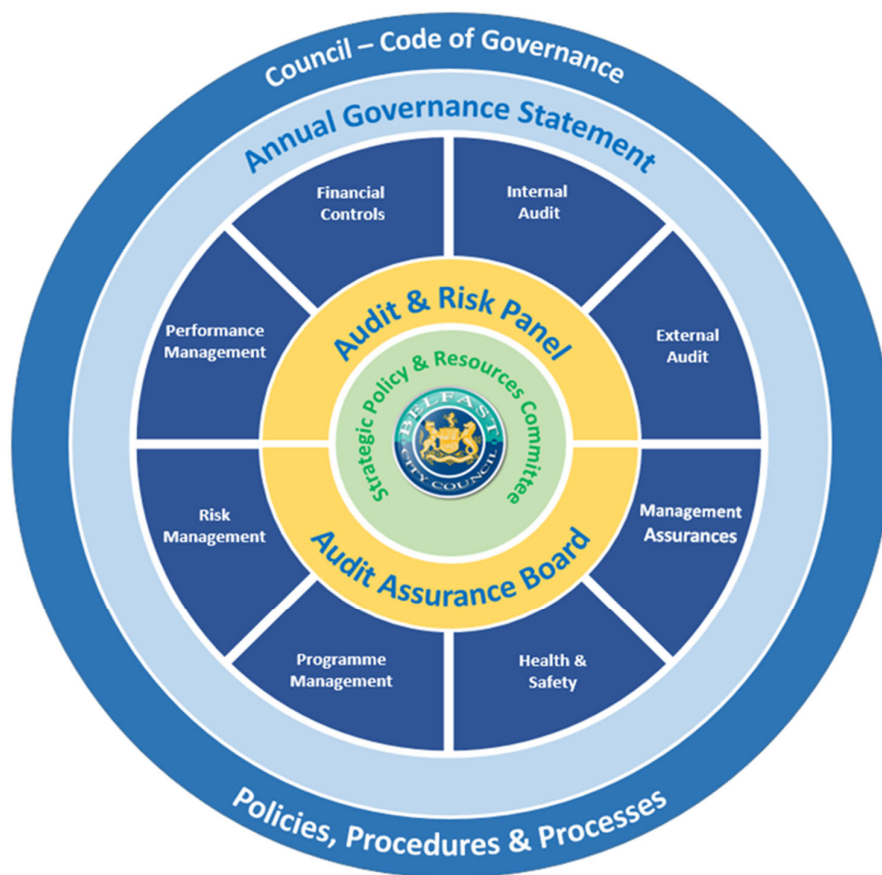
The continuing development of the Council's approach to Medium Term Financial Planning will support performance by better alignment of corporate and service plans with financial plans. Planning beyond the annual budget will enable Members and senior management to protect the financial sustainability of the Council by linking vision and strategy to outcomes.

Having considered all the principles of the CIPFA Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption (2014), subject to the implementation of the Corporate Fraud Risk Action Plans, the Council has adopted a response that is appropriate for its fraud and corruption risks and commits to maintain its vigilance to tackle fraud.

The Council's arrangements conform to the requirements of the new CIPFA Code of Practice for the Governance of Internal Audit in UK Local Government (2025) which apply from 1st April 2025.

The CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit (2019) outlines the five principles that set out the organisation's responsibilities to ensure the Head of Internal Audit (HIA) can operate effectively and perform their core duties. The Statement also sets out the core responsibilities of the HIA along with the personal skills and professional standards expected of the HIA. The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS), and the supporting operational arrangements in place, conform to the five principles set out in the CIPFA Statement. This is demonstrated through a self-assessment exercise undertaken by the Head of AGRS. While the principles state that the HIA should not be responsible for preparing the annual governance report, the arrangements within the council, involve AGRS co-ordinating the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement which is then reviewed and agreed by the Corporate Management Team, Audit Assurance Board and Audit and Risk Panel, before being reviewed by Strategic Policy and Resources committee and signed by the Chair of Strategic Policy & Resources and the Chief Executive.

The Council reported one breach of personal data to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) during 2024/25. After further investigation, it was confirmed that there was no personal data breach, and no further action was taken by the ICO.



Review of Effectiveness

The following diagram illustrates the Assurance Framework in place that provides information on compliance with the various elements of the Council's Governance Framework, including performance reports, health and safety reports, finance reports, external audit reports, internal audit reports and risk management report

Continued effort has been put into developing and implementing the key elements of an assurance framework within the Council with the key elements being:

- a process whereby senior managers are required to sign annual assurance statements;
- a process whereby members of CMT are required to sign quarterly assurance statements;
- embedding risk management and developing the arrangements for oversight of the management of these risks;
- business planning and related performance reporting arrangements;
- an Audit and Risk Panel;
- a professional internal audit function, which has been reviewed for effectiveness against the relevant professional standards; and
- a Health & Safety Assurance Board.

The various in year and year-end reports arising from the Assurance Framework are reviewed and approved by the Audit and Risk Panel and Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

In addition, the review of the effectiveness of the Governance Framework is also informed by:

- the annual review and update of the Code of Governance;
- comments or recommendations made by the external auditors during their annual audit; and
- the Head of Audit Governance and Risk Services (AGRS) annual assurance statement for the period ending 2024/25, which gives an opinion on the Council's risk and control environment.

A Statement by the Head of Internal Audit

As Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS), on the basis of work carried out, I can provide a reasonable assurance regarding the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control.

We developed our audit plan in consultation with management to ensure that our audit work was focused on the areas where assurance was most valuable. Member and management agreement of this plan combined with delivery of the majority of this plan signifies members and managers recognition of the importance of receiving independent assurance over the council's risk, control and governance frameworks and provided me with sufficient evidence to support my assurance statement.

My opinion is based on completion of audits in the audit plan for 24/25; programme and project assurance and advisory work undertaken for a number of fundamental corporate IT projects; other advisory work and; quarterly assurance statements from senior management on compliance with risk management and internal control systems.

Specifically, my opinion is based on the following:

Evidence from areas subject to detailed internal audit during 2024/2025, in that AGRS has been able to provide positive statements of assurance with the majority of audits falling into the 'some improvement needed' category - the 2nd tier of assurance in the 4-tier model.

Provision of assurance and advisory work for major programmes and projects including the new accounting system which went live on 1 May 2024.

The results of the recommendations monitor exercise completed in February 2025.

The work that was undertaken to support management in their quarterly review and update on the management of the corporate risks that could potentially impact on delivery of our corporate plan and priorities.

The work that was undertaken to complete the review of the Corporate Fraud Risk Assessments and to support management in the development of associated fraud risk mitigation plans.

Quarterly assurances from senior management on the management of key risks and maintenance of internal control systems.

The evidence set out in the review of the Council's Code of Governance and Annual Governance Statement regarding the range of key assurance and governance arrangements that the Council has in place to direct / oversee its activities.

However, some weaknesses and areas for improvement have been identified through audit work. These have been reported in detail to the Council's Audit Assurance Board and Audit and Risk Panel during 2024/25 through quarterly progress reports. In addition, I have highlighted, where appropriate, where further action is required to implement agreed audit actions. The key issues I would highlight in this statement are as follows:

AGRS was able to provide positive statements of assurance in the majority of audits completed in 2024/25, however one area resulted in 'major improvement' assurance level, relating to Communications, Marketing and External Affairs. It is important that the action plan for this audit is implemented in as timely a manner as possible.

The Asset Management gap analysis reported to the Panel in December 2024, set out improvement actions that should enable the Council to manage its substantial asset base in a way that should ensure the maximum contribution to delivery of corporate objectives. It is important that an agreed approach to improving asset management is developed and implemented.

The most recent recommendations monitor exercise completed in February 2025, showed a reduction in the implementation rate for audit actions. An analysis into the reasons for this reduction is underway and it is important that appropriate action is taken to ensure that there is a robust control environment to support delivery of services, programmes and priorities.

Departmental risk management processes were reintroduced during 2024/25, with each Director agreeing the risk management framework that was appropriate for their department. Departmental risk management frameworks take account of risk management processes for health and safety, programmes and projects, fraud etc. I underline the importance of Directors ensuring that these risk management frameworks are implemented effectively.

Looking ahead, I highlight the importance of the ongoing development of the council's approach to medium term financial planning and adequate and effective programme management and performance management processes to support the delivery of the new corporate plan and priorities for 2025-28.

Limitations – the most recent External Quality Assessment (EQA) of AGRS found strong evidence that AGRS is viewed as making a positive contribution to the continuous improvement of governance, risk management and internal control in the Council and conforms to the requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. One of the recommendations for improvement arising from the EQA was that my annual assurance report should highlight the limitations that result from AGRS' role in supporting the Council's risk management arrangements. In this regard I highlight that AGRS is responsible for assisting the Director in establishing, maintaining and supporting the implementation of the council's Risk Management Strategy. This places limitations on AGRS' ability to assess the overall effectiveness of the Council's risk management arrangements. To manage these limitations and to preserve the independence and objectivity of AGRS a number of safeguards have been put in place including resource planning to manage boundaries between our advisory and assurance work; self-assessments against best practice and periodic external assurance reviews of the councils' arrangements for risk management.

Public Sector Internal Audit Standards

I can confirm that the AGRS Service has conformed to Public Sector Internal Audit Standards during 2024/25. A quality assurance and improvement programme is in place including internal review of

work, annual assessment against professional standards, quarterly progress and performance reporting to the Assurance Board and Audit & Risk Panel. An external quality assessment of AGRS took place in 2022 and this confirmed the Service's compliance with professional standards.

As of 1st April 2025, the new Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) and the Application Note for the Public Sector came into effect and replaced the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). I have completed an initial assessment of AGRS conformance with the new GIAS and I can confirm that AGRS conforms with these standards.

Update on the Significant Governance Issues that were declared last year

Four issues were declared last year and two continue to be declared as issues in this year's statement regarding Digital Information Security and the Brexit Implementation Programme for Port Health. The issues relating to Financial Planning and the Black Mountain Shared Space Non-Compliance Issue are no longer considered to be significant governance issues for the year ended 31st March 2025 and an update on the work that was completed last year to manage these issues is set out below.

Financial Planning

The 5-step strategy was stood down for 2024/25 however, during the year, regular monitoring and reporting on actual spend against budget spend, as well as forecast spend against annual budget was carried out. This provided the council with assurance that the financial position of the Council was secure.

Contract savings achieved during the 24/25 financial year were incorporated into the 25/26 rate setting process, and although the increase in the district rate was above inflation, this was to allow for additional growth in services and capital spend and not because of a shortfall in the budget position.

This no longer remains a significant issue for 2025/26.

Black Mountain Shared Space Non-Compliance Issue

In 2024-25, the Director of Property and Projects have strengthened and ensured that adequate management and control systems are in place to ensure full compliance with all European Union grant funding conditions to prevent any reoccurrence of losses from fines. The Director has agreed additional management step and controls to be built in for above threshold capital projects funded by the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB) or any other European funding source, such as:

- procurement strategy must include a section on the requirement to advertise in the Official Journal of the European Union as necessary;
- prior to commencement of procurement, written approval of the procurement strategy must be secured from the funding body as well as the Project Board;
- the Programme Delivery Manager must confirm to the Portfolio Office that the funding body has approved the procurement strategy prior to requesting the commencement of the procurement exercise, both for construction professionals and contractors; and
- the Portfolio Office to ensure this confirmation has been received before publishing any procurement exercise.

Furthermore, the Council has received SEUPB funding for both Belfast Local Community PEACE Action Plan and PEACEPLUS Reconnected Belfast which will deliver infrastructure projects and investments

to local community activities. The Director will ensure that these projects will comply with the set funding terms and conditions, and lessons learned on the above governance issue will be considered.

Significant Governance Issues for the year ended 31 March 2025

The significant governance issues for the year ended 31 March 2025 were identified through review of the risks in the Corporate Risk Register and review of the Directors' Annual Assurance Statements.

The most significant issues for the Council are listed below and relate to two issues which have been carried forward from last year:

1. Digital Information Security / Digital Strategy
2. Brexit Implementation Programme for Port Health
3. Bank Reconciliations

More information on these significant governance issues is provided on the following pages.

1. Digital Information Security / Digital Strategy

Digital information security continues to be a significant governance issue and is overseen through the Council's risk management processes by the Council's Corporate Management Team. Digital Services has implemented the following controls to manage and have better visibility of the growing threats in this area:

- Completion of penetration tests and vulnerability scans.
- Completion of Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard attestation.
- Ongoing delivery of a Security Awareness programme through regular five-minute online training modules on a range of issues that pose a cyber risk for our network.
- Unannounced phishing tests.
- Public Key Infrastructure to enhance network access control.
- Always-On Virtual Private Network to ensure all homeworking access is managed through our security infrastructure.
- Mobile device management using Microsoft Intune being rolled out for all new mobile phones.
- Completion of firewall upgrades.
- Draft Ransomware incident response playbook.
- Cloud services access report reviewed by Security Oversight Group.
- Completion of separate cyber security desktop exercises for response to a ransomware incident for Digital Services, critical services and the Corporate Management Team.

The Digital information Security programme will continue to focus on priority areas that are most important to enhance the council's cyber security controls, including:

- Cyber security incident response.
- Identity management.
- Cloud strategy.
- Maturity assessment priorities.

Additional actions to be undertaken to further mitigate this key corporate risk in 2025/26 include:

- Carry out a new Cyber Security desktop Exercise.
- Ongoing Ransomware Playbook development.
- Managed Security Operations Centre procurement.

- Carry out NCSC Cyber Assessment Framework self and external assessments.

An internal audit highlighted issues with the management of the corporate risk on the strategic approach to the use of data, including future ownership of this risk. A Data and Analytics Board chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive / Strategic Director of Corporate Services has been established and has focused on:

- The development of technical infrastructure to support a corporate approach to Data & Analytics.
- Preparing a pipeline of data and analytics use cases.
- Developing an AI policy.
- Developing an Outline Business Case for the implementation of a corporate approach to the implementation of an Electronic and Document Records Management system.

Our new Digital Strategy with the vision to make the best use of digital and data to deliver excellent public services and inclusive growth in the Belfast City Region is supported through the delivery of a digital programme of work. The main objectives of the Digital Strategy relate to Digital Public Services; Information as an Asset; Digital City Innovation and Digital Capability.

ICT capability is an intrinsic pillar of the overall operating model of the Council, and it is important that we have the right skills within Digital Services and across the Council. Attracting new talent is proving problematic across the service but particularly in specialist areas such as Cyber Security and Application Development. In 24-25 Digital Services:

- Established a workforce planning group to review and determine future skills and development needs across the service.
- Focused on successfully recruiting external staff into entry level posts with a view to developing staff with the right skills required for the service.
- Successfully recruited 18 posts including our first apprentice post.

Additional actions are still required due to the high number of vacancies that still exist in the service. The following actions are planned to be carried out to mitigate this risk in 25-26 include:

- Carrying out a salary benchmark of the roles in Digital Services.
- Procuring managed Security Operations Centre services to enhance the cyber security team.
- Keeping a strong focus on recruitment and retention of staff.

2. Brexit Implementation Programme for Port Health

Engagement has continued at strategic and operational levels with partners including Food Standards Agency (FSA), Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) across all key strands of work to implement the changes, processes, systems and facilities required for delivery of the Council's Port Health statutory functions, including delivery of the Windsor Framework. This has included:

- Funding model: The Council has continued to advocate for a longer-term funding model for the provision of Port Health services. A further one-year funding arrangement is planned for 2025/26 however we are aware that a further four-year funding package is under consideration. It remains unclear when or if this will be confirmed. There is also no confirmation from Government whether fees and charges for checks / inspections will form part of the longer-term funding model.

- New Sanitary and Phytosanitary Inspection (SPS) inspection facility at Belfast Port: The Council has participated in the DEFRA SPS Facilities Board and Steering Groups which leads on construction and Go Live planning for operationalisation of the new inspection facilities in July 2025. The Council has developed its own Go Live plan in consultation with partners for transition to the new facility. This will be further developed as Standard Operating Procedures; risk assessments and detailed timelines are confirmed by DEFRA.
- IT systems: The Council has worked closely with DAERA and other Councils to enhance the DAERA IT systems provided to Council to streamline the process for recording of checks and inspections, and to move towards a more efficient one system approach which will be required when these services are co-located on the new inspection facility site. This work will continue in 2025/26.
- Staffing: A number of recruitment exercises have been completed in 2024/25 which has reduced the number of vacancies within the teams. However, challenges remain in securing sufficient Environmental Health Officers and a small number of vacant posts remain. Going forward, there remains uncertainty over future trade volumes which may be impacted further by introduction of latter phases of the Windsor Framework arrangements, and this may impact future resourcing requirements for the service. It is anticipated that further review will be required in the future to confirm the longer-term staffing requirements and structures.

In 2025/26, this remains a significant governance issue for the Council due to lack of clarity regarding future funding models, trade volumes and resourcing requirements particularly in the context of the announcement in May 2025 relating to the UK and EU discussions regarding a future sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) agreement. The move to a new inspection facility in summer of 2025 also poses risks to the Councils service delivery as it relies on effective staff resourcing, traffic management and operations management by the operator (DAERA), together with efficient service delivery by users (including Belfast City Council's Port Health service).

In each of these areas the Council will continue to engage with partners to:

- Advocate for a longer-term funding model.
- Ensure plans for transition to the new inspection facility are robust and effectively implemented in Summer 2025.
- Transition to the newly developed IT systems to improve joint working.
- Undertake recruitment campaigns to fill priority vacant posts.
- Following the announcement in May 2025 arising from UK and EU discussions, as more information becomes known, assess the impact of the future SPS agreement on Port Health arrangements.

3. Bank Reconciliations

The migration to a new finance system took place in May 2024. Several issues arose on migration to the new finance system in relation to bank reconciliations and clearing of unreconciled items. This combined with incorrect configuration of bank rules in the new finance system created an increasing volume of unreconciled banking transactions which at 31 March 2025 remained outstanding.

Actions have been implemented to address configuration of bank rules to maximise automatic clearing of transactions and training has been undertaken to ensure correct reconciliation coding to facilitate timely clearing of unreconciled items. Strengthened management and control systems are being developed for escalation of any issues surrounding unallocated income with monthly reports to management on volume and aging of uncleared items. These measures, combined with resolution

of issues on migration to a new finance system, should prevent recurrence for the 2026 year-end bank reconciliations.

Signed:
Chair Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Signed:
Chief Executive Officer

Belfast City Council
REMUNERATION REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

INTRODUCTION

The Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 require larger local government bodies to prepare a remuneration report as part of the statement of accounts.

ALLOWANCE AND REMUNERATION ARRANGEMENTS

COUNCILLORS

Allowances are payable by councils to Councillors and committee members under Part 3 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and The Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019, which came into operation on 1 October 2019.

Guidance and determinations on Councillors' Allowances applicable from 1 April 2024 were issued by the Department for Communities on 9 December 2024 (Circular LG 15/2024). Details of the allowances paid to individual Councillors are published on Council websites.

Following local elections on 18 May 2023, 462 Councillors were elected to the 11 new Councils for a four year term. Belfast City Council has 60 elected Members representing 10 District Electoral Areas in 2024/25.

SENIOR EMPLOYEES

The remuneration of senior employees employed by the Council is determined by the Council in line with that determined by the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services. Senior staff are those staff who are members of the Corporate Management Team, namely the Chief Executive and Directors.

Council appointments of employees are made in accordance with the Local Government Staff Commissions' Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection, which requires appointment to be on merit and on the basis of fair and open competition

Unless otherwise stated below, the officials covered by this report hold appointments which are open-ended.

ALLOWANCES PAID TO COUNCILLORS

The total amount paid to Councillors by way of allowances, under Part 3 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 was:

Table 1: Total Allowances paid to Councillors (audited information)

Allowance	2024/25		2023/24	
	Total Allowances £	Number of Councillors receiving the Allowance (FTE)	Total Allowances £	Number of Councillors receiving the Allowance restated (FTE)
Basic Allowance	1,047,233	60	929,294	60
Special Responsibility Allowance	123,606	30	113,581	28
Lord Mayor Allowance	34,800	1	34,800	1
Deputy Lord Mayor Allowance	6,250	1	6,029	1
PCSP Allowance	10,860	26	11,100	27
High Sheriff's Allowance	6,250	1	6,250	1
Fees & Travel	9,572	13	1,890	4
Mileage Allowance	1,381	9	1,399	9
Accommodation & Subsistence	8,074	12	1,657	1
TOTAL ALLOWANCES	1,248,026		1,106,000	

Details of the allowances paid to individual Councillors in 2024/25 are published on the Council website at www.belfastcity.gov.uk/council/your-council/councillors-allowances

The above table provides further information and details on the allowances paid to Councillors to that published on the Council website.

Details of the current Councillors can be found on the Council website.

REMUNERATION OF SENIOR EMPLOYEES

The remuneration of senior employees covers the Corporate Management Team (CMT). The following table provides details of the remuneration paid to senior employees:

Table 2 - Table 2: Remuneration (including salary) [audited information]

Officers	2024/25				2023/24			
	Salary (Full year equivalent in brackets where applicable) £'000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind £'000	Total £'000	Salary (Full year equivalent in brackets where applicable) £'000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind £'000	Total £'000
Chief Executive - John Walsh*	150-155			150-155	155-160			155-160
Deputy Cx / Strategic Dir of Corporate Services) - Sharon McNicholl**	120-125			120-125	75-80 (115-120)			75-80 (115-120)
Director of City and Organisational Strategy - John Tully	115-120			115-120	115-120			115-120
Strategic Director of City Operations - David Sales***	120-125			120-125	45-50 (115-120)			45-50 (115-120)
Strategic Director of Place and Economy - Damien Martin ****	115-120			115-120	25-30 (115-120)			25-30 (115-120)
City Solicitor - Nora Largey	115-120			115-120	110-115			110-115
Director Operational of Physical Programmes - Sinead Grimes	105-110			105-110	100-105			100-105
Director of External Affairs, Marketing & Comms - Lisa Caldwell*****	0			0	40-45 (100-105)			40-45 (100-105)
Director of Human Resources - Christine Sheridan	105-110			105-110	100-105			100-105
Director of Finance - Trevor Wallace	105-110			105-110	100-105			100-105
Director of Ext Affairs, Comms & Market - Eunan McConville*****	100-105			100-105	30-35 (95-100)			30-35 (95-100)

*The 2023/24 comparative figure includes payments in respect of duties as Deputy Returning Officer during elections in May 2023

** Sharon McNicholl appointed Deputy Chief Executive on 31 July 2023

***David Sales appointed to this post on 6 November 2023

****Damien Martin appointed to this post on 1 January 2024

*****Lisa Caldwell left on 31 August 2023

*****Eunan McConville appointed to this post on 4 December 2023

Councils are required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest paid member of the Corporate Management Team and the median remuneration of the Councils workforce.

The banded remuneration of the highest paid member of the Corporate Management Team at 31 March 2025 was £150k-155k. This was 4.98 times the median remuneration of the workforce, which was £31,067.

Table 3: Relationship between the remuneration of the highest paid member of the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and the median remuneration of the Councils workforce (audited information)

	2024/25 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Salary Band of Highest Paid member of the CMT	150-155	155-160
Median Total Remuneration	31.1	30.8
Ratio	4.98	5.07

In 2024/25, no employees received remuneration in excess of the highest paid member of the CMT.

Total remuneration includes salary, bonus payments and benefits in kind.

Salary and Benefits in Kind:

"Salary" includes gross salary and any ex gratia payments.

Benefits in Kind:

The monetary value of benefits in kind covers any benefits provided by the employer and treated by HM Revenue and Customs as a taxable emolument.

Exit Packages for staff

The number of exit packages provided to all staff by the Council, together with total cost per band and total cost of the voluntary redundancies as agreed under the Council's voluntary redundancy scheme are set out in the table below:

Table 4: Exit Packages in 2024/25 (audited information)

Severance Package Cost Band	2024/25				2023/24			
	Number of Compulsory Redundancies	Number of Other departures agreed	Total Number of Exit Packages in each Cost Band	Total Cost of Packages in each Cost Band £'000	Number of Compulsory Redundancies	Number of Other departures agreed	Total Number of Exit Packages in each Cost Band	Total Cost of Packages in each Cost Band £'000
£0 - £20,000	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0
£20,001 - £40,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
£40,001 - £60,000	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	59
£60,001 - £80,000	0	1	1	65	0	0	0	0
£80,001 - £100,000	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	174
£100,001 - £150,000	0	2	2	254	0	1	1	150
£150,001 - £200,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
£200,001 - £250,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	4	4	321	0	4	4	383

Pension Benefits

The Local Government Pension Scheme (Northern Ireland) (the Scheme) is a funded defined benefit pension scheme, which provides retirement benefits for council employees on a "career average revalued earnings" basis from 1 April 2015. Prior to that date benefits were built up on a "final salary" basis.

From 1 April 2015, a member builds up retirement pension at the rate of 1/49th pensionable pay for each year. Pension benefits in relation to membership between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2015 were built up at the rate of 1/60th pensionable pay for each year of membership. There is no automatic lump sum provided in respect of membership after 31 March 2009. Pension benefits in relation to any membership before 1 April 2009 were built up at the rate of 1/80th (pension) and 3/80ths (tax-free lump sum) of pensionable pay for each year of membership up to 31 March 2009. At retirement, members may give up some pension for additional lump sum, subject to HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) limits. The conversion rate is £12 additional lump sum for every £1 of pension given up.

Councillors have been able to join the Scheme since May 2011. The Scheme application is modified to reflect the fact that councillors hold an elected office. Councillor members have always accrued pension on a career average basis. Prior to 1 April 2015 pension was accrued at a rate of 1/60th and thereafter at a rate of 1/49th.

The Scheme is funded by contributions made by both employees/councillors and employers. Prior to 1 April 2009, a member's contribution rates were fixed at 6% of their pensionable remuneration (except for those who were entitled to contribute to the Scheme at 5% before 1 February 2003 and have remained in continuous employment). Tiered member contribution rates, determined by the whole-time equivalent rate of pay, were introduced from 1 April 2009. From 1 April 2015, the member contribution rates are determined on the actual rate of pay.

The ranges for the bands for tiered contribution rates are revised by the Department for Communities in April each year in accordance with the increase applied to a pension in payment. The bands, effective from 1 April 2024, were as follows

Table 5: Employee Contribution Rates

Band	Range	Employee Contribution Rate
1	£0 - £18,000	5.50%
2	£18,001 - £27,700	5.80%
3	£27,701 - £46,300	6.50%
4	£46,301 - £56,300	6.80%
5	£56,301 - £111,700	8.50%
6	More than £111,700	10.50%

Employers' contribution rates are determined by the fund's actuary every three years at the triennial valuation. Contribution rates for the 2024/25 year were set from the formal triennial actuarial valuation of the Fund as at 31 March 2022 carried out in 2022/23 and set the employer contribution rates for the 3 years commencing 1 April 2023 as follows:

Table 6: Employer Contribution Rates

Year	Employer Contribution Rate
1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024	19.0%
1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025	19.0%
1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026	19.0%

The Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 were made on 27 June 2014 and The Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment and Transitional Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 were made on 30 June 2014. Both sets of regulations are effective from 1 April 2015.

Councillors have been able to join the Scheme since May 2011 and therefore have not accrued significant benefits thus far. However, the in-year pension contributions made by the Council for all Councillors during 2024/25 was £191,914 (2023/24 £190,397).

The value of pension benefits of the most senior management of the Council accrued during the year was as follows:

Table 7: Pension Benefits of senior staff in 2024/25 (audited information)

Officers	Accrued Pension and Related Lump Sum (LS) at pension age as at 31/03/25 £'000	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at pension age £'000	CETV at 31/03/25 £'000	CETV at 31/03/24 £'000	Real increase in CETV £'000
John Walsh	70-75	5-7.5	1,550	1,354	157
	90-95 (LS)	2.5-5 (LS)			
Sharon McNicholl	0-5	2.5-5	63	24	26
John Tully	35-40	2.5-5	591	509	62
David Sales	5-10	2.5-5	99	58	27
Damien Martin	20-25	2.5-5	321	263	41
Nora Largey	35-40	5-7.5	633	493	119
	20-25 (LS)	0-2.5 (LS)			
Sinead Grimes	35-40	2.5-5	665	571	75
	25-30 (LS)	0-2.5 (LS)			
Christine Sheridan	45-50	5-7.5	973	795	156
	60-65 (LS)	0-2.5 (LS)			
Trevor Wallace	45-50	2.5-5	986	858	105
	60-65 (LS)	0-2.5 (LS)			
Eunan McConville	0-5	0-2.5	34	8	17

The Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV)

This is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. It is a payment made by a pension scheme or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the pension benefits they have accrued in their former scheme. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies. CETVs are calculated in accordance with The Occupational Pension Schemes (Transfer Values) (Amendment) Regulations and do not take account of any actual or potential reduction to benefits resulting from Lifetime Allowance Tax which may be due when pension benefits are taken.

The real increase in the value of the CETV

This reflects the increase in CETV effectively funded by the employer. It takes account of the increase in accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period.

Chief Executive

Certificate of the Chief Financial Officer

I certify that:

- (a) The Statement of Accounts for the year ended on pages 43 to 118 has been prepared in the form directed by the Department for Communities and under the accounting policies set out on pages 47 to 59 and page 107.
- (b) in my opinion the Statement of Accounts gives a true and fair view of the income and expenditure and cash flows for the financial year and the financial position as at the end of the financial year ending 31st March 2025.

Chief Financial Officer

Date

These accounts were approved by resolution of the Strategic Policy & Resource Committee on

Chairperson

Date

Belfast City Council
Movement in Reserves Statement for the year ended 31 March 2025

The Movement in Reserves Statement shows the movement from the start of the year to the end on the different reserves held by the authority, analysed into 'usable reserves' (ie those that can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce local taxation) and 'unusable reserves'. The Statement shows how the movements in year of the Council's reserves are broken down between gains and losses incurred in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices and the statutory adjustment required to return to the amounts chargeable to council tax for the year. The net "Increase/(Decrease)" line shows the statutory General Fund Balance movements in the year following those adjustments.

	General Fund Summary	Other Fund Balances and Reserves	Capital Receipts Reserves (Inc deferred and unapplied)	Total Usable Reserves	Total Unusable Reserves	Total Council Reserves
	Restated £	£	£	£	Restated £	£
Balance as at 1 April 2023	58,815,944	28,329,227	642,458	87,787,629	763,415,446	851,203,075
Movement in reserves during the year						
Surplus/ (Deficit) on the provision of services	(5,785,711)	-	-	(5,785,711)	-	(5,785,711)
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	-	-	-	-	3,509,775	3,509,775
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	(5,785,711)	-	-	(5,785,711)	3,509,775	(2,275,936)
Adjustments between accounting basis & funding under regulations	5,862,150	9,450	216,000	6,087,600	(872,414)	5,215,186
Net increase before transfers to Statutory and Other Reserves	76,439	9,450	216,000	301,889	2,637,361	2,939,250
Transfers to / from Statutory and Other Reserves	406,628	(406,628)	-	-	-	-
Other movements	-	-	(129,450)	(129,450)	(853,000)	(982,450)
Increase/ (Decrease) in year	483,067	(397,178)	86,550	172,439	1,784,361	1,956,800
Balance as at 31 March 2024	59,299,011	27,932,049	729,008	87,960,068	765,199,807	853,159,875
Movement in reserves during the year						
Surplus/ (Deficit) on the provision of services	921,477	-	-	921,477	-	921,477
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	-	-	-	-	25,446,123	25,446,123
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	921,477	-	-	921,477	25,446,123	26,367,600
Adjustments between accounting basis & funding under regulations	3,895,124	1,261,786	5,962,500	11,119,410	(9,225,219)	1,894,191
Net increase before transfers to Statutory and Other Reserves	4,816,601	1,261,786	5,962,500	12,040,887	16,220,904	28,261,791
Transfers to / from Statutory and Other Reserves	146,254	(146,254)	-	-	-	-
Other movements	309,202	-	(1,753,630)	(1,444,428)	103,953	(1,340,475)
Increase/ (Decrease) in year	5,272,057	1,115,532	4,208,870	10,596,459	16,324,858	26,921,317
Balance as at 31 March 2025	64,571,068	29,047,581	4,937,878	98,556,527	781,524,665	880,081,192

Belfast City Council
Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for the year ended 31 March 2025

The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement shows the accounting cost in the year of providing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices, rather than the amount to be funded from taxation. Councils raise taxation to cover expenditure in accordance with statutory requirements; this may be different from the accounting cost. The taxation position is shown in both the Expenditure and Funding Analysis (Note 2) and the Movement in Reserves Statement.

		2024/25			2023/24		
		Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure	Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure
					Restated	Restated	Restated
Service Expenditure	Note	£	£	£	£	£	£
Strategic Policy & Resources	2	110,265,101	(54,102,376)	56,162,725	94,713,172	(33,098,855)	61,614,317
City Growth & Regeneration	2	62,250,793	(29,644,238)	32,606,555	47,429,133	(18,164,896)	29,264,237
People & Communities	2	148,141,633	(23,818,216)	124,323,417	146,988,485	(23,348,487)	123,639,998
Planning & Licensing	2	10,288,097	(7,103,184)	3,184,913	9,755,547	(6,336,033)	3,419,514
Cost of Services on Continuing Operations		330,945,624	(114,668,014)	216,277,610	298,886,337	(80,948,271)	217,938,066
Other Operating Expenditure/ Income	8	5,992,173	(9,902,865)	(3,910,692)	137,193	(5,840,643)	(5,703,450)
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	9	1,247,095	(8,876,526)	(7,629,431)	1,620,218	(9,532,097)	(7,911,879)
(Surplus) or Deficit on Discontinued Operations				-			-
Net Operating Expenditure		338,184,892	(133,447,405)	204,737,487	300,643,748	(96,321,011)	204,322,737
Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income	10	2,788,459	(208,447,423)	(205,658,964)	897,462	(199,434,488)	(198,537,026)
(Surplus)/Deficit on the Provision of Services		340,973,351	(341,894,828)	(921,477)	301,541,210	(295,755,499)	5,785,711
(Surplus)/Deficit on revaluation of non-current assets	11			(24,562,123)			(19,659,775)
Impairment losses on non-current assets charged to the Revaluation Reserve	11			-			-
Surplus/(Deficit) arising on revaluation of available-for-sale financial assets	11						
Remeasurements of the Net Defined Benefit Liability (Asset)	20			(884,000)			16,150,000
Share of Other Comprehensive Expenditure & Income of associates and joint ventures	29			-			-
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure				(25,446,123)			(3,509,775)
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure				(26,367,600)			2,275,936

Belfast City Council
Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2025

The Balance Sheet shows the value as at the Balance Sheet date of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Council. The net assets of the Council (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Council. Reserves are reported in two categories. The first category is usable reserves, i.e. those reserves that the Council may use to provide services, subject to the need to maintain a prudent level of reserves and any statutory limitations on their use. The second category is unusable reserves, those that the Council is not able to use to provide services. This category of reserves includes reserves that hold unrealised gains and losses (for example the Revaluation Reserve), where amounts would only become available to provide services if the assets are sold; and reserves that hold timing differences shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement line 'Adjustments between accounting basis & funding basis under regulations'.

		31st March 2025	31st March 2024
	Note	£	Restated £
Fixed Assets	11	903,680,574	886,802,159
Long Term Investments		-	-
Investment in Associates and Joint Ventures	29	3,436,859	3,436,859
Long Term Debtors	15	276,161	936,759
Contract Assets		-	-
Contract Costs		-	-
LONG TERM ASSETS		907,393,594	891,175,777
Short Term Investments		-	-
Inventories	14	222,543	220,813
Short Term Debtors	15	28,348,917	45,276,406
Cash and Cash Equivalents	24	57,539,430	13,499,122
Assets Held for Sale	11	2,650,001	5,770,001
Contract Assets	3, 15	486,489	556,847
Contract Costs		-	-
CURRENT ASSETS		89,247,380	65,323,189
Bank Overdraft	24	-	-
Short Term Borrowing	16	4,512,476	5,375,701
Short Term Creditors	17	68,594,155	50,414,704
Provisions	18	3,593,301	4,265,735
Contract Liabilities	17	-	35,000
CURRENT LIABILITIES		76,699,932	60,091,140
Long Term Creditors	17	1,020,343	11,778
Provisions	18	1,844,093	1,844,093
Long Term Borrowing	16	28,633,163	33,145,642
Other Long Term Liabilities	20	6,154,942	7,068,942
Contract Liabilities		-	-
Donated Assets Account	21	1,914,576	443,856
Capital Grants Receipts in Advance	21, 22	292,732	733,640
LONG TERM LIABILITIES		39,859,849	43,247,951
NET ASSETS		880,081,193	853,159,875
USABLE RESERVES			
Capital Receipts Reserve	25	4,139,224	729,008
Deferred Capital Receipts	25	665,000	-
Capital Receipts Unapplied	25	111,725	-
Capital Grants Unapplied	25	21,929	-
Capital Fund	25	16,607,146	14,409,960
Leisure Mobilisation Fund	25	534,521	534,521
Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund	25	9,906,334	10,052,018
Other Balances and Reserves	25	1,999,580	2,935,552
General Fund	25	64,571,068	59,299,011
		98,556,527	87,960,070
UNUSABLE RESERVES			
Capital Adjustment Account	26	530,276,689	526,101,099
Revaluation Reserve	26	259,650,318	248,325,740
Pensions Reserve	26	(6,154,942)	(7,068,942)
Accumulated Absences Account	26	(2,243,204)	(2,153,896)
Provisions Discount Rate Reserve	26	(4,196)	(4,196)
		781,524,666	765,199,805
NET WORTH		880,081,193	853,159,875

Belfast City Council
Cash Flow Statement at 31 March 2025

The Cash Flow Statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Council during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Council generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of the extent to which the operations of the Council are funded by way of taxation and grant income or from the recipients of services provided by the Council. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Council's future service delivery. Cash flows arising from financing activities are useful in predicting claims on future cash flows by providers of capital (i.e. borrowing) to the Council.

		2024/25	2023/24
	Note	£	Restated £
Surplus/(Deficit) on the Provision of Services		921,477	(5,785,711)
Adjustment for non-cash movements	24	64,476,592	24,900,871
Adjust for items included in the (Surplus)/Deficit on the Provision of Services that are investing and financing activities	24	(10,670,399)	(5,948,531)
Net cash flows from operating activities		54,727,670	13,166,629
Cash flows from Investing Activities	24	(5,311,658)	(13,547,607)
Net Cash flows from Financing Activities	24	(5,375,704)	(5,260,562)
Net increase or decrease in cash and cash equivalents		44,040,308	(5,641,540)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period	24	13,499,122	19,140,662
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		57,539,430	13,499,122

1 Accounting Policies

a General Principles

The Statement of Accounts summarises the Council's transactions for the 2024/25 financial year and its position at the year-end of 31 March 2025. The Council is required to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts in a form directed by the Department for Communities in accordance with regulations 3 (7) and (8) in the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 in accordance with proper accounting practices.

These practices primarily comprise the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2024/25, supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). The accounting convention adopted in the Statement of Accounts is principally historical cost, modified by the revaluation of certain categories of non-current assets and financial instruments.

Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

i) Accruals of Income and Expenditure

Activity is accounted for in the year that it takes place, not simply when cash payments are made or received. In particular:

- Revenue from contracts with service recipients, whether for services or the provision of goods, is recognised when (or as) the goods or services are transferred to the service recipient in accordance with the performance obligations in the contract.

- Supplies are recorded as expenditure when they are consumed – where there is a gap between the date supplies are received and their consumption, they are carried as inventories on the Balance Sheet.

- Expenses in relation to services received (including services provided by employees) are recorded as expenditure when the services are received rather than when payments are made.

- Interest receivable on investments and payable on borrowings is accounted for respectively as income and expenditure on the basis of the effective interest rate for the relevant financial instrument rather than the cash flows fixed or determined by the contract.

- Where revenue and expenditure have been recognised but cash has not been received or paid, a debtor or creditor for the relevant amount is recorded in the Balance Sheet. Where it is doubtful that debts will be settled, the balance of debtors is written down and a charge made to revenue for the income that might not be collected.

ii) Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash is represented by cash in hand and deposits with financial institutions repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours. Cash equivalents are highly liquid investments that mature in six months or less from the date of acquisition and that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change in value.

In the Cash Flow Statement, cash and cash equivalents are shown net of bank overdrafts that are repayable on demand and form an integral part of the Council's cash management.

iii) Contingent Assets

A contingent asset arises where an event has taken place that gives the Council a possible asset whose existence will only be confirmed by the occurrence or otherwise of uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the Council.

Contingent assets are not recognised in the Balance Sheet but disclosed in a note to the accounts where it is probable that there will be an inflow of economic benefits or service potential.

iv) Contingent Liabilities

A contingent liability arises where an event has taken place that gives the Council a possible obligation whose existence will only be confirmed by the occurrence or otherwise of uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the Council. Contingent liabilities also arise in circumstances where a provision would otherwise be made but either it is not probable that an outflow of resources will be required or the amount of the obligation cannot be measured reliably.

Contingent liabilities are not recognised in the Balance Sheet but disclosed in a note to the accounts.

v)

Employee Benefits

Short-term employee benefits are those due to be settled wholly within 12 months of the year-end. They include such benefits as wages and salaries, paid annual leave and paid sick leave, bonuses and non-monetary benefits (e.g. cars) for current employees, and are recognised as an expense in the year in which employees render service to the Council. An accrual is made for the cost of holiday entitlements (or any form of leave, e.g. time off in lieu) earned by employees but not taken before the year-end which employees can carry forward into the next financial year. The accrual is made at the applicable wage and salary rate. The accrual is charged to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services, but then reversed out through the Movement in Reserves Statement so that holiday entitlements are charged to revenue in the financial year in which the holiday absence occurs.

Termination benefits

Termination benefits are amounts payable as a result of a decision by the Council to terminate an officer's employment before the normal retirement date or an officer's decision to accept voluntary redundancy in exchange for those benefits and are charged on an accruals basis to the appropriate service segment or, where applicable, to a corporate service segment at the earlier of when the Council can no longer withdraw the offer of those benefits or when the Council recognises costs for a restructuring.

Where termination benefits involve the enhancement of pensions, statutory provisions require the General Fund balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Council to the pension fund or pensioner in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the Movement in Reserves Statement, appropriations are required to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for pension enhancement termination benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end.

Post Employment Benefits

The majority of employees of the Council are members of the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Pension Fund administered by the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee. The scheme provides defined benefits to members (retirement lump sums and pensions), earned as employees worked for the Council.

The Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Pension Fund

The Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Pension Fund is accounted for as a defined benefits scheme.

The liabilities of the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Pension Fund attributable to the Council are included in the Balance Sheet on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method – i.e. an assessment of the future payments that will be made in relation to retirement benefits earned to date by employees, based on assumptions about mortality rates, employee turnover rates, etc., and projections of projected earnings for current employees.

Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices, using a discount rate based on the Aon Hewitt GBP Select AA Curve over the duration of the Employer's liabilities.

The assets of the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' pension fund attributable to the Council are included in the Balance Sheet at their fair value:

- quoted securities – current bid price
- unquoted securities – professional estimate
- property – market value
- unitised securities – current bid price

The change in the net pensions liability is analysed into the following seven components:

Within the Cost of Services

Current Service Cost – the increase in the present value of the defined benefit obligation (liabilities) resulting from employee service in the current period.

Past Service Cost – (where applicable) the change in the present value of the defined benefit obligation for employee service in prior periods, resulting from a scheme amendment (the introduction or withdrawal of, or changes to, a defined benefit scheme) or a curtailment (a significant reduction in the number of employees covered by the scheme).

Any Gains or Losses on Settlement – (where applicable) arising where a council enters into a transaction that eliminates all further legal or constructive obligations for part or all of the benefits provided under a defined benefit scheme.

Within Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure

Net interest on the net defined benefit liability (asset), – i.e. net interest expense for the Council, the change during the period in the net defined benefit liability (asset) that arises from the passage of time charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement – this is calculated by applying the discount rate used to measure the defined benefit obligation at the beginning of the period to the net defined benefit liability (asset) at the beginning of the period – taking into account any changes in the net defined benefit liability (asset) during the period as a result of contribution and benefit payments.

Within Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure (Remeasurements)

The Return on Plan Assets – excluding amounts recognised in the Net Interest on the Net Defined Benefit Liability (Asset). This includes interest, dividends and other income derived from the plan assets, together with realised and unrealised gains or losses on the plan assets, less any costs of managing plan assets, and any tax payable by the plan itself other than tax included in the actuarial assumptions used to measure the present value of the defined benefit obligation.

Actuarial Gains and Losses – changes in the present value of the defined benefit obligation resulting from: a) experience adjustments (the effects of differences between the previous actuarial assumptions and what has actually occurred) and b) the effects of changes in actuarial assumptions.

Within the Movement in Reserves Statement Appropriations

Contributions by Scheme Participants – the increase in scheme liabilities and assets due to payments into the scheme by employees (where increased contribution increases pension due to the employee in the future).

Contributions by the Employer – the increase in scheme assets due to payments into the scheme by the employer.

In relation to retirement benefits, statutory provisions require the General Fund balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Council to the pension fund or directly to pensioners in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the Movement in Reserves Statement, this means that there are transfers to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for retirement benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end. The negative balance that arises on the Pensions Reserve thereby measures the beneficial impact to the General Fund of being required to account for retirement benefits on the basis of cash flows rather than as benefits are earned by employees.

Discretionary Benefits

The Council also has restricted powers to make discretionary awards of retirement benefits in the event of early retirements. Any liabilities estimated to arise as a result of an award to any member of staff are accrued in the year of the decision to make the award and accounted for using the same policies that are applied to the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' pension fund.

Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Pension Scheme

As a result of Local Government Reform on 1 April 2015, staff that transferred from Central Government to the Council retained membership of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Pension Scheme. The scheme provides defined benefits to members (retirement lump sums and pensions). However, the arrangements for the NICS Pension Scheme mean that liabilities for these benefits cannot ordinarily be identified specifically to the Council. The scheme is therefore accounted for as if it were a defined contribution scheme and no liability for future payments of benefits is recognised in the Balance Sheet.

vi)

Events After the Balance Sheet Date

Events after the Balance Sheet date are those events, both favourable and unfavourable, that occur between the end of the reporting period and the date when the Statement of Accounts is authorised for issue. Two types of events can be identified:

1) Those that provide evidence of conditions that existed at the end of the reporting period – the Statement of Accounts is adjusted to reflect such events.

2) Those that are indicative of conditions that arose after the reporting period – the Statement of Accounts is not adjusted to reflect such events, but where a category of events would have a material effect, disclosure is made in the notes of the nature of the events and their estimated financial effect.

The Statement of Accounts may subsequently be adjusted up to the date when they are authorised for issue. This date will be recorded on the Statement of Accounts and is usually the date the Local Government Auditor issues the certificate and opinion. Where material adjustments are made in this period they will be disclosed.

Events taking place after the date of authorisation for issue are not reflected in the Statement of Accounts.

vii) **Exceptional Items**

When items of income and expense are material, their nature and amount is disclosed separately, either on the face of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement or in the notes to the accounts, depending on how significant the items are to an understanding of the Council's financial performance.

viii) **Prior Period Adjustments, Changes in Accounting Policies and Estimates and Errors**

Prior period adjustments may arise as a result of a change in accounting policies or to correct a material error. Changes in accounting estimates are accounted for prospectively, i.e. in the current and future years affected by the change and do not give rise to a prior period adjustment.

Changes in accounting policies are only made when required by proper accounting practices or the change provides more reliable or relevant information about the effect of transactions, other events and conditions on the Council's financial position or financial performance. Where a change is made, it is applied retrospectively (unless stated otherwise) by adjusting opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period as if the new policy had always been applied.

Material errors discovered in prior period figures are corrected retrospectively by amending opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period.

ix) **Financial Instruments**

Financial Liabilities

Financial liabilities are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the Council becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument and are initially measured at fair value and are carried at their amortised cost. Annual charges to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for interest payable are based on the carrying amount of the liability, multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument. The effective interest rate is the rate that exactly discounts estimated future cash payments over the life of the instrument to the amount at which it was originally recognised.

For most of the borrowings that the Council has, this means that the amount presented in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal repayable (plus accrued interest); and interest charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is the amount payable for the year according to the loan agreement.

Where premiums and discounts have been charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, regulations allow the impact on the General Fund Balance to be spread over future years. The Council has a policy of spreading the gain or loss over the term that was remaining on the loan against which the premium was payable or discount receivable when it was repaid. The reconciliation of amounts charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to the net charge required against the General Fund Balance is managed by a transfer to or from the Financial Instruments Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Financial Assets

Financial assets are classified based on a classification and measurement approach that reflects the business model for holding the financial assets and their cashflow characteristics.

There are three main classes of financial assets measured at:

- amortised cost
- fair value through profit or loss (FVPL), and
- fair value through other comprehensive income (FVOCI)

The Council's business model is to hold investments to collect contractual cash flows. Financial assets are therefore classified as amortised cost, except for those whose contractual payments are not solely payment of principal and interest (i.e. where the cash flows do not take the form of a basic debt instrument).

Financial Assets Measured at Amortised Cost

Financial assets measured at amortised cost are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the Council becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument and are initially measured at fair value. They are subsequently measured at their amortised cost. Annual credits to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for interest receivable are based on the carrying amount of the asset multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument. For most of the financial assets held by the Council, this means that the amount presented in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal receivable (plus accrued interest) and interest credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure is the amount receivable for the year in the loan agreement.

Any gains and losses that arise on the derecognition of an asset are credited or debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Expected Credit Loss Model

The Council recognises expected credit losses on all of its financial assets held at amortised cost, either on a 12-month or lifetime basis. The expected credit loss model also applies to lease receivables and contract assets. Only lifetime losses are recognised for trade receivables (debtors) held by the Council.

Impairment losses are calculated to reflect the expectation that the future cash flows might not take place because the borrower could default on their obligations. Credit risk plays a crucial part in assessing losses. Where risk has increased significantly since an instrument was initially recognised, losses are assessed on a lifetime basis. Where risk has not increased significantly or remains low, losses are assessed on the basis of 12-month expected losses.

Financial Assets Measured at Fair Value through Profit or Loss

Financial assets that are measured at FVPL are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the Council becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument and are initially measured and carried at fair value. Fair value gains and losses are recognised as they arrive in the Surplus or Deficit on Provision of Services.

The fair value measurements of the financial assets are based on the following techniques:

- instruments with quoted market prices - the market price.
- other instruments with fixed and determinable payments - discounted cash flow analysis.

The inputs to the measurement techniques are categorised in accordance with the following three levels:

- Level 1 inputs - quoted prices (unadjusted) in active markets for identical assets that the authority can access at the measurement date.
- Level 2 inputs - inputs other than quoted prices included within Level 1 that are observable for the asset, either directly or indirectly.
- Level 3 inputs - unobservable inputs for the asset.

Any gains and losses that arise on the derecognition of the asset are credited or debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

x) Foreign Currency Translation

Where the Council has entered into a transaction denominated in a foreign currency, the transaction is converted into sterling at the exchange rate applicable on the date the transaction was effective. Where amounts in foreign currency are outstanding at the year-end, they are reconverted at the spot exchange rate at 31 March. Resulting gains or losses are recognised in the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

xi) Government Grants and Contributions

Whether paid on account, by instalments or in arrears, government grants and third party contributions and donations are recognised as due to the Council when there is reasonable assurance that:

- the Council will comply with the conditions attached to the payments, and
- the grants or contributions will be received.

Amounts recognised as due are not credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement until conditions attaching to the grant or contribution have been satisfied. Conditions are stipulations that specify that the future economic benefits or service potential embodied in the asset in the form of the grant or contribution are required to be consumed by the recipient as specified, or future economic benefits or service potential must be returned to the transferor.

Monies advanced as grants and contributions for which conditions have not been satisfied are carried in the Balance Sheet as creditors. When conditions are satisfied, the grant or contribution is credited to the relevant service line (attributable revenue grants and contributions) or Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income (non-ring-fenced revenue grants and all capital grants) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Where capital grants are credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, they are reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement. Where the grant has yet to be used to finance capital expenditure, it is posted to the Capital Grants Unapplied Reserve. Where it has been applied, it is posted to the Capital Adjustment Account. Amounts in the Capital Grants Unapplied Reserve are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account once they have been applied to fund capital expenditure.

xii) Inventories and Long Term Contracts

Inventories are included in the Balance Sheet at the lower of cost and net realisable value. The cost of inventories is assigned using the FIFO costing formula.

Long-term contracts are accounted for on the basis of charging the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services with the consideration allocated to the performance obligations satisfied based on the goods or services transferred to the service recipient during the financial year.

xiii) Overheads and Support Services

The majority of overheads and support services are included in the expenditure of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

xiv) **Landfill Allowance Scheme**

The Landfill Allowances Scheme operates under the Landfill Allowances Scheme (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2005. Local Authorities are allocated annual target figures for the maximum amount of biodegradable municipal waste that can be sent to landfill but there are no tradable allowances. It is not a 'cap and trade' scheme since landfill allowances are not tradable. For this reason, landfill allowances are not recognised as assets on the Balance Sheet.

xv) **Intangible Assets**

Expenditure on non-monetary assets that do not have physical substance but are controlled by the Council as a result of past events (e.g. software licences) is capitalised when it is expected that future economic benefits or service potential will flow from the intangible asset to the Council.

Internally generated assets are capitalised where it is demonstrable that the project is technically feasible and is intended to be completed (with adequate resources being available) and the Council will be able to generate future economic benefits or deliver service potential by being able to sell or use the asset. Expenditure is capitalised where it can be measured reliably as attributable to the asset and restricted to that incurred during the development phase (research expenditure is not capitalised).

Expenditure on the development of websites is not capitalised if the website is solely or primarily intended to promote or advertise the Council's goods or services.

Intangible assets are measured initially at cost. Amounts are only revalued where the fair value of the assets held by the Council can be determined by reference to an active market. In practice, no intangible asset held by the Council meets this criterion, and they are therefore carried at amortised cost. The depreciable amount of an intangible asset is amortised over its useful life to the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. An asset is tested for impairment whenever there is an indication that the asset might be impaired – any losses recognised are posted to the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Any gain or loss arising on the disposal or abandonment of an intangible asset is posted to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Where expenditure on intangible assets qualifies as capital expenditure for statutory purposes, amortisation, impairment losses and disposal gains and losses are not permitted to have an impact on the General Fund Balance. The gains and losses are therefore reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement and posted to the Capital Adjustment Account and (for any sale proceeds greater than £5,000) the Capital Receipts Reserve.

xvi) **Investment Property**

Investment properties are those that are used solely to earn rentals and/or for capital appreciation. The definition is not met if the property is used in any way to facilitate the delivery of services or production of goods or is held for sale.

Investment properties are measured initially at cost and subsequently at fair value, being the price that would be received to sell such an asset in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurable date. As a non-financial asset, investment properties are measured at highest and best use. Properties are not depreciated but are revalued annually according to market conditions at the year-end. Gains and losses on revaluation are posted to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The same treatment is applied to gains and losses on disposal.

Rentals received in relation to investment properties are credited to the Financing and Investment Income line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and result in a gain for the General Fund Balance. However, revaluation and disposal gains and losses are not permitted by statutory arrangements to have an impact on the General Fund Balance. The gains and losses are therefore reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement and posted to the Capital Adjustment Account and the Capital Receipts Reserve.

xvii) **Leases**

Leases are classified as leases where the terms of the lease transfer substantially all the risks and rewards incidental to ownership of the property, plant or equipment from the lessor to the lessee. All other leases are classified as operating leases.

Where a lease covers both land and buildings, the land and buildings elements are considered separately for classification.

Arrangements that do not have the legal status of a lease but convey a right to use an asset in return for payment are accounted for under this policy where fulfilment of the arrangement is dependent on the use of specific assets

The Council as Lessee - lease

In 2024/25, the Council applied IFRS 16 Leases as required by the Code of Practice for Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom. The main impact of the new requirements is that for arrangements previously accounted for as operating leases (i.e. without recognising the leased property as an asset and future rents as a liability) a right-of-use asset and a lease liability are to be brought into the Balance Sheet at 1 April 2024.

The council has availed of provisions in the Code allowing prospective application of the changes in accounting. This means a prior year restatement of the balance sheet is not required. Provisions in the Code also allow for leases not to be recognised if they are short-term leases (less than one year) or where the underlying asset is of low value. At the commencement of the lease, its fair value is measured at the lease's inception (or the present value of the minimum lease payments, if lower). The asset recognised is matched by a liability for the obligation to pay the lessor. Initial direct costs of the Council are added to the carrying amount of the asset. Premiums paid on entry into a lease are applied to writing down the lease liability. Contingent rents are charged as expenses in the periods in which they are incurred.

Some practical expedients have been applied as required or permitted by the Code:

- lease liabilities are measured at the present value of the remaining lease payments at 1 April 2024, discounted by the authority's incremental borrowing rate at that date.
- right-of-use assets are measured at the amount of the lease liability, adjusted for any prepaid or accrued lease payments that were in the balance sheet on 31 March 2024, and any initial direct costs have been excluded.

Lease payments are apportioned between:

- a. a charge for the acquisition of the interest in the property, plant or equipment – applied to write down the lease liability, and
- b. a finance charge (debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement)

Property, Plant and Equipment recognised under leases is accounted for using the policies applied generally to such assets, subject to depreciation being charged over the lease term if this is shorter than the asset's estimated useful life (where ownership of the asset does not transfer to the Council at the end of the lease period).

The Council is not required to raise district rates to cover depreciation or revaluation and impairment losses arising on leased assets. Instead, a prudent annual contribution is made from revenue towards the deemed capital investment in accordance with statutory requirements. Depreciation and revaluation and impairment losses are therefore substituted by a revenue contribution in the General Fund Balance, by way of an adjusting transaction with the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement for the difference between the two.

Rentals paid under operating leases that are of low value or exempt under the provisions of IFRS 16 are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as an expense of the services benefiting from use of the leased property, plant or equipment. Charges are made on a straight-line basis over the life of the lease, even if this does not match the pattern of payments (e.g. there is a rent-free period at the commencement of the lease).

Where the Council grants a finance lease over a property or an item of plant or equipment, the relevant asset is written out of the Balance Sheet as a disposal. At the commencement of the lease, the carrying amount of the asset in the Balance Sheet (whether Property, Plant and Equipment or Assets Held for Sale) is written off to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of the gain or loss on disposal. A gain, representing the Council's net investment in the lease, is credited to the same line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement also as part of the gain or loss on disposal (i.e. netted off against the carrying value of the asset at the time of disposal), matched by a lease asset (long term debtor) in the Balance Sheet.

The Council as Lessor - lease

Lease rentals receivable are apportioned between:

- a. a charge for the acquisition of the interest in the property – applied to write down the lease debtor together with any premiums received, and
- b. finance income (credited to the Financing and Investment income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement).

The gain credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on disposal is not permitted by statute to increase the General Fund Balance and is required to be treated as a capital receipt. Where a premium has been received, this is posted out of the General Fund Balance to the Capital Receipts Reserve in the Movement in Reserves Statement. Where the amount due in relation to the lease asset is to be settled by the payment of rentals in future financial years, this is posted out of the General Fund Balance to the Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve in the Movement in Reserves Statement. When the future rentals are paid, the element for the capital receipt for the disposal of the asset is used to write down the lease debtor. At this point, the deferred capital receipts are transferred to the Capital Receipts Reserve.

The written-off value of disposals is not a charge against District rates, as the cost of non-current assets is fully provided for under separate arrangements for capital financing. Amounts are therefore appropriated to the Capital Adjustment Account from the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Where the Council grants an operating lease over a property or an item of plant or equipment, the asset is retained in the Balance Sheet. Rental income is credited to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Credits are made on a straight-line basis over the life of the lease, even if this does not match the pattern of payments (e.g. there is a premium paid at the commencement of the lease). Initial direct costs incurred in negotiating and arranging the lease are added to the carrying amount of the relevant asset and charged as an expense over the lease term on the same basis as rental income.

The Council as Lessor - Operating Lease

The council has no sale and leaseback arrangements.

xviii) **Surplus Assets**

Surplus assets are non-operational assets that do not meet the conditions to be classified as assets held for sale. They are measured at fair value, reflecting the actual market state and conditions at the balance sheet date (which is the valuation date) with best evidence of fair value in an active market for similar properties in the same location. The Council classifies assets to surplus assets on the advice of its estates management officers and in consultation with its external property valuers.

The surplus assets held by the Council comprise a number of properties including land, buildings or sites of land and buildings combined, which have not reached the stage where the council can market these for sale advantageously, or where the properties have restrictions that prevent them currently being brought to market.

xix) **Disposals and Non-Current Assets Held for Sale**

When it becomes probable that the carrying amount of an asset will be recovered principally through a sale transaction rather than through its continuing use, it is reclassified as an Asset Held for Sale. The asset is revalued immediately before reclassification and then carried at the lower of this amount and fair value less costs to sell. Where there is a subsequent decrease to fair value less costs to sell, the loss is posted to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Gains in fair value are recognised only up to the amount of any previously recognised losses in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services. Depreciation is not charged on Assets Held for Sale.

If assets no longer meet the criteria to be classified as assets held for sale, they are reclassified back to non-current assets and valued at the lower of its carrying amount before they were classified as held for sale: adjusted for depreciation, amortisation or revaluations that would have been recognised had they not been classified as held for sale, and their recoverable amount at the date of the decision not to sell.

Assets that are to be abandoned or scrapped are not reclassified as assets held for sale.

When an asset is disposed of, or decommissioned, the carrying amount of the asset in the Balance Sheet (whether property, plant and equipment or assets held for sale) is written off to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of the gain or loss on disposal. Receipts from disposals (if any) are credited to the same line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement also as part of the gain or loss on disposal (i.e. netted off against the carrying value of the asset at the time of disposal). Any revaluation gains accumulated for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account.

Amounts greater than £5k received for a disposal are categorised as capital receipts and credited to the Capital Receipts Reserve. Receipts are appropriated to the Reserve from the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

The written-off value of disposals is not a charge against District Rates, as the cost of non-current assets is fully provided for under separate arrangements for capital financing. Amounts are appropriated to the Capital Adjustment Account from the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

xx) **Property, Plant and Equipment**

Assets that have physical substance and are held for use in the production or supply of goods or services, for rental to others, or for administrative purposes and that are expected to be used during more than one financial year are classified as Property, Plant and Equipment.

Recognition

Expenditure on the acquisition, creation or enhancement of Property, Plant and Equipment is capitalised on an accruals basis, provided that it is probable that the future economic benefits or service potential associated with the item will flow to the Council and the cost of the item can be measured reliably. Expenditure that maintains but does not add to an asset's potential to deliver future economic benefits or service potential (i.e., repairs and maintenance) is charged as an expense when it is incurred. The Council applies a de-minimis level of £25k to Plant & Machinery, Information Technology equipment, Fixtures & Fittings and Office equipment, meaning only assets over £25k are capitalised. Subsequent capital expenditure is only capitalised where it provided an enhancement to the economic benefits of the asset in excess of those previously addressed.

Measurement

Assets are initially measured at cost, comprising:

- a. the purchase price.
- b. any costs attributable to bringing the asset to the location and condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management.
- c. the initial estimate of the costs of dismantling and removing the item and restoring the site on which it is located.

The Council does not capitalise borrowing costs incurred whilst assets are under construction.

The cost of assets acquired other than by purchase is deemed to be its fair value, unless the acquisition does not have commercial substance (i.e. it will not lead to a variation in the cash flows of the Council). In the latter case, where an asset is acquired via an exchange, the cost of the acquisition is the carrying amount of the asset given up by the Council.

Donated assets are measured initially at fair value. The difference between fair value and any consideration paid is credited to the Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, unless the donation has been made conditionally. Until conditions are satisfied, the gain is held in the Donated Assets Account. Where gains are credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, they are reversed out of the General Fund Balance to the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Assets are then carried in the Balance Sheet using the following measurement basis:

- infrastructure, community assets and assets under construction: depreciated historical cost.
- short life assets, including road vehicles, plant and equipment, fixtures and fittings, office equipment, and IT and IT equipment: depreciated historic cost as a proxy for current value.
- surplus assets: fair value (at highest and best use).
- investment properties: measured initially at cost and subsequently at fair value as outlined in accounting policy xv.
- all other assets: service potential (current value).

Where there is no market-based evidence of fair value because of the specialist nature of an asset, depreciated replacement cost is used as an estimate of fair value.

Valuation

The Council operates a rolling programme for the revaluation of Land and Buildings with approximately 20% of these being revalued by physical inspection each year and the remainder being revalued by a desktop exercise. Increases in valuations are matched by credits to the Revaluation Reserve to recognise unrealised gains. Exceptionally, gains might be credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement where they arise from the reversal of a loss previously charged to a service.

The Revaluation Reserve contains revaluation gains recognised since 1 April 2007 only, the date of its formal implementation. Gains arising before that date have been consolidated into the Capital Adjustment Account.

Impairment

Assets are assessed at each year-end as to whether there is any indication that an asset may be impaired. Where indications exist and any possible differences are estimated to be material, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated and, where this is less than the carrying amount of the asset, an impairment loss is recognised for the shortfall.

Where impairment losses are identified, they are accounted for by:

- a. where there is a balance of revaluation gains for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against that balance (up to the amount of the accumulated gains).
- b. where there is no balance in the Revaluation Reserve or an insufficient balance, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Where an impairment loss is reversed subsequently, the reversal is credited to the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, up to the amount of the original loss, adjusted for depreciation that would have been charged if the loss had not been recognised.

The same accounting treatment is applied to revaluation losses as a result of a general fall in asset prices across the board as opposed to a consumption of economic benefit specific to an asset as is in the case of impairment losses.

Depreciation

Depreciation is provided for on all property, plant and equipment assets by the systematic allocation of their depreciable amounts over their useful lives. An exception is made for assets without a determinable finite useful life (i.e. freehold land and certain Community Assets) and assets that are not yet available for use (i.e. assets under construction).

Depreciation is calculated on a straight-line basis on the following classes of tangible asset:

- buildings, installation and fittings are depreciated on their fair value over the estimated remaining lives of those assets as advised by the Independent Chartered Surveyors. Depending on the type of building, installation or fitting the maximum useful life will be a range up to 60 years.
- infrastructure assets, short-life assets, including road vehicles, plant and equipment, fixtures and fittings, office equipment, and IT and IS equipment are depreciated over their estimated useful lives.

Intangible assets are amortised on a straight-line basis over their estimated useful lives.

Amortisation is calculated on the following basis:

- straight-line allocation of the estimated useful lives.
- amortisation is charged in the month of capitalisation but not in the month of disposal.

Componentisation

Where an item of Property, Plant and Equipment asset has major components whose cost is significant in relation to the total cost of the item, the components are depreciated separately.

Componentisation is only applicable to larger value land and buildings or equipment assets. The Council applies the following de-minimis levels in relation to componentisation:

- a component should be valued separately if it is greater than or equal to 3% of the total value of the asset; and
- the individual component has a valuation of greater than or equal to £300k.

Revaluations

Revaluation gains are also depreciated, with an amount equal to the difference between current value depreciation charged on assets and the depreciation that would have been chargeable based on their historical cost being transferred each year from the Revaluation Reserve to the Capital Adjustment Account.

xxi)

Community Assets

From 1 April 2017, community assets are recognised, measured and accounted for at their depreciated historic cost. The historical cost of a community asset is deemed to be the carrying amount of an asset as at 1 April 2007 or at the date of acquisition, whichever date is the later, and adjusted for subsequent depreciation or impairment (if applicable).

Community assets that consist of land or that have an indeterminable useful life will not be depreciated but will be subject to annual review for impairment. Community assets that are depreciable, or that have depreciable components, and have a determinable useful life will be depreciated systematically at a constant (straight-line) rate over their useful lives, as well as being subject to impairment review if there is evidence of excessive deterioration or that their value to the Council is below their then carrying amount.

Depreciation on community assets will be charged on an annual basis to the appropriate service of the Council in that year against the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

xxii) **Heritage Assets**

Heritage Assets are assets with historical, artistic, scientific, technological, geophysical or environmental qualities that are held and maintained principally for their contribution to knowledge and culture.

Heritage Assets are those assets that are intended to be preserved in trust for future generations because of their cultural, environmental or historic associations. They would be held by this authority in pursuit of our overall objectives in relation to the maintenance of heritage.

The Council's collection of Heritage Assets (Works of Art and Civic Items) is reported in the balance sheet at insurance valuation, which is based on market values, or if it is not possible to obtain a valuation, they are maintained at historical cost less any depreciation, amortisation or impairment losses. These insurance valuations based on market values are updated on a periodic basis. Where no cost can be measured reliably, heritage assets are not held at a monetary value and are not reported in the balance sheet. Such assets will continue to be retained by the Council and will form part of its heritage assets collection, and will be reported in summary by way of a note to the financial statements.

Summary information on Heritage Assets has been provided for current financial year along with comparatives for the previous financial year. Detailed information relating to transactions has not been included for prior years as it would not be practical to do so and there is little value added for the users of the accounts.

xxiii) **Provisions**

Provisions are made where an event has taken place that gives the Council a legal or constructive obligation that probably requires settlement by a transfer of economic benefits or service potential, and a reliable estimate can be made of the amount of the obligation. For instance, the Council may be involved in a court case that could eventually result in the making of a settlement or the payment of compensation.

Provisions are charged as an expense to the appropriate service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year that the Council becomes aware of the obligation, and measured at the best estimate at the balance sheet date of the expenditure required to settle the obligation, taking into account relevant risks and uncertainties.

When payments are eventually made, they are charged to the provision carried in the Balance Sheet. Estimated settlements are reviewed at the end of each financial year – where it becomes less than probable that a transfer of economic benefits will now be required (or a lower settlement than anticipated is made), the provision is reversed and credited back to the relevant service.

Where some or all of the payment required to settle a provision is expected to be recovered from another party (e.g. from an insurance claim), this is only recognised as income for the relevant service if it is virtually certain that reimbursement will be received if the Council settles the obligation.

xxiv) **Reserves**

The Council sets aside specific amounts as reserves for future policy purposes or to cover contingencies. Reserves are created by transferring amounts out of the General Fund Balance. When expenditure to be financed from a reserve is incurred, it is charged to the appropriate service in that year against the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The reserve is then transferred back into the General Fund Balance so that there is no net charge against District Rates for the expenditure.

Certain reserves are kept to manage the accounting processes for non-current assets, financial instruments, retirement benefits and employee benefits and do not represent usable resources for the Council – these reserves are explained in the relevant note to the accounts.

xxv) **Charges to Revenue for Non-Current Assets**

Services, support services and trading accounts are debited with the following amounts to record the cost of holding non-current assets during the year:

- a. depreciation attributable to the assets used by the relevant service.
- b. revaluation and impairment losses on assets used by the service where there are no accumulated gains in the Revaluation Reserve against which the losses can be written off.
- c. amortisation of intangible fixed assets attributable to the service.

The Council is not required to raise District Rates to cover depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses or amortisations. However, it is required to make an annual contribution from revenue to contribute towards the reduction in its overall borrowing requirement [equal to either an amount calculated on a prudent basis determined by the Council in accordance with statutory guidance]. Depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses and amortisation are therefore replaced by the contribution in the General Fund Balance [minimum revenue provision (MRP)], by way of an adjusting transaction with the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement for the difference between the two.

xxvi) **Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital under Statute**

Expenditure incurred during the year that may be capitalised under statutory provisions but that does not result in the creation of a non-current asset has been charged as expenditure to the relevant service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year. Where the Council has determined to meet the cost of this expenditure from existing capital resources or by borrowing, a transfer in the Movement in Reserves Statement from the General Fund Balance to the Capital Adjustment Account then reverses out the amounts charged, so that there is no impact on the level of District Rates.

xxvii) **Value Added Tax**

VAT payable is included as an expense only to the extent that it is not recoverable from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. VAT receivable is excluded from income.

xxviii) **Landfill Exploration and Evaluation**

The Council considers the facts and circumstances to determine whether an exploration and evaluation asset should be recognised in respect of the landfill site including assessment of the amount, timing and certainty of future cash flows under IFRS 6. The Council's landfill site produces gas to generate electricity. The increase in utility prices in recent years due in principal to a number of Global Geo-political factors has ended and prices have fallen back substantially from their peak in 2022. This has led to a substantial reduction in income from electricity generation during financial year 24/25 and an under recovery position at Period 13 of £98,522. Gas levels have also continued to decrease in line with expectations and will continue to do so, leading to lower KWH output. Whilst operating costs have increased due to index linking of contract costs with Renewable Power Systems, the Council does not recognise any asset in respect of this gas production as any forecasting or estimating of future income is uncertain. The Council cannot reliably measure or value such an asset under IAS 38.

xxix) **Fair Value Measurement**

The Council measures some of its non-financial assets such as surplus assets and investment properties and some of its financial instruments such as equity shareholdings [other financial instruments as applicable] at fair value at each reporting date. Fair value is the price that would be received to sell an asset or paid to transfer a liability in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. The fair value measurement assumes that the transaction to sell the asset or transfer the liability takes place either:

- a) in the principal market for the asset or liability, or
- b) in the absence of a principal market, in the most advantageous market for the asset or liability.

The Council measures the fair value of an asset or liability using the assumptions that market participants would use when pricing the asset or liability, assuming that market participants act in their economic best interest.

When measuring the fair value of a non-financial asset, the Council takes into account a market participant's ability to generate economic benefits by using the asset in its highest and best use or by selling it to another market participant that would use the asset in its highest and best use.

The Council uses valuation techniques that are appropriate in the circumstances and for which sufficient data is available, maximising the use of relevant observable inputs and minimising the use of unobservable inputs.

Inputs to the valuation techniques in respect of assets and liabilities for which fair value is measured or disclosed in the Council's financial statements are categorised within the fair value hierarchy, as follows:

- Level 1 – quoted prices (unadjusted) in active markets for identical assets or liabilities that the authority can access at the measurement date.
- Level 2 – inputs other than quoted prices included within Level 1 that are observable for the asset or liability, either directly or indirectly.
- Level 3 – unobservable inputs for the asset or liability.

xxx) **Capital Receipts Unapplied**

This represents capital receipts that are held on the balance sheet to finance future capital expenditure. Income from disposal of fixed assets is posted into the capital receipts unapplied account until such time as it is allocated to finance other capital expenditure.

b Accounting Standards That Have Been Issued but Have Not Yet Been Adopted

At the balance sheet date, the following new standards and amendments to existing standards have been published, but not yet adopted by the Code of Practice for Local Authority Accounting:

The changes to the measurement of non-investment assets within the 2025/26 Code include adaptations and interpretations of IAS 16 Property, Plant and Equipment and IAS 38 Intangible Assets. These include setting out three revaluation processes for operational property, plant and equipment, requiring indexation for tangible non-investment assets and a requirement to value intangible assets using the historical cost approach.

c Critical Judgements in Applying Accounting Policies

In applying accounting policies set out from Note 1a above the Council has had to make certain judgements about complex transactions or those involving uncertainty about future events.

The critical judgements made in the Statement of Accounts are:

Landfill Provision

The calculation of the necessary financial provision for the capping and aftercare costs for the landfill site depends on a judgement around the appropriate discount rate to be used and the number of years over which these costs need to be provided. The landfill provision figures are sensitive to the assumptions used. The impact of amending the interest rates used to discount this provision has been mitigated through the creation of a Provision Discount Rate Reserve to accommodate fluctuations in the current value of the annual calculation of long term provisions for landfill costs.

d Assumptions Made About the Future and Other Major Sources of Estimation Uncertainty

The Statement of Accounts contains estimated figures that are based on assumptions made by the Council about the future or that are otherwise uncertain. Estimates are made taking into account historical experience, current trends and other relevant factors. However, because balances cannot be determined with certainty, actual results could be materially different from the assumptions and estimates.

The items in the Council's Balance Sheet at 31 March 2025 for which there is a significant risk of material adjustment in the forthcoming financial year are as follows:

Pension Liability

Estimation of the net liability to pay pensions depends on a number of complex judgements relating to the discount rate used, the rate at which salaries are projected to increase, changes in retirement ages, mortality rates and expected returns on pension fund assets. A firm of consulting actuaries AON Hewitt is engaged to provide the Council with expert advice about the assumptions to be applied. The pension figures disclosed in these financial statements are sensitive to the assumptions used.

The approximate impact of changing key assumptions on the present value of the funded defined benefit obligation as at 31 March 2025 and the projected service cost for the year ending 31 March 2025 is set out in Note 20.

2

a Expenditure and Funding Analysis

The Expenditure and Funding Analysis shows how annual expenditure is used and funded from resources (government grants, rents, and rates) by local authorities in comparison with those resources consumed or earned by authorities in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices. It also shows how this expenditure is allocated for decision making purposes between the Council's committees. Income and expenditure accounted for under generally accepted accounting practices is presented more fully in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

	2024/25			2023/24		
	Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund	Adjustments	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund	Adjustments	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Strategic Policy & Resources	53,273,447	(2,889,278)	56,162,725	55,135,342	(6,478,975)	61,614,317
City Growth & Regeneration	27,962,346	(4,644,209)	32,606,555	24,471,258	(4,792,979)	29,264,237
People & Communities	105,821,387	(18,502,030)	124,323,417	101,912,838	(21,727,160)	123,639,998
Planning & Licensing	3,156,287	(28,626)	3,184,913	3,242,324	(177,190)	3,419,514
Net Cost of Services	190,213,467	(26,064,143)	216,277,610	184,761,762	(33,176,304)	217,938,066
Other Income and Expenditure	(195,485,524)	21,713,563	(217,199,087)	(185,244,829)	26,907,526	(212,152,355)
Surplus or Deficit	(5,272,057)	(4,350,580)	(921,477)	(483,067)	(6,268,778)	5,785,711
Opening General Fund			59,299,011			58,815,944
Surplus/(Deficit) on General Fund Balance in Year			5,272,057			483,067
Closing General Fund			64,571,068			59,299,011

Councils are required to report on the basis of how they are structured and how they operate, monitor and manage financial performance. The purpose of the Expenditure and Funding Analysis is to bring together the operating framework and accounting framework. The adjustments referenced above are detailed in Note 2b.

2

b Note to the Expenditure and Funding Analysis

This note provides a reconciliation of the main adjustments to Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund to arrive at the amounts in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The relevant transfers between reserves are explained in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis 2024/25					
Adjustments from General Fund to arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement Amounts	Adjustments for Capital Purposes	Net Change for the Pension Adjustments	Other Statutory Adjustments	Other non-statutory Adjustments	Total adjustments
	£	£	£	£	£
Strategic Policy & Resources	(2,556,644)	(287,333)	57,457	(102,758)	(2,889,278)
City Growth & Regeneration	(4,509,478)	(29,435)	(61,800)	(43,496)	(4,644,209)
People & Communities	(18,262,450)	(158,636)	(80,944)	-	(18,502,030)
Planning & Licensing	-	(24,605)	(4,021)	-	(28,626)
Net Cost of Services	(25,328,572)	(500,009)	(89,308)	(146,254)	(26,064,143)
Other Income and Expenditure from the Expenditure and Funding Analysis	21,495,756	527,009	-	(309,202)	21,713,563
Difference between General Fund surplus or deficit and Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	(3,832,816)	27,000	(89,308)	(455,456)	(4,350,580)

Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis 2023/24					
Adjustments from General Fund to arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement Amounts	Adjustments for Capital Purposes	Net Change for the Pension Adjustments	Other Statutory Adjustments	Other non-statutory Adjustments	Total adjustments
	£	£	£	£	£
Strategic Policy & Resources	(4,200,477)	(761,928)	(175,217)	(1,341,353)	(6,478,975)
City Growth & Regeneration	(5,452,484)	(180,885)	(94,336)	934,726	(4,792,979)
People & Communities	(20,629,845)	(969,402)	(127,913)	-	(21,727,160)
Planning & Licensing	-	(151,054)	(26,136)	-	(177,190)
					-
Net Cost of Services	(30,282,806)	(2,063,269)	(423,602)	(406,627)	(33,176,304)
Other Income and Expenditure from the Expenditure and Funding Analysis	25,558,260	1,349,266	-	-	26,907,526
Difference between General Fund surplus or deficit and Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	(4,724,546)	(714,003)	(423,602)	(406,627)	(6,268,778)

Adjustments for Capital Purposes

Adjustments to General Fund Balances to meet the requirements of generally accepted accounting practices, this column adds in depreciation and impairment and revaluation gains and losses in the services line and for:

- i) Other operating expenditure – adjusts for capital disposals with a transfer of income on disposal of assets and the amounts written off for those assets.
- ii) Financing and investment income and expenditure - the statutory charges for capital financing, i.e. Minimum Revenue Provision and other revenue contributions are deducted from financing and investment income and expenditure as these are not chargeable under generally accepted accounting practices.
- iii) Taxation and Non Specific Grant Income and Expenditure – Capital grants are adjusted for income not chargeable under generally accepted accounting practices. Revenue grants are adjusted from those receivable in the year to those receivable without conditions or for which conditions were satisfied throughout the year. The Taxation and Non Specific Grant Income and Expenditure line is credited with capital grants receivable in the year without conditions or for which conditions were satisfied in the year.

Net change for the Pensions Adjustments

Net change for the removal of pension contributions and the addition of IAS 19 Employee Benefits pension related expenditure and income:

For Services: this represents the removal of the employer pension contributions made by the authority as allowed by statute and the replacement with current service costs and past service costs.

For Financing and investment income and expenditure: the net interest on the defined benefit liability is charged to the CIES.

Other statutory differences

Other statutory adjustments between amounts debited/credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and amounts payable/receivable to be recognised under statute:

For Financing and investment income and expenditure the other statutory adjustments column recognises adjustments to General Fund for the timing differences for premiums and discounts.

The charge under Taxation and non-specific grant income and expenditure represents the difference between what is chargeable under statutory regulations for district rates and NDR that was projected to be received at the start of the year and the income recognised under generally accepted accounting practices in the Code.

Other non-statutory adjustments

Other non-statutory adjustments represent amounts debited/credited to service segments which need to be adjusted against the 'Other income and expenditure from the Expenditure and Funding Analysis' line to comply with the presentational requirements in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:

For financing and investment income and expenditure the other non-statutory adjustments column recognises adjustments to service segments, e.g. for interest income and expenditure and changes in the fair values of investment properties.

For taxation and non-specific grant income and expenditure the other non-statutory adjustments column recognised adjustments to service segments, e.g. for unringfenced government grants.

Each committee is responsible for the delivery of key services to the Council and the main services included in each committee is as follows:

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

The net expenditure of this committee includes Legal and Civic Services, Finance, Corporate Services, City Organisation Structure and Major Projects and Corporate Priorities, Human Resources, External Comms and Marketing and Good Relations.

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

The net expenditure of the committee includes Economic Initiatives and City Regeneration, City Events and Venues including Off-Street Car Parking, Place and Economy and Parks Estates and Zoo.

People and Communities Committee

The net expenditure of the committee includes Cleansing, Waste Management and Vehicles, Parks, Cemeteries and Leisure Centres, Environmental Health, Neighbourhood and Development and Community Services.

Planning and Licensing Committees

The net expenditure includes Planning and Building Control Services.

3 a Expenditure and Income Analysed by Nature

Expenditure		2024/25	2023/24
	Note	£	£
Employee Benefits Expenses	7	118,288,761	110,380,690
Other Services Expenditure		198,639,162	160,944,486
Support Service Recharges		-	-
Depreciation, Amortisation, Impairment	11	25,328,572	30,282,807
Interest Payments	9	854,093	985,734
(Gain)/Loss on the Disposal of Asset:	8	(2,044,237)	(200,507)
Other Expenditure	9	(93,000)	(852,000)
Total Expenditure		340,973,351	301,541,210
Income		2024/25	2023/24
	Note	£	£
Fees, Charges and Other Service Income		(127,359,337)	(87,683,664)
Interest and Investment Income	9	(8,876,526)	(9,532,097)
District Rate Income	10	(199,532,067)	(187,441,550)
District Rate Clawback	10	2,788,458	894,750
Government Grants and Contributions	10	(8,915,356)	(11,992,938)
Support Service Income		-	-
Other Income		-	-
Total Income		(341,894,828)	(295,755,499)
(Surplus)/Deficit on the Provision of Services		(921,477)	5,785,711

b Revenue from contracts with service recipients

On transition to IFRS 15, there is no impact on the Belfast City Council revenue recognition for contracts with customers.

Amounts included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for contracts with service recipients

Revenue from contracts with service recipients		2024/25	2023/24
		£	£
Strategic Policy & Resources		4,869,475	4,767,681
City Growth & Regeneration		1,465,096	1,181,877
People & Communities		4,747,674	6,356,005
Total included in Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement		11,082,245	12,305,563

Revenue from contracts with service recipients includes services such as the provision of IT support, the provision of off street car parking facilities, and the sale of recycle. Income is recognised as the contract obligation is satisfied and received in arrears after each event.

The Council has applied the accounting standard to determine revenue recognition under IFRS 15.

Amounts included in the Balance Sheet for contracts with service recipients

		31st March 2025	31st March 2024
	Note	£	£
Receivables, which are included in Debtors		-	-
Contract Assets	15	486,489	556,847
Contract Liabilities		-	(35,000)
Other		-	-
Total included in Net Assets		486,489	521,847

4 Adjustments between an Accounting Basis and Funding Basis under Regulations
a Amounts included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement but required by statute to be excluded when determining the Movement on the General Fund Balance for the year:

		2024/25		2023/24	
	Note	£	£	Restated £	Restated £
Amounts included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement but required by statute to be excluded when determining the Movement on the General Fund Balance for the year:					
Impairments (losses & reversals) of non-current assets		-		-	
Derecognition (other than disposal) of non-current assets	11	-		-	
Revaluation increases/decreases taken to Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	11	(3,576,975)		(1,609,311)	
Depreciation charged in the year on non-current assets	11	28,791,047	25,214,072	30,392,118	28,782,807
Net Revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute	12	8,100,274		17,029,101	
REFCUS - Government Grants and other Contributions	12	(5,855,398)		(15,264,024)	
REFCUS - Direct Financing	12	(1,971,946)		(1,765,077)	
REFCUS - Capital grants applied	12	(272,930)	-	-	-
Carrying amount of non current assets sold	8, 11	5,992,173		137,193	
Proceeds from the sale of PP&E, investment property and intangible assets	8, 9, 24	(8,036,410)	(2,044,237)	(337,700)	(200,507)
Difference between finance costs calculated on an accounting basis and finance costs calculated in accordance with statutory requirements			-		-
Net charges made for retirement benefits in accordance with IAS 19	20		17,754,000		17,155,000
Direct revenue financing of Capital Expenditure	12, 25		(7,562,536)		(9,594,430)
Capital Grants and Donated Assets Receivable and Applied in year	10		(2,633,989)		(5,610,831)
Capital Grants Receivable and Unapplied in year	10		-		-
Rates Claw-Back Reserve			-		-
Adjustments in relation to Short-term compensated absences	26		89,308		423,603
Adjustments in relation to Lessor Arrangements			-		-
Landfill Regulations Reserve Adjustment			-		-
Provisions Discount Rate Reserve Adjustment	26		-		-
Amounts not included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement but required by statute to be included when determining the Movement on the General Fund Balance for the year					
Statutory Provision for the financing of Capital Investment	26		(9,140,494)		(8,652,492)
Employers contributions payable to the NILGOSC and retirement benefits payable direct to pensioners	20		(17,781,000)		(16,441,000)
		3,895,124		5,862,150	

b Net transfers (to)/from statutory and other earmarked reserves:		2024/25	2024/25	2023/24	2023/24
	Note	£	£	£	£
Capital Fund					
Interest		-	-	-	-
From Capital		-	-	-	-
Other	25e	(935,402)	(935,402)	696,480	696,480
Leisure Mobilisation Fund					
Interest		-	-	-	-
Other	25f	-	-	77,356	77,356
Capital Receipts Reserve					
Interest		-	-	-	-
Other	25a	-	-	-	-
Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund					
Interest		-	-	-	-
Other	25g	145,684	145,684	(52,016)	(52,016)
Other Funds and earmarked reserves					
Interest		(12,652)	-	(62,745)	-
From Other funds		-	-	-	-
Other	25h	948,624	935,972	(252,447)	(315,192)
Unusable reserves					
Capital Adjustment Account		-	-	-	-
			146,254		406,628

5 Cost of Services on Continuing Operations

a General power of competence

Under Section 79 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, the Council has the power to do anything that individuals generally may do. Councils have the power to do this with or without charge. The power of competence is not limited to benefitting the area or its residents nor is it limited by existing powers.

Expenditure under the power of competence during 2024/25 was £1,037,151 (2023/24 £263,965).

b External Audit Fees

The Council has incurred the following costs relating to the annual audit of the Statement of Accounts, certification of grant claims and other services provided by the Councils external auditors.

	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
External Audit Fees	131,850	126,000
National Fraud Initiative	1,437	-
Performance Improvement work	28,750	26,250
	162,037	152,250

The were no other fees payable in respect of any other services provided by the appointed auditor over and above those described above.

6 Leases (as a Lessor and Lessee)

Council as Lessor

a Finance Leases (Council as lessor)

The Council leases out a number of land and building assets by long term leases with lease terms from 250 to 999 years. The leases for 250 years are on a perpetual basis and it is assumed the leases will be renewed so the economic substance is similar to disposal. The rental income is either nil or 5p per annum. Rent is not normally received on these properties and so future minimum lease income is assumed to be nil.

The Council has a gross investment in the lease, made up of the minimum lease payments expected to be received over the remaining term and the residual value anticipated for the property when the lease comes to an end.

The minimum lease payments comprise settlement of the long-term debtor for the interest in the property acquired by the lessee and finance income that will be earned by the Council in future years while the debtor remains outstanding. The gross investment is made up of the following amounts:

	31st March 2025	31st March 2024
	£	£
lease debtor (net present value of minimum lease payments):		
Current	-	-
Non-current	-	-
Unearned finance income	-	-
Unguaranteed residual value of property	-	-
Gross Investment in the lease	-	-
Total undiscounted lease receivables	-	-
Discounted amount of unguaranteed residual values	-	-

The gross investment in the lease and the minimum lease payments will be received over the following periods:

	Gross Investment in the Lease		Minimum Lease Payments	
	31st March 2025	31st March 2024	31st March 2025	31st March 2024
	£	£	£	£
Not later than one year	-	-	-	-
1 - 2 years	-	-	-	-
2 - 3 years	-	-	-	-
3 - 4 years	-	-	-	-
4 - 5 years	-	-	-	-
Later than five years	-	-	-	-

	31st March 2025	31st March 2024
	£	£
Transactions under leases:		
The council made the following gains and losses as a lessor during the year:		
Finance Leases		
Selling gain or loss	-	-
Finance income on the net investment in the lease	-	-
Income relating to variable lease payments not included in the measurement of the net	-	-
Operating Leases		
Total lease income	-	-
Share of lease income relating to variable lease payments that do not depend on an index	-	-

	31st March 2025	31st March 2024
	£	£
Net investment in finance leases:		
The council experienced the following changes in the carrying amount of its net investment		
Net investment at 1 April	-	-
New leases entered into	-	-
Payments by lessees	-	-
Lease modifications	-	-
Impact of changes in unguaranteed residual values	-	-
Movements in impairment loss allowances	-	-
Net investment at 31 March	-	-

As there is a possibility that worsening financial circumstances might result in lease payments not being made, the Council has set aside an allowance for uncollectable amounts of £nil (£nil at 31 March 2024)

The minimum lease payments do not include rents that are contingent on events taking place after the lease was entered into, such as adjustments following rent reviews. In 2024/25, £nil contingent rents were receivable by the Council (2023/24 £nil).

b Operating Leases (Council as lessor)

The Council leases out property and equipment under operating leases for the following purposes:

- for the provision of community services, such as sports facilities, tourism services and community centres.
- for economic development purposes to provide suitable affordable accommodation for local businesses.

The future minimum lease payments due under non-cancellable operating leases in future years are:

	31st March 2025	31st March 2024
	£	£
Not later than 1 year	6,380,290	6,279,489
1 -2 years	5,624,488	5,559,330
2 -3 years	5,624,488	5,550,080
3 -4 years	5,580,405	5,550,080
4 -5 years	5,520,015	5,485,496
Later than 5 years	410,182,678	406,277,932
	438,912,364	434,702,408

The minimum lease payments receivable do not include rents that are contingent on events taking place after the lease was entered into, such as adjustments following rent reviews. In 2024/25, no contingent rents were receivable by the Council (2023/24 £nil).

Council as Lessee

c leases - Right of Use Assets - (Council as lessee)

IFRS 16 Leases has been applied using the modified retrospective approach as required by the Code of Practice for Local Authority Accounting, allowing prospective application of the changes in accounting. Therefore, a prior restatement of the balance sheet is not required.

This has resulted in the following additions to the Balance Sheet on 1 April 2024:

- £1,473,381 Property, plant and equipment - land and buildings, vehicles, plant and equipment (right of use assets)
- £1,083,077 Non-current creditors (lease liabilities)
- £362,358 Current creditors (lease liabilities)

The Council has acquired a number of operational buildings, vehicles, plant and equipment and copier-printer systems under leases.

The assets acquired under these leases are carried as property, plant and equipment in the Balance Sheet at the following net amounts:

	31st March 2025	31st March 2024
	£	£
Other Land and Buildings	1,031,459	-
Vehicles, Plant, Furniture and Equipment	319,737	-
	1,351,196	-

The Council is committed to making minimum payments under these leases comprising settlement of the long-term liability for the interest in the property acquired by the Council and finance costs that will be payable by the authority in future years while the liability remains outstanding. The minimum lease payments are made up of the following amounts:

	31st March 2025	31st March 2024
	£	£
Leases liabilities (net present value of minimum lease payments):		
Current	345,516	-
Non- Current	974,994	-
Finance costs payable in future years	192,489	-
Minimum Lease Payments	1,512,999	-

The minimum lease payments will be payable over the following periods:

	Minimum Lease Payments		Lease Liabilities	
	31st March 2025	31st March 2024	31st March 2025	31st March 2024
	£	£	£	£
Not later than one year	345,516	-	414,778	-
Later than one year and not later than five years	849,672	-	962,914	-
Later than five years	125,322	-	135,307	-
	1,320,510	-	1,512,999	-

The Council incurred the following expenses and cash flows

	31st March 2025	31st March 2024
	£	£
Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement		
Interest expense on lease liabilities	-	-
Expense relating to short-term leases	78,227	-
Expense relating to exempt leases of low-value items	-	-
Variable lease payments not included in the measurement	-	-
Income from subletting right-of-use assets	(270,402)	-
Expense relating to operating leases prior to implementation of IFRS 16	-	-
Gains or losses arising from sale and leaseback transactions	-	-
Balance Sheet		
Repayment of Lease Liabilities held on the Balance Sheet	439,749	-
Cash flow statement		
Total cash outflow for leases	247,574	-

	31st March 2025	31st March 2024
	£	£
Future cash outflows to which the lessee is potentially exposed that are		
Variable lease payments	-	-
Extension options and termination options:	-	-
Residual value guarantees	-	-
Leases not yet commenced to which the lessee is committed	-	-
Restrictions or covenants imposed by leases	-	-
Sale and leaseback transactions	-	-

The minimum lease payments do not include rents that are contingent on events taking place after the lease was entered into, such as adjustments following rent reviews. In 2024/25, no contingent rents were payable by the Council (2023/24 £nil).

The Council has sub-let some of the property held under these leases. At 31 March 2025, the minimum payments expected to be received under non-cancelable sub-leases was £984,838 (2023.24 £1,237,554).

d Operating Leases (Council as lessee)

The Council is paying ground rent on 19 properties.

The future minimum lease payments due under non-cancellable leases in future years are:

	31st March 2025	31st March 2024
	£	£
Not later than 1 year	6,759	3,029
Later than 1 year and no later than 5 years	-	-
Later than 5 years	-	-
	6,759	3,029

Where assets acquired under operating leases are sub-let, disclosures is required of the future minimum sublease payments expected to be received by the Council, per paragraph 4.2.4.2(7) of the Code.

The expenditure charged to the Business Change line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement during the year in relation to these leases was:

	31st March 2025	31st March 2024
	£	£
Minimum lease payments	6,759	3,029
Contingent rentals	-	-
Less: Sublease payments receivable	-	-
Total	6,759	3,029

7 Employee Costs and Member Allowances

a Staff Costs	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Salaries and Wages	90,814,376	85,274,611
Employers NIC	9,546,274	8,691,938
Employers Superannuation	17,928,111	16,414,141
Total staff costs	118,288,761	110,380,690

The above staff costs include the costs of voluntary redundancies in 2024/25. These costs total £320,433 (2023/24 £383,187) and are disclosed separately in Table 4 of the Remuneration Report. In addition, agency costs during the year amounted to £7,708,888 (2023/24 £8,589,688).

The Council's contribution rate to the NILGOSC scheme in 2024/25 was 19%. At the last actuarial valuation dated 31 March 2022 there was a surplus of £1,004.4m relative to the liabilities and funding level was 111%.

Average Number of Employees - where FTE represents fulltime equivalent employees

b Average Number of Employees	2024/25	2023/24
	FTE	FTE
Strategic Policy & Resources	608	590
City Growth & Regeneration	196	197
People & Communities	1,276	1,206
Planning & Licensing	150	151
Total Number	2,230	2,144

	2024/25	2023/24
	Actual Numbers	Actual Numbers
Full-time numbers employed	2,068	1,968
Part-time numbers employed	308	322
Total Number	2,376	2,290

c Senior Employees' Remuneration	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
£50,001 to £60,000	183	149
£60,001 to £70,000	87	74
£70,001 to £80,000	26	2
£80,001 to £90,000	6	6
£90,001 to £100,000	3	5
£100,001 to £110,000	9	8
£110,001 to £120,000	3	5
£120,001 to £130,000	2	-
£130,001 to £140,000	-	-
£140,001 to £150,000	-	1
£150,001 to £160,000	1	-
Total Number	320	250

d Members' Allowances

	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Salaries	-	-
Basic Allowance	1,047,233	929,294
Special Responsibility Allowance	123,606	113,581
Lord Mayor Allowance	34,800	34,800
Deputy Lord Mayor Allowance	6,250	6,029
PCSP Allowance	10,860	11,100
High Sheriff Allowance	6,250	6,250
Fees & Travel	9,572	1,890
Mileage Allowance	1,381	1,399
Subsistence (including Accommodation)	8,074	1,657
	-	-
Total	1,248,026	1,106,000

e Northern Ireland Civil Service Pension Arrangements

As a result of Local Government Reform on 1st April 2015, staff transferred from Central Government to the Council but remain members of the Northern Ireland Civil Service Pension Scheme.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service Pension arrangements are unfunded multi-employer defined benefit schemes but the Department for Communities is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities. The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) is responsible for carrying out scheme valuations. The Actuary reviews employer contributions every four years following the scheme valuation. The 2020 scheme valuation has been finalised. The outcome of this valuation informed contribution rates from April 2023 for both employers and employees.

For 2024/25, employers' contributions of £379,345 (2023/24 £352,883) were payable to the NICS pension arrangements at a rate of 34.25% of pensionable pay.

The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) is responsible for carrying out scheme valuations. The Actuary reviews employer contributions every four years following the scheme valuation. The 2020 scheme valuation was completed by GAD in October 2023. The outcome of this valuation was used to set the level of contributions for employers from 1 April 2023.

8 Other Operating Income & Expenditure**a Surplus/Deficit on Non-Current Assets (excl. Investment Properties)**

	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Proceeds from sale	(8,036,410)	(337,700)
Carrying amount of non-current assets sold (excl Investment Properties)	5,992,173	137,193
	(2,044,237)	(200,507)

b Other Operating Income/ Expenditure

	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Income	(1,866,455)	(5,502,943)
Expenditure	-	-
	(1,866,455)	(5,502,943)

Other Operating Income for both 23/24 and 24/25 is in relation to compensation from a VAT court case

Other Operating Expenditure	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
(Surplus) /Deficit on Non Current Asset:	(2,044,237)	(200,507)
Other Operating (Income) / Expenditure	(1,866,455)	(5,502,943)
	(3,910,692)	(5,703,450)

9 Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure**a Interest Payable and Similar Charges**

	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Lease/hire purchase interest	-	-
Bank interest	-	-
Government Loan Interest	837,941	919,489
Commercial Loan Interest	-	-
Other interest	16,152	66,245
	854,093	985,734

b Interest and Investment Income

	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Bank Interest	2,338,673	875,080
Employee car loan interest	1,076	1,543
NIHE Loan interest receivable	-	-
Investment income on Fund Balances	-	-
Capital Fund	-	-
Repairs & Renewals Fund	-	-
Election Fund	12,652	62,745
Other Investment income	-	-
	2,352,401	939,368

c Pensions interest costs and expected return on pensions assets

	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Net interest on the net defined benefit liability (asset)	(93,000)	(852,000)
Past service cost increase		
	(93,000)	(852,000)

d Surplus/ (Deficit) on trading operations

	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Income from trading	-	-
Expenditure	-	-
(Surplus)/Deficit for the year	-	-

e Income, Expenditure and changes in Fair Value of Investment Properties

	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Income/Expenditure from Investment Properties		
Income including rental income	(6,316,625)	(6,240,729)
Expenditure	393,002	634,484
Net income from investment properties	(5,923,623)	(5,606,245)
Surplus/deficit on sale of Investment Properties		
Proceeds from sale	-	-
Carrying amount of investment properties sold	-	-
(Surplus)/deficit on sale of Investment Properties:	-	-
Changes in Fair Value of Investment Properties	(114,500)	(1,500,000)
	(6,038,123)	(7,106,245)

Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	2024/25			2023/24		
	Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure	Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Interest Payable and Similar Charges	854,093	-	854,093	985,734	-	985,734
Interest and Investment Income	-	(2,352,401)	(2,352,401)	-	(939,368)	(939,368)
Pensions interest cost	-	(93,000)	(93,000)	-	(852,000)	(852,000)
Surplus/(Deficit) on trading operations	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other investment income	393,002	(6,316,625)	(5,923,623)	634,484	(6,240,729)	(5,606,245)
Changes in Fair Value of Investment Properties	-	(114,500)	(114,500)	-	(1,500,000)	(1,500,000)
	1,247,095	(8,876,526)	(7,629,431)	1,620,218	(9,532,097)	(7,911,879)

10 Taxation and Non Specific Grant Income
a Revenue Grants

	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
General	(6,281,367)	(6,382,107)
Other	-	-
	(6,281,367)	(6,382,107)

b Revenue Grants - Unapplied

	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Government & Other Grants - Conditions met and applied in year	-	-
Other	-	-
	-	-

c Capital Grants and Donated Assets - Applied

	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Government & Other Grants - Conditions met and applied in year	(1,316,198)	(4,428,028)
Government & Other Grants - Transfer from receipts in advance	(1,317,791)	(1,182,803)
Donated Assets - Conditions met	-	-
Donated Assets - Transfer from donated assets creditor	-	-
	(2,633,989)	(5,610,831)

d Capital grants from capital receipts unapplied

	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Government & Other Grants - Conditions met and not applied in year	-	-
Capital grants from capital receipts unapplied	-	-
	-	-

e District Rates

	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Current year	(199,532,067)	(187,441,550)
Clawback/ (Finalisation) - previous year	2,788,458	894,750
Transitional Relief	-	-
Clawback/ (Finalisation) - other years	1	2,712
	(196,743,608)	(186,544,088)

Taxation and Non Specific Grant Income Summary	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
District Rate Income	(196,743,608)	(186,544,088)
Revenue Grants	(6,281,367)	(6,382,107)
Capital Grants from capital receipts unapplied	-	-
Capital Grants and Contributions	(2,633,989)	(5,610,831)
	(205,658,964)	(198,537,026)

Belfast City Council
Notes to the Financial Statements
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

11 a Long - Term Assets - Current Year

Cost or Valuation	Land	Buildings	Infrastructure Assets	Landfill Sites	Vehicles, Plant & Equipment	Community Assets	PP&E Under Construction	Surplus Assets	Total PP&E	Heritage Assets	Assets Held for Resale	TOTAL
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Balance as at 1 April 2024	112,336,504	555,929,618	5,093,674	-	53,465,269	60,835,882	30,998,214	5,446,001	824,105,162	10,108,954	1,863,000	836,077,116
Adjustments between cost/value & depreciation/impairment	-	100,933	-	-	-	(77,061)	-	-	23,872	-	-	23,872
Balance as at 1 April 2024	112,336,504	556,030,551	5,093,674	-	53,465,269	60,758,820	30,998,214	5,446,001	824,129,035	10,108,954	1,863,000	836,100,989
Additions	8,100	7,215,184	-	-	3,917,554	213,358	6,744,958	-	18,099,153	200	-	18,099,353
Donations	16,900	1,106,770	-	-	-	247,050	-	-	1,370,720	100,000	-	1,470,720
Revaluation increases/ (decreases) to Revaluation Reserve	6,740,500	(8,827,628)	-	-	-	94,866	6,189,256	1,000	4,197,994	16,109	-	4,214,103
Revaluation increases/ (decreases) to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	1,268,500	(228,486)	-	-	-	-	1,666,466	-	2,706,480	(6,070)	-	2,700,410
Impairment to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Derecognition - Disposals	(140,000)	-	-	-	(1,212,376)	-	-	-	(1,352,376)	-	-	(1,352,376)
Derecognition - Other	-	(1)	-	-	(7,728)	-	-	-	(7,729)	-	-	(7,729)
Reclassifications & Transfers	180,000	863,529	-	-	309,764	398,044	(9,864,241)	(4,170,000)	(12,282,904)	12,500	11,887,000	(383,405)
Newly recognised on the valuation report	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	1
Balance as at 31 March 2025	120,410,504	556,159,918	5,093,674	-	56,472,483	61,712,139	35,734,653	1,277,001	836,860,374	10,231,693	13,750,000	860,842,067

Depreciation and Impairment	Land	Buildings	Infrastructure Assets	Landfill Sites	Vehicles, Plant & Equipment	Community Assets	PP&E Under Construction	Surplus Assets	Total PP&E	Heritage Assets	Assets Held for Resale	TOTAL
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Balance as at 1 April 2024	-	189,098	1,301,614	-	32,485,521	11,237,013	-	-	45,213,246	27,261	-	45,240,507
Adjustments between cost/value & depreciation/impairment	-	(24)	-	-	-	(77,064)	-	-	(77,088)	-	-	(77,088)
Balance as at 1 April 2024	-	189,074	1,301,614	-	32,485,521	11,159,949	-	-	45,136,158	27,261	-	45,163,419
Depreciation Charge	-	21,079,766	169,794	-	4,059,350	2,812,914	-	-	28,121,824	226,232	-	28,348,056
Depreciation written out on Revaluation Reserve	-	(20,230,831)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(20,230,831)	(117,189)	-	(20,348,020)
Depreciation written out on Revaluation taken to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	(762,065)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(762,065)	-	-	(762,065)
Impairment losses/reversals to Revaluation Reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment losses/reversals to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Derecognition - Disposals	-	-	-	-	(1,130,203)	-	-	-	(1,130,203)	-	-	(1,130,203)
Derecognition - Other	-	-	-	-	(6,376)	-	-	-	(6,376)	-	-	(6,376)
Reclassifications & Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Eliminated on reclassification to Held for Sale	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Balance as at 31 March 2025	-	275,944	1,471,408	-	35,408,292	13,972,863	-	-	51,128,507	136,304	-	51,264,811
Balance as at 31 March 2025	120,410,504	555,883,974	3,622,266	-	21,064,191	47,739,276	35,734,653	1,277,001	785,731,867	10,095,389	13,750,000	809,577,256

b Long - Term Assets - Comparative Year

Cost or Valuation	Land	Buildings	Infrastructure Assets	Landfill Sites	Vehicles, Plant & Equipment	Community Assets	PP&E Under Construction	Surplus Assets	Total PP&E	Heritage Assets	Assets Held for Resale	TOTAL
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	Restated £	£
Balance as at 1 April 2023	112,007,504	535,655,715	5,093,674	-	54,101,042	53,798,477	50,767,895	5,446,001	816,870,308	9,643,064	-	826,513,372
Adjustments between cost/value & depreciation/impairment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,863,000	1,863,000
Balance as at 1 April 2023	112,007,504	535,655,715	5,093,674	-	54,101,042	53,798,477	50,767,895	5,446,001	816,870,308	9,643,064	1,863,000	828,376,372
Additions	1,500	1,457,699	-	-	3,551,694	194,835	11,208,448	-	16,414,176	15,001	-	16,429,177
Donations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation increases/decreases to Revaluation Reserve	27,500	(3,473,458)	-	-	-	-	15	-	(3,445,943)	42,890	-	(3,403,053)
Revaluation increases/decreases to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	300,000	(509,646)	-	-	-	-	(239,215)	-	(448,861)	(5,290)	-	(454,151)
Impairment to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Derecognition - Disposals	-	-	-	-	(4,139,172)	-	-	-	(4,139,172)	-	-	(4,139,172)
Derecognition - Other	-	-	-	-	(152,460)	-	-	-	(152,460)	-	-	(152,460)
Reclassifications & Transfers	-	22,799,309	-	-	104,165	6,842,570	(30,738,929)	-	(992,885)	413,289	-	(579,596)
Reclassified to(-) / from(+) Held for Sale	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Balance as at 31 March 2024	112,336,505	555,929,619	5,093,674	-	53,465,268	60,835,883	30,998,213	5,446,001	824,105,163	10,108,954	1,863,000	836,077,117

Depreciation and Impairment	Land	Buildings	Infrastructure Assets	Landfill Sites	Vehicles, Plant & Equipment	Community Assets	PP&E Under Construction	Surplus Assets	Total PP&E	Heritage Assets	Assets Held for Resale	TOTAL
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Balance as at 1 April 2023	-	201,401	1,131,820	-	32,760,547	8,849,493	-	-	42,943,261	27,261	-	42,970,522
Adjustments between cost/value & depreciation/impairment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Balance as at 1 April 2023	-	201,401	1,131,820	-	32,760,547	8,849,493	-	-	42,943,261	27,261	-	42,970,522
Depreciation Charge	-	23,494,247	169,794	-	3,861,777	2,387,520	-	-	29,913,338	119,740	-	30,033,078
Depreciation written out on Revaluation Reserve	-	(22,943,088)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(22,943,088)	(119,740)	-	(23,062,828)
Depreciation written out on Revaluation taken to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	(563,462)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(563,462)	-	-	(563,462)
Impairment losses/reversals to Revaluation Reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment losses/reversals to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Derecognition - Disposals	-	-	-	-	(4,001,979)	-	-	-	(4,001,979)	-	-	(4,001,979)
Derecognition - Other	-	-	-	-	(134,824)	-	-	-	(134,824)	-	-	(134,824)
Reclassifications & Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Eliminated on reclassification to Held for Sale	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Balance as at 31 March 2024	-	189,098	1,301,614	-	32,485,521	11,237,013	-	-	45,213,246	27,261	-	45,240,507
Net Book Values												
Balance as at 31 March 2024	112,336,505	555,740,521	3,792,060	-	20,979,747	49,598,870	30,998,213	5,446,001	778,891,917	10,081,693	1,863,000	790,836,610
Balance as at 31 March 2025	120,410,504	555,883,974	3,622,266	-	21,064,191	47,739,276	35,734,653	1,277,001	785,731,865	10,095,389	13,750,000	809,577,256

Valuations

The land and buildings assets held by the Council were valued originally as at 1 April 1997 by the Valuations and Lands Agency, in accordance with the statements of asset valuation practice and guidance notes of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors. The Council operates a rolling programme for the valuation of its land and building properties, so approximately 20% of these assets are revalued discretely by physical inspection each year, and the remainder are revalued annually by a desktop exercise.

In the 2024/25 year, land and buildings including investment properties were valued as at 31 March 2025. The valuations were carried out by Land and Property Services (LPS), a part of the Department of Finance.

Capital Commitments

A total of 3 capital contracts were entered into during the period:

Project Name	Date	Capital Commitment £
Belfast Story/Destination Hub	25/03/2024	344,880
Floral Hall H&S Works	13/01/2025	645,145
Belfast eBikes	12/03/2025	955,250
	Total	1,945,275

Effects of Changes in Estimates

There were no material changes in accounting estimates for property, plant and equipment during the period.

Surplus Assets

Surplus assets are non-current assets that are not being used to deliver services but which do not meet the criteria to be classified as either investment properties or non-current assets held for sale. Assets held for sale are assets which are not being used to deliver services and whose economic value will be realised by disposal, are actively being marketed, and ordinarily are expected to be disposed of within 12 months of the balance sheet date.

Impairment and revaluation losses

There were no material impairments to property during the period.

11 c Property, plant and equipment

Depreciation

The useful lives and depreciation rates applied to calculate the depreciation are outlined in Note 1.

d Intangible Assets

Intangible assets relate to landfill closure costs with a net book value of £nil (2023/24: £nil) and a gross cost before amortisation of £16,700k (2023/24: £16,700k); and purchased licensed software and related implementation costs with a net book value of £1,608k (2023/24: £1,511k), and a gross costs before amortisation of £4,058k (2023/24: £4,674k)

Intangible Assets	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Balance at start of year:		
Gross carrying amounts	21,442,663	20,888,569
Accumulated amortisation	(19,932,114)	(19,573,074)
Net carrying amount at start of year	1,510,549	1,315,495
Additions	107,359	(25,503)
Amortisation for the period	(442,991)	(359,040)
Reclassification and transfer from WIP	433,405	579,597
Gross carrying amount of assets derecognised in the year	(1,156,215)	-
Accumulated amortisation on assets derecognised during the year	1,156,215	-
Net carrying amount at end of year	1,608,322	1,510,549
Comprising:		
Gross carrying amounts as previously published	21,983,427	21,442,663
Derecognise intangible assets for the year	-	-
Gross carrying amounts restated	<u>21,983,427</u>	<u>21,442,663</u>
Accumulated amortisation as previously published	(20,375,105)	(19,932,114)
Derecognise intangible assets for the year	-	-
Accumulated amortisation	<u>(20,375,105)</u>	<u>(19,932,114)</u>
Net carrying amount at end of year	1,608,322	1,510,549

e Investment Properties

The following items of income and expense have been accounted for in the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:

Investment Properties	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Rental Income from Investment Activities	6,316,625	6,240,729
Direct Operating expenses arising from investment properties	(393,002)	(634,484)
Net gain/(loss)	5,923,623	5,606,245

There are no restrictions on the Council's ability to realise the value inherent in its invest properties or on the Council's right to the remittance of income and proceeds of disposal. The Council has no contracted obligations to purchase, construct or develop investment property or repairs, maintenance or enhancement.

The following table summarises the movement in the fair value of Investment Properties over the year:

Investment Properties	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Balance at start of the year	94,455,000	92,955,000
Additions	625,500	-
Disposals	-	-
Net gains/losses from fair value adjustments	114,500	1,500,000
Transfers to/ from inventories	-	-
Transfers to/ from property, plant and equipment	(2,700,000)	-
Other changes	-	-
Balance at end of the year	92,495,000	94,455,000

Investment Properties are comprised of the following properties, all held at valuation:

Investment Property	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Industrial Estates	76,540,000	75,770,000
Commercial Units	11,955,000	18,685,000
Land/building combined	4,000,000	-
Balance at end of the year	92,495,000	94,455,000

Summary of the net book values of non-current assets as reported in the balance sheet is as follows

Non-current assets	Total PP&E	Heritage Assets	Investment Properties	Intangible Assets	Assets held for sale	TOTAL
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Net Book Value as at 31 March 2024	778,891,916	10,081,693	94,455,000	1,510,549	1,863,000	886,802,158
Net change in cost or valuation	12,755,211	122,739	(1,960,000)	540,764	11,887,000	23,345,714
Depreciation and Impairment in the year	(5,915,261)	(109,043)		(442,991)		(6,467,295)
Net movement for the year	6,839,950	13,696	(1,960,000)	97,773	11,887,000	16,878,419
Net Book Value as at 31 March 2025	785,731,866	10,095,389	92,495,000	1,608,322	13,750,000	903,680,577

Fair Value Hierarchy

Details of the Council's Investment Properties and information about the fair value hierarchy as at 31 March 2025 and 31 March 2024 are as follows

2024/25 Recurring fair value measurements using:	Quoted Prices in active markets for identical assets (Level 1)	Other significant observable inputs (Level 2)	Significant unobservable inputs (Level 3)	Fair value as at 31st March 2025
	£	£	£	£
Industrial Estates and Commercial Units	-	92,495,000	-	-
Total	-	92,495,000	-	-

2023/24 Recurring fair value measurements using:	Quoted Prices in active markets for identical assets (Level 1)	Other significant observable inputs (Level 2)	Significant unobservable inputs (Level 3)	Fair value as at 31st March 2024
	£	£	£	£
Industrial Estates and Commercial Units	-	94,455,000	-	-
Total	-	94,455,000	-	-

Transfers between levels of the fair value hierarchy

There were no transfers between Levels 1 and 2 during the year.

Investment Properties are considered to have enough uniqueness so they no longer can be compared to similar items that are used for reference in an active market, and are valued using inputs other than quoted prices that are observable. As such, they are valued using Level 2 inputs.

Valuation techniques used to determine Level 2 and 3 Fair Values for Investment Properties

Significant Observable Inputs - Level 2

In 2024/25, all Investment Properties were measured using the same methodology as in 2023/24, and additionally, for industrial estates included within investment properties, an assessment was made of their incomes and expenditures over the preceding rolling 5-year period. The inputs used to value these properties have been classified as Level 2, other significant observable inputs

Highest and best use of Investment Properties

In estimating the fair value of the Council's Investment Properties, the highest and best use of the properties is their current use, reflecting best estimates of fair value given by current prices on a market for similar property in similar locations.

Valuation Techniques

There has been no change in the valuation techniques used during the year for Investment Properties

Gains or losses arising from changes in the fair value of the investment properties are recognised in Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services - Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line.

Valuation process for Investment Properties

The fair value of the Council's investment properties is measured at market value as at 31 March 2025. All valuations are carried out by Land and Property Services, in accordance with their methodologies and bases for estimation as set out in the professional standards of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. The Council's valuation experts work closely with Council finance officers reporting directly to the Chief Financial Officer on a regular basis regarding all valuation matters.

f Heritage Assets

The Council's collection of heritage assets consists of works of art, civic items, donated works of art, and certain historic buildings and monuments with historical, artistic, scientific, technological, geophysical or environmental qualities that are held and maintained principally for their contribution to knowledge and culture. These assets are reported in the balance sheet at valuation; or at insurance valuation as a proxy for market value; or, if it is not possible to obtain a valuation, they are measured at historic cost less depreciation, amortisation or impairment losses. Insurance valuations are updated on a periodic basis.

Where no cost can be measured accurately for a heritage asset, it is not held on the balance sheet at a monetary value. The item will still be retained in the Council's possession and will form part of its heritage asset collection. There are currently 169 of these items recorded by Belfast City Council.

Heritage assets- additions		2024/25	2023/24
		£	£
Frederick Douglass Statue		200	155,709
Winifred Carney & Mary Anne McCracken Statues			257,579
Portrait of Councillor Kate Nicholl			15,000
Michael Longley 'Light from Two Windies'			1
Portrait of Councillor Tina Black		12,500	
Total		12,700	428,290

There were no other additions, transfers or disposals of heritage assets during the period.

g Assets Held for Sale

Assets Held for Sale	Current	Non Current	Total
	£	£	£
Cost or Valuation			
Balance as at 1 April 2024	5,770,001	1,863,000	7,633,001
Adjustments between cost/value & depreciation/impairment	-	-	-
Transferred from Non-Current Assets during year	2,650,000	11,887,000	14,537,000
Assets Held for Sale Donations	-	-	-
Assets Held for Sale Revaluation increases/decreases to Revaluation Reserve	-	-	-
Revaluation increases/decreases taken to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-	-
Assets Held for Sale Impairment @ Cost to Provision of Services	-	-	-
Derecognition - Disposals	(5,770,000)	-	(5,770,000)
Derecognition - Other	-	-	-
Reclassified from Current Assets Held for Sale to non current Assets Held for Sale	-	-	-
Transferred to Property, Plant & Equipment during year	-	-	-
Balance as at 31 March 2025	2,650,001	13,750,000	16,400,001
Impairment			
Balance as at 1 April 2024	-	-	-
Adjustments between cost/value & depreciation/impairment	-	-	-
Impairment losses/reversals taken to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-	-
Derecognition - Disposals	-	-	-
Derecognition - Other	-	-	-
Reclassified from Current Assets Held for Sale to non current Assets Held for Sale	-	-	-
Transferred to Property, Plant & Equipment during year	-	-	-
Balance as at 31 March 2025	-	-	-
Net Book Values			
Balance as at 31 March 2025	2,650,001	13,750,000	16,400,001
Balance as at 31 March 2024	5,770,001	1,863,000	7,633,001

During 2024/25, non-current assets with a fair value of £11,887,000 met the criteria to be recognised as assets held for sale.

The gain on assets classified as held for sale and sold during the year was £650,000.

Assets Held for Sale	Current	Non Current	Total
	Restated	Restated	Restated
Cost or Valuation	£	£	£
Balance as at 1 April 2023	5,770,001	1,863,000	7,633,001
Adjustments between cost/value & depreciation/impairment	-	-	-
Transferred from Non-Current Assets during year	-	-	-
Assets Held for Sale Donations	-	-	-
Assets Held for Sale Revaluation increases/decreases to Revaluation Reserve	-	-	-
Revaluation increases/decreases taken to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-	-
Assets Held for Sale Impairment @ Cost to Provision of Services	-	-	-
Derecognition - Disposals	-	-	-
Derecognition - Other	-	-	-
Reclassified from Current Assets Held for Sale to non current Assets Held for Sale	-	-	-
Transferred to Property, Plant & Equipment during year	-	-	-
Balance as at 31 March 2024	5,770,001	1,863,000	7,633,001
Impairment			
Balance as at 1 April 2023	-	-	-
Adjustments between cost/value & depreciation/impairment	-	-	-
Impairment losses/reversals taken to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-	-
Derecognition - Disposals	-	-	-
Derecognition - Other	-	-	-
Reclassified from Current Assets Held for Sale to non current Assets Held for Sale	-	-	-
Transferred to Property, Plant & Equipment during year	-	-	-
Balance as at 31 March 2024	-	-	-

During 2023/24, non-current assets with a fair value of £1,863,000 met the criteria to be recognised as assets held for sale.

The restatement of this note for balance classified as Assets Held for Sale in 23/24 has impacted several notes to the accounts as well as the Balance Sheet and Cashflow statement.

The gain on assets classified as held for sale and sold during the year was £nil.

h Right of Use Assets held under leases (included within Land and Buildings, Vehicles, and Equipment)

	Land and Buildings	Vehicles	Equipment	TOTAL
	£	£	£	£
Cost or Valuation				
At 1 April 2024 (Recognition upon implementation of IFRS 16)	1,307,404	55,608	110,369	1,473,381
Additions	-	34,249	252,629	286,878
Revaluations	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2025	1,307,404	89,857	362,998	1,760,259
Depreciation				
At 1 April 2024	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-
Provided for year	(275,945)	(47,613)	(85,505)	(409,063)
At 31 March 2025	(275,945)	(47,613)	(85,505)	(409,063)
Net Book Value	1,031,459	42,244	277,493	1,351,196

	Land and Buildings	Vehicles	Equipment	TOTAL
	£	£	£	£
Cost or Valuation				
At 1 April 2023 (Completion of comparatives required if implemented IFRS 16 early)	-	-	-	-
Additions	-	-	-	-
Revaluations	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2024	-	-	-	-
Depreciation				
At 1 April 2023 (Completion of comparatives required if implemented IFRS 16 early)	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-
Provided for year	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2024	-	-	-	-
Net Book Value	-	-	-	-

I Fair Value Hierarchy for Surplus Assets

Surplus assets are non-operational assets that do not meet the conditions to be classified as assets held for sale. They are measured at fair value, reflecting the actual market state and conditions at the balance sheet date (which is the valuation date) with best evidence of fair value in an active market for similar properties in the same location. The council classifies assets to surplus assets on the advice of its estates management officers and in consultation with its external property valuers.

The surplus assets held by the council comprise a number of properties including land, buildings or sites of land and buildings combined, which have not reached the stage where the council can market these for sale advantageously, or where the properties have restrictions that prevent them currently being brought to market.

Details of the Council's surplus assets and information about the fair value hierarchy as at 31 March 2025 and 31 March 2024 are as follows:

2024/25 Recurring fair value measurements using:	Quoted Prices in active markets for identical assets (Level 1)	Other significant observable inputs (Level 2)	Significant unobservable inputs (Level 3)	Fair value as at 31st March 2025
	£	£	£	£
Land	-	967,001	-	967,001
Buildings	-	300,000	-	300,000
Land and Buildings combined	-	10,000	-	10,000
Total	-	1,277,001	-	1,277,001

2023/24 Recurring fair value measurements using:	Quoted Prices in active markets for identical assets (Level 1)	Other significant observable inputs (Level 2)	Significant unobservable inputs (Level 3)	Fair value as at 31st March 2024
	£	£	£	£
Land	-	676,001	-	676,001
Buildings	-	660,000	-	660,000
Land and Buildings combined	-	4,110,000	-	4,110,000
Total	-	5,446,001	-	5,446,001

Surplus Assets are considered to have enough uniqueness that they no longer can be compared to similar items that are used for reference in an active market, and are valued using inputs other than quoted prices that are observable. As such, they are valued using Level 2 inputs.

Transfers between levels of the fair value hierarchy

There were no transfers between Levels 1 and 2 during the year.

In 2024/25, all Surplus Assets were measured using the same methodology as in 2023/24. The inputs used to value these properties have been

Highest and best use of surplus assets

In estimating the fair value of the Council's surplus assets, the highest and best use of the assets is their current use, reflecting best estimates of fair value given by current prices on a market for similar property in similar locations.

Valuation Techniques

There has been no change in the valuation techniques used during the year for surplus assets.

The fair value of the Council's Surplus Assets is measured at market valuation as at 31 March 2025. All valuations are carried out externally by Land and Property Services, in accordance with the methodologies and bases for estimation set out in the professional standards of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. The Council's valuation experts work closely with finance officers reporting directly to the chief financial officer on a regular basis regarding all valuation matters.

12 Capital Expenditure and Capital Financing

The total amount of capital expenditure incurred in the year is shown in the table below (including the value of assets acquired under finance leases and PFI contracts), together with the resources that have been used to finance it. Where capital expenditure is to be financed in future years by charges to revenue as assets are used by the Council, the expenditure results in an increase in the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), a measure of the capital expenditure incurred historically by the Council that is yet to be financed. The CFR is analysed in the second part of this note.

Capital Expenditure		2024/25	2023/24 Restated
	Note	£	£
Opening Capital Financing Requirement		121,643,598	129,217,677
Capital Investment			
Property, Plant and Equipment	11	18,099,354	16,429,177
Investment Properties		625,500	-
Intangible Assets	11	107,359	(25,503)
Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital under Statute		8,100,274	17,029,101
Investments		-	-
Sources of Finance			
Capital Receipts	25a	(2,000,000)	-
Government Grants and Other Contributions	10c	(2,633,989)	(5,610,831)
REFCUS - Government Grants and other Contributions		(5,855,398)	(15,264,024)
REFCUS - Direct Financing		(1,971,946)	(1,765,077)
REFCUS - Capital grants applied		(272,930)	-
Transfers from Earmarked Reserves	25e, 26a	(625,500)	(120,000)
Sums set aside from Revenue:			
Direct Revenue Contributions		(7,562,536)	(9,594,430)
Minimum Revenue Provision		(9,140,494)	(8,652,492)
Closing Capital Financing Requirement		118,513,292	121,643,598
Explanation of Movements in Year		2024/25	2023/24
		£	£
Increase/(decrease) in underlying need to borrow		(3,130,306)	(7,574,079)
Assets acquired under finance leases		-	-
Assets acquired under PFI/PPP contracts		-	-
Increase/(decrease) in Capital Financing Requirement		(3,130,306)	(7,574,079)

Belfast City Council have undertaken a number of projects including expenditure on community and leisure infrastructure and have provided grant aid to community organisations which have been included in the REFCUS totals above. The 23/24 accounts have been updated for disclosure of these REFCUS amounts.

13 Future Capital Commitments

	Gross Cost	Grant Aid	Net Cost
	£	£	£
Schemes underway	21,724,909	4,956,803	16,768,106
Other Commitments	37,040,274	152,088	36,888,186
Total	58,765,183	5,108,891	53,656,292

Total net expenditure of £2,334,528 has been incurred against these projects in the year ended 31 March 2025

Inventories	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Central Stores	222,543	220,813
Total	222,543	220,813

The cost of inventories written down, recognised as an expense and included in 'services' amounted to £785,998 (2023/24 £682,751).

Belfast City Council also hold £109k worth of stock on behalf of suppliers, which is only charged when used. This value does not form part of the stock figure disclosed in the Accounts.

15 Debtors		
a Long Term Debtors	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Government Departments	-	-
Other Councils	-	-
Public corporations and trading funds	-	-
Bodies external to general government	-	-
Employee car loans	13,177	18,119
Revenue Grants	-	-
Capital Grants	-	-
Interest Receivable	-	-
Capital Debtors	-	-
Loans and advances	-	-
Finance lease debtors	-	-
Trade debtors	262,984	918,640
NIHE Loans	-	-
Other	-	-
Impairment of loans and receivables	-	-
Contract Receivables	-	-
Total Long Term Debtors	276,161	936,759

b Short Term Debtors	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Government Departments	1,446,650	1,384,978
Other Councils	100,640	401,041
Public corporations and trading funds	-	-
Bodies external to general government	-	-
Rates finalisation	-	-
NIHE loans	-	-
Employee car loans	17,743	23,591
Revenue Grants	5,973,020	18,548,774
Capital Grants	8,269,981	6,480,062
Interest receivable	-	-
Capital Debtors	665,000	-
Value Added Tax	4,382,047	2,218,990
Prepayments	2,567,182	4,568,566
Finance lease debtors	-	-
Other	3,011,865	10,946,522
Trade receivables	2,435,067	1,778,520
Impairment loss - Trade receivables	(520,278)	(1,074,638)
Contract receivables	486,489	556,847
Total Short Term Debtors	28,835,406	45,833,253

The total short term debtors have decreased from prior year due to an decrease in grants receivable at year end.

Total Debtors	29,111,567	46,770,012
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Trade debtors, inclusive of VAT, can be analysed by age as follows:

	£
Less than 3 months	3,683,053
Three months to one year	785,792
More than one year	262,985
	4,731,830

16	Borrowings		
a	Short Term Borrowing	2024/25	2023/24
		£	£
	Loans re-payable within one year	4,512,476	5,375,701
	Finance lease principal	-	-
	Total Short Term Borrowing	4,512,476	5,375,701
b	Long Term Borrowing	2024/25	2023/24
		£	£
	Between 1 and 2 years	4,598,568	4,512,476
	Between 2 and 5 years	12,838,723	13,064,416
	Between 5 and 10 years	6,260,226	10,633,101
	In more than 10 years	4,935,646	4,935,649
	Government Loans Fund	28,433,163	33,145,642
	Total Borrowing	33,145,639	38,521,343

Belfast City Council also have two loans due to Lisburn & Castlereagh Borough Council totalling £45,349.10. These relate to assets transferred under Local Government Reform in 2015, and are included in creditors in the accounts

17	Creditors		
a	Short Term Creditors	2024/25	2023/24
		£	£
	Government Departments	4,101,146	2,486,587
	Other Councils	463	-
	Lease liability right of use assets	345,516	-
	Bodies external to general government	-	-
	Rates clawback	2,742,451	894,750
	De-rating grant clawback	240,000	-
	Remuneration due to employees	2,879	1,071
	Accumulated absences	2,243,204	2,153,896
	Loan interest payable	130,824	151,535
	Capital creditors	6,437,938	2,749,841
	Receipts in advance	25,580,261	18,324,042
	Trade creditors	1,462,295	3,297,222
	Creditor accruals	25,307,178	20,355,760
	Contract payables	-	35,000
	Total Short Term Creditors	68,594,155	50,449,704

The total short term creditors have increased significantly due to amounts owed in respect of Belfast Region City Deal projects and related deferred income, as well as an increase in rates clawback to Land and Property Services.

b	Long Term Creditors	2024/25	2023/24
	<i>Other creditors falling due after more than one year</i>	£	£
	Government Departments	-	-
	Other Councils	-	-
	Lease liability right of use assets	974,994	-
	Bodies external to general government	-	-
	Rates clawback	-	-
	Remuneration due to employees	-	-
	Accumulated absences	-	-
	Receipts in advance	-	-
	Trade creditors	-	-
	Other	45,349	11,778
	Contract payables	-	-
	Total Long Term Creditors	1,020,343	11,778
	Total Creditors	69,614,498	50,461,482

c Payment of Invoices

The Council has a target, where no other terms are agreed, of paying supplier invoices within 30 days. During the year 2024/25 the Council paid 69,124 (2023/24: 75,629) invoices totalling £180,851,764 (2023/24: £192,418,313).

The Council paid:

53,191 invoices within 10 working days target (2023/24: 58,774);
61,691 invoices within 30 calendar days target (2023/24: 70,456); and
7,433 invoices outside of the 30 day target (2023/24: 5,173).

The average number of days taken to pay suppliers during the year was 19 days (2023/24: 17 days).

The Council paid 89.25% of invoices within the target of 30 days (2023/24: 93.2%), against the target objective of 90%.

18 Provisions						
	Balance as at 1 April 2024	(Decrease)/Increase in provision during year	Utilised during year	Unused amounts reversed	Interest cost and/or discount rate changes	Balance as at 31 March 2025
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Landfill Closure	3,236,198	(272,640)	(87,969)	-	-	2,875,589
Claims Management	2,338,982	999,660	(490,937)	(285,900)	-	2,561,805
EU Fine Black Mountain	534,648	101,042	(635,690)	-	-	-
Total	6,109,828	828,062	(1,214,596)	(285,900)	-	5,437,394

The above EU fine relates to a penalty for a non-compliance issue on Black Mountain Shared Space project. Further details are included in the Annual Governance Statement.

Current Provisions	4,265,735	828,062	(1,214,596)	(285,900)	-	3,593,301
Long Term Provisions	1,844,093	-	-	-	-	1,844,093
Total	6,109,828	828,062	(1,214,596)	(285,900)	-	5,437,394

Comparative Year

	Balance as at 1 April 2023	(Decrease)/Increase in provision during year	Utilised during year	Unused amounts reversed	Interest cost and/or discount rate changes	Balance as at 31 March 2024
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Landfill Closure	3,203,740	124,805	(92,347)	-	-	3,236,198
Claims Management	2,377,327	1,455,616	(1,218,755)	(275,206)	-	2,338,982
EU Fine Black Mountain	-	534,648	-	-	-	534,648
Total	5,581,067	2,115,069	(1,311,102)	(275,206)	-	6,109,828

Current Provisions	3,736,974	2,115,069	(1,311,102)	(275,206)	-	4,265,735
Long Term Provisions	1,844,093	-	-	-	-	1,844,093
Total	5,581,067	2,115,069	(1,311,102)	(275,206)	-	6,109,828

Landfill Closure

The financial provision for the capping and annual monitoring costs required to meet the Council's environmental obligations under the NIEA licence has been agreed on a Local Authority Deed. The discount rates applied on the provision are based on PWLB borrowing rates adjusted for inflation which has resulted in a valuation of £2,875,589.

Claims Management

A provision of £2,561,805 has been made in respect of public liability, employer's liability and other claims/legal cases notified but not processed. Adequate insurance arrangements are in place covering the Council's activities as recommended by the Council's Insurance Brokers. The related insurance premiums paid are accounted for in the financial statements. At 31 March 2025, the total liability for legal cases notified but not processed amounted to an estimated maximum liability of £4,908,446

19 Financial Instruments

Financial Assets as at 31 March 2025

The Council has the following non-current Investments and debtors:

The Council's contribution to Belfel LLP is included in 'Investments in Associates and Joint Ventures' and is disclosed at the original value of the contribution.

The majority of the long term debtor relate to trade debtors and car loan balances with employees. The relevant credit losses have been calculated and included in the impairment loss balance.

Current financial assets, namely trade debtors, employee car loans and cash balances have been assessed and relevant credit losses calculated. These amounts are included in the impairment loss balance of £520,278 for 2024/25 (2023/24 £1,074,638).

The employee car loan rate at 31 March 2025 was 2.45%, in comparison to the HMRC official rate of 2.25%.

Financial Liabilities as at 31 March 2025

The Council is in receipt of loans from the Department of Finance at concessionary interest rates that differ from the prevailing market rates. The fair value of these loans is £30,468,684 (2023/24 £35,861,380).

20 Retirement Benefits

a Participation in the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Pension Fund.

As part of the terms and conditions of employment of its officers and other employees, the Council offers retirement benefits. Although these benefits will not actually be payable until employees retire, the Council has a commitment to make the payments that need to be disclosed at the time that employees earn their future entitlement.

The Council participates in the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Pension Fund administered by the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee. This is a funded scheme, meaning that the Council and employees pay contributions into a fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pension's liabilities with investment assets.

b Transactions relating to retirement benefits - Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

The Council recognises the cost of retirement benefits in the Cost of Services on Continuing Operations when they are earned by employees, rather than when the benefits are eventually paid as pensions.

However, the charge the Council is required to make against district rates is based on the cash payable in the year, and the real cost of retirement benefits is reversed out in the 'Adjustments between accounting basis & funding under regulations' line, in the Movement on Reserves Statement.

The following transactions have been made in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and the adjustments between accounting basis & funding basis under regulations line, in the Movement on Reserves Statement during the year

	Note	2024/25 £	2023/24 £
Net cost of services:			
Current service cost		17,663,000	17,890,000
Past service cost/(gain)		184,000	117,000
Gains and losses on settlements or curtailments		-	-
Net operating expenditure:			
Net interest on net defined benefit liability (asset)		(93,000)	(852,000)
			-
Total Post-employment Benefits charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services		17,754,000	17,155,000
Movement in Reserves Statement:			
Reversal of net charges made for retirement benefits in accordance with IAS 19 and the Code		(17,754,000)	(17,155,000)
Actual amount charged against the general fund balance for pensions in the year:			
Employers' contributions payable to scheme		17,781,000	16,441,000
Net adjustment to General Fund		27,000	(714,000)

The service cost figures include an allowance for administration expenses of £445k (2023/24 £412k).

The impact of the McCloud judgement has been allowed for in these figures with the change in allowance over the period being treated as an experience item through Other Comprehensive Income.

Remeasurements recognised in Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	Note	2024/25 £	2023/24 £
Liability gains/(losses) due to change in assumptions		109,696,000	22,238,000
Liability gains/(losses) due to demographic changes		4,745,000	10,269,000
Liability experience gains/(losses) arising in the year		(899,000)	(8,528,000)
Actuarial gains/(losses) on plan assets		(2,822,000)	32,168,000
Adjustment due to restriction of surplus (para 64 IAS19)		(109,836,000)	(72,297,000)
Total gains/(losses) recognised in Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure		884,000	(16,150,000)

c Assets and liabilities in relation to retirement benefits			
Reconciliation of present value of the scheme liabilities:		2024/25	2023/24
	Note	£	£
Balance as at 1 April		651,745,000	646,002,000
Current service cost		17,663,000	17,890,000
Interest cost		30,838,000	29,949,000
Contributions by members		6,130,000	5,579,000
Remeasurement (gains) and losses:			
Actuarial gains/losses arising from changes in financial assumptions		(109,696,000)	(22,238,000)
Actuarial gains/losses arising from demographic changes		(4,745,000)	(10,269,000)
Actuarial gains/losses arising on liabilities from experience		899,000	8,528,000
Other (if applicable)		-	-
Past service costs/(gains)		184,000	117,000
Losses/(gains) on curtailments		-	-
Liabilities extinguished on settlements		-	-
Estimated unfunded benefits paid		(683,000)	(684,000)
Estimated benefits paid		(24,687,000)	(23,129,000)
Balance as at 31 March		567,648,000	651,745,000

Reconciliation of present value of the scheme assets:		2024/25	2023/24
	Note	£	£
Balance as at 1 April		717,190,058	656,014,058
Interest income		34,401,000	30,801,000
Contributions by members		6,130,000	5,579,000
Contributions by employer		17,098,000	15,757,000
Contributions in respect of unfunded benefit:		683,000	684,000
Remeasurement gain/(loss)		(2,822,000)	32,168,000
Assets distributed on settlements		-	-
Unfunded benefits paid		(683,000)	(684,000)
Benefits paid		(24,687,000)	(23,129,000)
Balance as at 31 March		747,310,058	717,190,058

Belfast City Council employs a building block approach in determining the rate of return on Fund assets. Historical markets are studied and assets with higher volatility are assumed to generate higher returns consistent with widely accepted capital market principles. The assumed rate of return on each asset class is calculated and the overall expected rate of return on assets so derived by aggregating the expected return for each asset class over the actual asset allocation for the Fund at 31 March 2025.

The actual return on scheme assets in the year was a gain of £31,579,000 (2023/24: gain £62,969,000).

Fair Value of Plan Assets		2024/25	2023/24
		£	£
Equity investments	300,418,643	284,724,453	
Bonds	141,988,911	140,569,251	
Property	74,731,006	66,698,675	
Multi Asset Credit	100,139,548	93,234,708	
Cash	85,193,346	88,931,567	
Other	44,838,604	43,031,404	
		747,310,058	717,190,058

The Council's share of the Net Pension Liability (included in the Balance Sheet):

	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Fair Value of Employer Assets	747,310,058	717,190,058
Present value of funded defined benefit obligation	(561,707,000)	(644,893,000)
Pension asset/(liability) of Funded Scheme	185,603,058	72,297,058
Present Value of unfunded defined benefit obligation	(5,941,000)	(6,852,000)
Adjustment due to restriction of surplus (para 64 IAS19)	(185,603,000)	(72,297,000)
Net asset/(liability) arising from the defined benefit obligation	(5,940,942)	(6,851,942)
Amount in the Balance sheet:		
Liabilities	(567,648,000)	(651,745,000)
Assets	747,310,058	717,190,058
Adjustment due to restriction of surplus (para 64 IAS19)	(185,603,000)	(72,297,000)
Net Asset/(Liability)	(5,940,942)	(6,851,942)

d Scheme History		
Analysis of scheme assets and liabilities		
	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Fair Value of Assets in pension scheme	747,310,058	717,190,058
Present Value of Defined Benefit Obligation	(567,648,000)	(651,745,000)
Adjustment due to restriction of surplus (para 64 IAS19)	(185,603,000)	(72,297,000)
Surplus/(deficit) in the Scheme	(5,940,942)	(6,851,942)

Amount recognised in Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure:		
	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Actuarial gains/(losses)	884,000	(16,150,000)
Expected Return on Plan Assets	-	-
Increase/(decrease) in irrecoverable surplus from membership fall and other factors	-	-
Remeasurements recognised in Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	884,000	(16,150,000)
Cumulative actuarial gains and losses	177,273,000	176,389,000
History of experience gains and losses:		
Experience gains and (losses) on assets	(2,822,000)	32,168,000
Experience gains and (losses) on liabilities	(899,000)	(8,528,000)

The Council has a net pension asset at 31 March 2025 mainly due to higher asset returns. The Council has restricted the surplus under para 64 of IAS 19 and this is reflected in notes b, c and d

Analysis of projected amount to be charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for the year to 31 March 2026

	31/03/2025	31/03/2025
	£	%
Projected current cost	12,262,000	101.5%
Net interest on the net defined benefit liability (asset)	(187,000)	-1.5%
Past service cost	-	-
Gains and losses on settlements or curtailments	-	-
Total	12,075,000	100.0%

The total contributions expected to be made to the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Pension Fund by the Council in the year to 31 March 2026 is £18,299k (2024/25 £17,027k).

History of experience gains and losses

The actuarial gains/losses identified as movements on the Pensions Reserve 2024/25 can be analysed into the following categories, measured as a percentage of assets or liabilities at 31 March 2025.

	2024/25	2023/24
	%	%
Experience gains and (losses) on Asset:	-0.38%	4.49%
Experience gains and (losses) on Liabilities	0.16%	1.31%

e Basis for estimating assets and liabilities

Liabilities have been assessed on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method, an estimate of the pensions that will be payable in the future years dependent on assumptions about mortality rates, salary levels, etc. The Council's Fund liabilities have been assessed by Aon Hewitt Limited, an independent firm of actuaries, estimates for the Council Fund being based on data pertaining to the latest full valuation of the scheme as at 31 March 2022.

Pension scheme assumptions:	2024/25 %	2023/24 %
Mortality assumptions:		
Longevity at 65 current pensioners:	Years	Years
Men	21.6	21.7
Women	24.5	24.6
Longevity at 65 for future pensioners:		
Men	22.2	22.7
Women	25.2	25.6
Inflation/Pension Increase Rate	2.50%	2.60%
Salary Increase Rate	4.00%	4.10%
Discount Rate	5.80%	4.80%
Pension accounts revaluation rate	2.50%	2.60%
Take-up of option to convert annual pension into retirement lump sum:		
Service to April 2009	75%	75%
Service post April 2009	75%	75%

Pension Assumptions Sensitivity Analysis

The pension figures disclosed in these financial statements are sensitive to the assumptions used

The approximate impact of changing key assumptions on the present value of the funded defined benefit obligation as at 31 March 2025 is set out below.

In each case, only the assumption noted below is altered; all other assumptions remain the same and are summarised in the disclosure above.

Funded Pension Scheme Benefits

Discount Rate Assumption		
Adjustment to discount rate	+0.1%p.a.	-0.1%p.a.
Present value of the total obligation	553,281,000	570,133,000
% change in the present value of the total obligation	-1.50%	1.50%
Projected service cost	11,735,000	12,802,000
Approximate % change in projected service cost	-4.30%	4.40%
Rate of General Increase in Salaries		
Adjustment to salary increase rate	+0.1%p.a.	-0.1%p.a.
Present value of the total obligation	563,392,000	560,022,000
% change in the present value of the total obligation	0.30%	-0.30%
Projected service cost	12,262,000	12,262,000
Approximate % change in projected service cost	0.00%	0.00%
Rate of Increase to Pensions in Payment and Deferred Pension Assumption		
Adjustment to pension increase rate	+0.1%p.a.	-0.1%p.a.
Present value of the total obligation	568,447,000	554,967,000
% change in the present value of the total obligation	1.20%	-1.20%
Projected service cost	12,802,000	11,735,000
Approximate % change in projected service cost	4.40%	-4.30%
Post Retirement Mortality Assumption		
Adjustment to mortality age rating assumption*	+0.1%p.a.	-0.1%p.a.
Present value of the total obligation	574,626,000	548,788,000
% change in the present value of the total obligation	2.30%	-2.30%
Projected service cost	12,703,000	11,821,000
Approximate % change in projected service cost	3.60%	-3.60%

* A rating of +1 year means that members are assumed to follow the mortality pattern of the base table above for an individual that is 1 year older than that.

f Major categories of plan assets as percentage of total plan assets

The Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Pension Fund's assets consist of the following categories, by proportion of the total assets held:

	31/03/2025 %	31/03/2024 %
Equity investments	40.20%	39.70%
Government Bonds	15.40%	15.00%
Corporate Bonds	3.60%	4.60%
Property	10.00%	9.30%
Multi Asset Credit	13.40%	13.00%
Cash	11.40%	12.40%
Other	6.00%	6.00%
Total	100.00%	100.00%

g Northern Ireland Civil Service Pension Arrangements

The Northern Ireland Civil Service Pension arrangements are unfunded multi-employer defined benefit schemes but the Council is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities. The most up to date actuarial valuation was completed by October 2023. This valuation is then reviewed by the Scheme Actuary and updated to reflect current conditions and rolled forward to the reporting date of the DoF Superannuation and Other Allowances Resource Accounts as at 31 March 2025.

h Assets and Liabilities in relation to the retirement benefits of the Gas Pension fund

Reconciliation of present value of the scheme liabilities:		2024/25 £	2023/24 £
	Note		
Balance as at 1 April		499,000	613,000
Current service cost		-	-
Interest cost		21,000	26,000
Contributions by members		-	-
Remeasurement (gains) and losses:			
Actuarial gains/losses arising from changes in financial assumptions		(15,000)	(2,000)
Actuarial gains/losses arising from demographic changes		(8,000)	(12,000)
Actuarial gains/losses arising on liabilities from experience		1,000	4,000
Other (if applicable)		-	-
Past service costs/(gains)		-	-
Losses/(gains) on curtailments		-	-
Liabilities extinguished on settlements		-	-
Net benefits paid		(126,000)	(130,000)
Balance as at 31 March		372,000	499,000
Reconciliation of present value of the scheme assets:		2024/25 £	2023/24 £
	Note		
Balance as at 1 April		282,000	407,000
Interest Income		11,000	16,000
Contributions by members		-	-
Contributions by employer		-	-
Remeasurement gain/(loss)		(9,000)	(11,000)
Assets distributed on settlements		-	-
Net Benefits paid		(126,000)	(130,000)
Balance as at 31 March		158,000	282,000
Analysis of scheme assets and liabilities		2024/25 £	2023/24 £
	Note		
Fair Value of Assets in pension scheme		158,000	282,000
Present Value of Defined Benefit Obligation		372,000	499,000
Net Asset/(Liability) recognised on the balance sheet		(214,000)	(217,000)

Funded Pension Scheme Benefits- Gas Pension Fund Sensitivity Analysis

Discount Rate Assumption		
Adjustment to discount rate	+0.1% p.a.	-0.1% p.a.
Present value of the total obligation	371,000	374,000
% change in the present value of the total obligation	-0.40%	0.50%
Rate of Increase to Pensions in Payment accounts assumption		
Adjustment to pension increase rate	+0.1% p.a.	-0.1% p.a.
Present value of the total obligation	374,000	371,000
% change in the present value of the total obligation	0.50%	-0.40%
Post Retirement Mortality Assumption		
Adjustment to mortality age rating assumption*	-1 Year	+1 Year
Present value of the total obligation	398,000	347,000
% change in the present value of the total obligation	7.00%	-6.80%

* A rating of +1 year means that members are assumed to follow the mortality pattern of the base table above for an individual that is 1 year older than that.

	2024/25 %	2023/24 %
Government Bonds	0.00%	45.70%
Cash	100.00%	54.30%
Total	100.00%	100.00%
Mortality assumptions:		
Members aged 85 at accounting date	Years	Years
Men	6.7	6.7
Women	7.7	7.7
Inflation/Pension Increase Rate	2.50%	2.60%
Discount Rate	5.60%	4.80%

Gas Pension Fund

The Council's Gas Pension Fund had been established under an agreement between the Council and the Department of Economic Development on 3rd July, 1990. The purpose of the Fund was to provide for the continuation of pension payments to former Gas Department employees and their dependants who were members of various statutory pension schemes. The Gas Pension Fund is maintained to provide for future pension payments to the beneficiaries, the objective being to maintain a fund sufficient to provide all future anticipated payments. No contributions are currently being paid and there are no service members accruing further benefits. Members' benefits are guaranteed by statute. Should the Fund's assets not be sufficient to provide all the benefits, the residual liability for pension payments would fall on Belfast City Council.

The current market value of the Fund at 31 March 2025 is assessed by the Council's actuaries, Aon Hewitt and is disclosed above. The Fund's financial statements outlined below do not take account of liabilities to pay pensions and other benefits after 31 March 2025.

At 31 March 2025 there were 10 pensioners left in the Gas Pensions Fund and the balances relating to the Gas Pension Fund are fully consolidated in the Group financial statements.

GAS PENSION FUND RESULTS	31/03/2025 £	31/03/2024 £
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT:		
INCOME		
Investment Income	1,623	3,156
EXPENDITURE		
Pensions Paid	(122,347)	(125,578)
Administration Expenses	(4,876)	(4,850)
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year	(125,600)	(127,272)
NET ASSET MOVEMENTS:		
Brought forward balance	210,263	337,507
Unrealised gain	72,770	69,910
Opening Value of Fund	283,033	407,417
Add contribution from City Council	0	0
Add surplus/(deficit) for the year	(125,600)	(127,272)
CHANGE IN MARKET VALUES OF INVESTMENTS		
Realised gain for year	58,031	0
Unrealised gain/(loss) for year	(57,770)	2,888
Closing value of fund	157,692	283,031
FINANCED BY:		
UK Index Linked Investments	0	128,930
Cash deposits and at bank	157,692	153,423
Debtors	0	678
	157,692	283,031
Bank Balance	-	-
Creditors	-	-
	-	-
Closing value of fund	157,692	283,031

Summary Net Asset/Liability recognised on the Balance Sheet	2024/25	2023/24
Northern Ireland Local Government Officer's Pension Fund	(5,940,942)	(6,851,942)
Gas Pension Fund	(214,000)	(217,000)
Belfast Waterfront & Ulster Hall Limited	-	-
Total Net Asset/(Liability) recognised on the Balance Sheet	(6,154,942)	(7,068,942)

The figures above include a pension amount in respect of Belfast Waterfront & Ulster Hall Limited (BWUH Ltd). BWUH Ltd became a participating employer in the NILGOSC scheme on 1 April 2016. Belfast City Council has agreed to include and disclose the net pension amount under this scheme up to 31 March 2025 within the net total for Belfast City Council. The net pension asset of BWUH Ltd has been restricted under para 64 of IAS 19 by £3.749m

Allowance for the McCloud Judgement and GMP Indexation / Equalisation

The above amounts include an allowance for additional liabilities arising from the McCloud Judgement and GMP Indexation and Equalisation cases outlined below.

McCloud Judgement

In December 2018, the Court of Appeal ruled in the 'McCloud/Sargeant' judgement that the transitional protection arrangements put in place when the Firefighters' and Judges' pension schemes were reformed in 2015 were age discriminatory. While the judgement was not in relation to members with Local Government Pension Scheme (NI) benefits it would be reasonable to assume that the Government will seek remedy for all public sector schemes including Local Government Pension Scheme (NI).

The method for valuing the McCloud remedy is closely aligned with the method proposed by MHCLG (now DLUHC) in its consultation issued in July 2020 and the Department of Communities in its consultation issued in November 2020.

As under the proposed remedy the period of protection will apply from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2022. The McCloud allowances are included within the past service liabilities, and no allowance has been made within the current service cost over this accounting period.

GMP Indexation and Equalisation

Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP) is a portion of pension that is payable to members who were contracted out of the State Second Pension and accrued benefits in the scheme between 6 April 1978 and 5 April 1997. The LGPS (NI) was contracted out. The GMP was intended to approximately replace the State Pension which members were giving up, however the payment terms of GMP are different between men and women, which was a consequence of the state pension itself being unequal at that time.

On 26 October 2018 the High Court ruled in the Lloyds Bank case that equalisation for the effect of unequal GMPs is required. The estimated liability has been based on a typical Local Government pension fund to quantify the value of fully indexing GMP's in line with CPI inflation for those reaching State Pension Age (SPA) after 5 December 2018. This was calculated to be 0.3% of the liabilities/defined benefit obligation.

Allowance has been made for full pension increases to be paid on GMPs to individuals reaching SPA after 6 April 2016. Any increase in liability at this accounting date has been charged through Other Comprehensive Income. No allowance has been made for the outcome of the second ruling in the Lloyds bank case in October 2020.

21	Donated Assets Account	Note	2024/25 £	2023/24 £
	Opening balance		443,856	443,856
	Add: new donated assets received (condition of use not met)		1,470,720	-
	Less: amounts released to the District Fund - Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account (conditions met)		-	-
			1,914,576	443,856

Analysis of Donated Assets Account

The balance of the Donated Assets Account represents donations received that have yet to be recognised as income, as they have conditions attached to them, which will require the donated assets to be returned, if conditions are not met. The balances at the year end are as follows:

Donated Assets Account	Note	2024/25 £	2023/24 £
Neil Shawcross "Writers of Belfast" collection		430,000	430,000
Animal Welfare Van Vauxhall Combo Cargo		13,856	13,856
Rory Gallagher Statue		100,000	
Pairc an Lonnain (Land)		16,900	
Pairc an Lonnain (Built)		1,106,770	
Ravenhill Road Site (Built)		247,050	
		1,914,576	443,856

Capital Receipts Unapplied	Note	2024/25 £	2023/24 £
Opening balance		111,725	111,725
Add: new capital grants received in advance (condition of use not met)		-	-
Less: amounts transferred to Capital Receipts Unapplied Reserve	25	(111,725)	-
		-	111,725

Proceeds of £250k was received in 17/18 in relation to a disposal to NIHE. To date, £138k of this has been used to finance a playground, with the balance remaining of £112k transferred to Capital Receipts Unapplied Reserve in 24/25.

22	Capital Grants Received in Advance		2024/25 £	2023/24 £
	Note			
			621,914	1,599,918
			1,809,544	204,800
			(799,006)	
			(1,317,791)	(1,182,803)
	25		(21,929)	0
			292,732	621,914

Analysis of Capital Grants Receipts in Advance Balance

The balance of Capital Grants Receipts in Advance represents grants received that have yet to be recognised as income, as they have conditions attached to them, which will require the grant to be repaid, if conditions are not met. The balances at the year end are as follows:

Capital Grants Receipts in Advance		2024/25 £	2023/24 £
	Note		
Forth Meadow DFC		117,338	211,731
Loughside Trim Trail-UKSPF Green Spaces			-
Belfast Bikes Asset Upgrade			4,233
Paisley Park Refurb		46,236	147,034
Belfast Castle LWWP		1,000	1,000
Forthriver LWWP		5,327	5,327
Ballysillan PF LWWP		122,831	221,151
Botanic Upsurge		-	31,439
		292,732	621,914

23 Contingencies

Residential Waste Treatment Project

The arc21 Joint Committee has, with the approval of their Participant Councils, entered into a Contingent Liability Undertaking with the bidding consortium in the procurement for the Residential Waste Treatment Project. Payments made, if any, in accordance with this undertaking will be funded by the Participant Councils.

Landfill Site

The financial provision for the capping and annual monitoring cost of the landfill site, required to meet the Council's environmental obligations under the NIEA licence, has been agreed on a Local Authority Deed and disclosed in Note 18. The remaining area not covered by NIEA licence may require specific capping depending on the future use of this land. The impact of any future capping of this area on the liabilities of Belfast City Council is uncertain and therefore no provision for any such costs has been made.

Contingent Asset

The Council has recognised £1,866,455 (23/24 £5,502,943) in compensation payments in respect of ongoing legal action against HMRC to recover previously overdeclared output VAT in respect of leisure and recreational income. These amounts are included in Note 8b as Other Income. If resolution is reached on the remaining elements of this legal action, it will take time to conclude the matter and assess any associated financial impact.

24 Other cash flow disclosures
a Analysis of Adjustments to Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services

Adjustment to surplus or deficit on the provision of services for non-cash movements	Note	2024/25 £	2023/24 £
Depreciation	4a, 11	28,791,047	30,392,118
Impairment & downward revaluations (& non-sale derecognitions)	4a, 11	(3,576,975)	(1,609,311)
Amortisation (included with depreciation above)		-	-
(Increase)/Decrease in inventories	14	(1,730)	85,945
(Increase)/Decrease in Debtors	15	18,212,805	(15,216,011)
Increase/(Decrease) in impairment provision for bad debts	15	(554,360)	170,839
Increase/(Decrease) in Creditors	17	19,063,708	7,168,902
Increase/(Decrease) in Interest Creditors		-	-
Payments to NILGOSC	20b	(27,000)	714,000
Carrying amount of non-current assets sold	4a, 8a, 11	5,992,173	137,193
AIC/WIP written off to Net Cost of Services		-	-
Contributions to Other Reserves/Provisions		(3,423,076)	3,057,196
Movement in value of investment properties (included with Impairment & downward revaluations (& non-sale derecognitions) above)		-	-
Amounts posted to CIES from Donated Assets Account	21	-	-
Contract Costs		-	-
Contract Assets		-	-
Contract Liabilities		-	-
Deferred Revenue		-	-
		64,476,592	24,900,871

Adjust for items included in the net surplus or deficit on the provision of services that are investing and financing activities	Note	2024/25 £	2023/24 £
Purchase of short-term (not considered to be cash equivalents) and long-term investments (includes investments in associates, joint ventures and subsidiaries)		-	-
Proceeds from short-term (not considered to be cash equivalents) and long-term investments (includes investments in associates, joint ventures and subsidiaries)		-	-
Proceeds from the sale of PP&E, investment property and intangible assets	4a, 8a, 9e	(8,036,410)	(337,700)
Capital grants included in Taxation & non-specific grant income	10c	(2,633,989)	(5,610,831)
		(10,670,399)	(5,948,531)

b Cash and Cash Equivalents

For the purposes of the cash flow statement, cash and cash equivalents include cash on hand and in bank and short term deposits and investments (considered to be cash equivalents), net of outstanding bank overdrafts. Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period as shown in the statement of cash flows can be reconciled to the related items in the Balance Sheet as follows:

	Note	2024/25 £	2023/24 £
Cash and Bank Balances		(764,131)	1,499,122
Short Term Deposits (considered to be cash equivalents)		58,303,561	12,000,000
Short Term Investments (considered to be cash equivalents)		-	-
Bank Overdraft		-	-
		57,539,430	13,499,122

c Cash flows from Investing Activities

	Note	2024/25 £	2023/24 £
Purchase of PP&E, investment property and intangible assets	11	15,144,116	18,576,649
Purchase of Short Term Investments (not considered to be cash equivalents)		-	-
Purchase of Long Term Investments		-	-
Other Payments for Investing Activities		837,941	919,489
Proceeds from the sale of PP&E, investment property and intangible assets	4a, 8a, 9e	(8,036,410)	(337,700)
Proceeds from Short Term Investments (not considered to be cash equivalents)		-	-
Proceeds from Long Term Investments		-	-
Capital Grants and Contributions Received	10c	(2,633,989)	(5,610,831)
Other Receipts from Investing Activities		-	-
Net Cash flows from Investing Activities		5,311,658	13,547,607

a Cash flows from Financing Activities		2024/25	2023/24
		£	£
Cash Receipts from Short and Long Term Borrowing		-	-
Other Receipts from Financing Activities		-	-
Cash payments for the reduction of the outstanding liability relating to a finance lease and on-Balance Sheet PFI contracts		-	-
Repayment of Short and Long Term Borrowing		(5,375,704)	(5,260,562)
Other payments for Financing Activities		-	-
Net Cash flows from Financing Activities		(5,375,704)	(5,260,562)

25 Usable Reserves

a Capital Receipts Reserve

These are capital receipts which have originated primarily from the sale of assets which have not yet been used to finance capital expenditure.

The Capital Receipts Reserve is credited with the proceeds from fixed asset sales and other monies defined by statute as capital receipts. These are originally credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of the gain/loss on disposal and posted out via the Movement in Reserves Statement to the Capital Receipts Reserve. The reserve is written down when resources are applied to finance new capital expenditure or set aside to reduce an authority's capital financing requirement (or used for other purposes permitted by statute).

Capital Receipts Reserve		31/03/2025	31/03/2024
		£	£
	Note		
At 1 April		729,008	642,458
Transfers between Statutory & Other Reserves & the General		-	-
Disposal of Non Current Assets/ Capital Sales	8, 9e	7,297,500	216,000
Capital Receipts used to finance capital expenditure	12	(2,000,000)	-
Difference between finance and other costs and income calculated on an accounting basis and finance costs calculated in accordance with statutory requirements		-	-
Other Movements		(1,887,284)	(129,450)
At 31 March		4,139,224	729,008

b Deferred Capital Receipts Account

The Deferred Capital Receipts Account holds the gains recognised on the disposal of non-current assets but for which cash settlement has yet to take place. Under statutory arrangements, the Council does not treat these gains as usable for financing new capital expenditure until they are backed by cash receipts. When the deferred cash settlement eventually takes place, amounts are transferred to the Capital Receipts Reserve.

Deferred Capital Receipts Account		31/03/2025	31/03/2024
		£	£
	Note		
At 1 April		-	-
Other movements		665,000	-
At 31 March		665,000	-

c Capital Receipts Unapplied

Where a capital receipt (or part thereof) has been recognised as income in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, but the expenditure to be financed from that receipt has not been incurred at the Balance Sheet date, the receipt shall be transferred to the Capital Receipts Unapplied Account, reflecting its status as a capital resource available to finance expenditure. This transfer is reported in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

When, at a future date, the expenditure to be financed from the receipt is incurred, the receipt (or part thereof) shall be transferred from the Capital Receipts Unapplied Account to the Capital Adjustment Account, reflecting the application of capital resources to finance expenditure. This transfer is also reported in the Movement in Reserves Statement or in the notes to the accounts.

Capital Receipts Unapplied Account		31/03/2025	31/03/2024
		£	£
	Note		
At 1 April		-	-
Transfer from Capital Receipts Unapplied	21	111,725	-
Other movements		-	-
At 31 March		111,725	-

d Capital Grants Unapplied

Where a capital grant (or part thereof) has been recognised as income in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, but the expenditure to be financed from that grant has not been incurred at the Balance Sheet date, the grant shall be transferred to the Capital Grants Unapplied Account, reflecting its status as a capital resource available to finance expenditure. This transfer is reported in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

When, at a future date, the expenditure to be financed from the grant is incurred, the grant (or part thereof) shall be transferred from the Capital Grants Unapplied Account to the Capital Adjustment Account, reflecting the application of capital resources to finance expenditure. This transfer is also reported in the Movement in Reserves Statement or in the notes to the accounts.

Capital Grants Unapplied Account		31/03/2025	31/03/2024
		£	£
	Note		
At 1 April		-	-
Transfer from Capital Grants Received in Advance	22	21,929	-
Other movements		-	-
At 31 March		21,929	-

e Capital Fund

This fund is authorised under Section 9 of Part 1 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

Capital Fund		31/03/2025	31/03/2024
	Note	£	£
At 1 April		14,409,960	15,096,990
Transfers between statutory & other reserves & the General Fund	4b	935,402	(696,480)
Transfer to Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund		-	-
Financing from CCIF		-	-
CCIF new contributions	12, 26a	1,887,284	129,450
CCIF drawdowns from fund	12, 26a	(625,500)	(120,000)
At 31 March		16,607,146	14,409,960

	£	£
Local Investment Fund	304,937	348,433
Belfast Investment Fund	5,872,462	4,807,700
City Centre Investment Fund	9,508,497	8,246,713
Social Outcomes Fund	921,250	1,007,114
Total	16,607,146	14,409,960

The movement and purpose of these funds is outlined below:

Local Investment Fund		31/03/2025	31/03/2024
	Note	£	£
Opening balance		348,433	579,545
Add: new contributions to fund		-	-
Less: financing drawn down from fund	4b	(43,496)	(231,112)
At 31 March		304,937	348,433

Local Investment Fund (LIF) is a key part of the Investment Programme that provides funding for smaller initiatives focusing on physical work on buildings or facilities within communities. The balance on this fund as at 31 March 2025 is £304,937.

Belfast Investment Fund		31/03/2025	31/03/2024
	Note	£	£
Opening balance		4,807,700	4,638,532
Add: new contributions to fund	4b	1,270,000	1,270,000
Less: financing drawn down from fund	4b	(205,238)	(1,100,832)
Less: transfer to Neighbourhood Regeneration fund		-	-
At 31 March		5,872,462	4,807,700

There is a balance of £5,872,462 on the Belfast Investment Fund at year end 31 March 2025. This fund was established to support partnership projects across the City.

City Centre Investment Fund		31/03/2025	31/03/2024
	Note	£	£
Opening balance		8,246,713	8,237,263
Add: new contributions to fund		1,887,284	129,450
Less: amounts drawn down from fund		(625,500)	(120,000)
At 31 March		9,508,497	8,246,713

City Centre Investment Fund (CCIF) is a fund to support the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Investment Plans. The proposed investment principles for the CCIF are as follows:

- the project should make a significant impact on the City Centre economy in terms of "gross value added" and job creation
- the project should make positive and net contribution to the business rates income received by Belfast City Council

Belfast City Council used this fund to support ongoing and potential City Centre regeneration projects. The balance on CCIF at year end 31 March 2025 is £9,508,497.

Social Outcomes Fund		31/03/2025	31/03/2024
	Note	£	£
Opening balance		1,007,114	1,641,650
Add: transfer from Belfast Investment fund		-	-
Less: amounts drawn down from fund	4b	(85,864)	(634,536)
At 31 March		921,250	1,007,114

Social Outcomes Fund is set up to support City Centre projects which might not generate a direct financial return but which would enhance the overall City Centre offer and support the attraction of investment into the City Centre. The balance on this fund as at 31 March 2025 is £921,250.

f Leisure Mobilisation Fund

This fund is authorised under Section 9 of Part 1 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

Leisure Mobilisation Fund		31/03/2025	31/03/2024
	Note	£	£
At 1 April		534,521	611,877
Transfers between statutory & other reserves & the General Fund	4b	-	(77,356)
Transfers between Renewal & Repair Fund & CAA to finance Capital Expenditure	12	-	-
At 31 March		534,521	534,521

The Leisure Mobilisation Fund is a fund to support the Leisure Transformation Programme. This fund will cover programme level costs including communications, engagements and procurement costs.

g Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

This fund is authorised under Section 9 of Part 1 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund		31/03/2025	31/03/2024
	Note	£	£
At 1 April		10,052,018	10,000,000
Transfers between statutory & other reserves & the General Fund	4b	-	280,000
Less: amounts drawn down from fund		(145,684)	(227,982)
At 31 March		9,906,334	10,052,018

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund is a fund to support neighbourhood regeneration and tourism projects in local neighbourhoods.

h Other Balances & Reserves

Other Balances & Reserves		31/03/2025	31/03/2024
	Note	£	£
At 1 April		2,935,552	2,620,360
Transfers between statutory & other reserves & the General Fund	4b	(935,972)	315,192
Transfer to BWUH Subvention Fund		276,768	131,673
Transfer to BWUH Sinking Fund		(276,768)	(131,673)
At 31 March		1,999,580	2,935,552

	£	£
Election Fund	225,397	62,745
BWUH Subvention Fund	1,102,648	1,078,513
BWUH Sinking Fund	671,535	1,794,294
Total	1,999,580	2,935,552

The movement and purpose of these funds is outlined below:

Election Fund		31/03/2025	31/03/2024
	Note	£	£
Opening balance		62,745	913,390
Add: new contributions to fund		162,652	62,745
Less: financing drawn down from fund		-	(913,390)
At 31 March		225,397	62,745

This reserve is used to equalise (smooth) the cost of elections by building up a fund to cover the costs of future elections by making contributions, as and when required, to the reserve.

BWUH Subvention Fund		31/03/2025	31/03/2024
	Note	£	£
Opening balance		1,078,513	909,283
Add: new contributions to fund		300,903	300,903
Less: amounts drawn down from fund		-	-
Less: amounts transferred to Sinking Fund		(276,768)	(131,673)
At 31 March		1,102,648	1,078,513

BWUH Subvention Fund was established to support national and international corporate organisations in bringing their conferences to Belfast.

BWUH Sinking Fund		31/03/2025	31/03/2024
	Note	£	£
Opening balance		1,794,294	797,687
Add: new contributions to fund		200,000	1,211,480
Less: amounts drawn down from fund		(1,322,759)	(214,873)
At 31 March		671,535	1,794,294

BWUH Sinking Fund is a fund to support planned maintenance and future capital works of the new exhibition centre at Waterfront Hall.

i General Fund

This reserve shows the accounting cost in the year of providing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices, rather than the amount to be funded from District Rates. Councils raise rates to cover expenditure in accordance with regulations; this may be different from the accounting cost. The taxation position is shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

General Fund		2024/25	2023/24
	Note	£	Restated £
At 1 April		59,299,011	58,815,944
Prior year adjustment			
Applied Capital Grants	10, 12	(2,633,989)	(5,610,831)
Unapplied Capital Grants received in year		-	-
Direct Revenue Financing	4, 12	(7,562,536)	(9,594,430)
Depreciation and Impairment adjustment	4	25,214,072	28,782,807
Statutory Provision for financing Capital Investment	4	(9,140,494)	(8,652,492)
Net Revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute	4, 12	8,100,274	17,029,101
REFCUS - Government Grants and other Contributions	4, 12	(5,855,398)	(15,264,024)
REFCUS - Direct Financing	4, 12	(1,971,946)	(1,765,077)
REFCUS - Capital grants applied	4, 12	(272,930)	-
Surplus/(Deficit) on the Provision of Services	CIES	921,477	(5,785,711)
Transfers between Statutory and Other Reserves and the General Fund	4	146,254	406,628
Net movements on Pension Reserve	4, 20	(27,000)	714,000
Disposal of Fixed Assets/Capital Sales	4, 11	(2,044,237)	(200,507)
Difference between finance and other costs and income calculated on an accounting basis and finance costs calculated in accordance with statutory requirements	26d	89,308	423,603
Other Movements		309,202	-
At 31 March		64,571,068	59,299,011

This fund represents the surplus of income over expenditure. It can be used to supplement income and unexpected expenditure in future years. Of the £64.1m, £50.1m relates to expenditure committed at the year end (23/24 £59.3m, £46.1m committed).

Committed Expenditure by Theme	£
Theme 1: Our services	7,316,698
Theme 2: Our organisation	12,674,887
Theme 3: Our people and communities	7,185,131
Theme 4: Our economy	7,918,111
Theme 5: Our place	5,798,183
Theme 6: Our planet	3,561,989
Theme 7: Compassionate city	4,687,949
Other	972,479
Total	50,115,427

26 Unusable Reserves

a Capital Adjustment Account

The Capital Adjustment Account absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for the consumption of non-current assets and for the acquisition, construction or enhancement of those assets under statutory provisions.

The Account is debited with the cost of acquisition, construction or enhancement as depreciation, impairment losses and amortisations are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, with reconciling postings from the Revaluation Reserve to convert fair value figures to an historic cost basis.

The account is credited with the amounts set aside by the Council as finance for the costs of acquisition, construction and subsequent costs

The Account contains accumulated gains and losses on Investment Properties and gains recognised on donated assets that have yet to be consumed by the Council.

The Account also contains revaluation gains accumulated on Property, Plant and Equipment before 1 April 2007, the date that the Revaluation Reserve was created to hold such gains.

Capital Adjustment Account		2024/25	2023/24
	Note	£	Restated £
At 1 April		526,101,099	522,981,947
Prior year restatement	31	333,404	
At 1 April (restated)		526,434,504	522,981,947
Applied Capital Grants	10, 12	2,633,989	5,610,831
Unapplied Capital Grants transferred to CAA in year		-	-
Direct Revenue Financing	4, 12	7,562,536	9,594,430
Depreciation & Impairment adjustment	11	(25,214,072)	(28,782,807)
Statutory Provision for financing Capital Investment	4, 12	9,140,494	8,652,492
Net Revenue expenditure funded from Capital under statute	4, 12	8,100,274	17,029,101
REFCUS - Government Grants and other Contributions	4, 12	(5,855,398)	(15,264,024)
REFCUS - Direct Financing	4, 12	(1,971,946)	(1,765,077)
REFCUS - Capital grants applied	4, 12	(272,930)	-
Disposal of Fixed Assets/ Capital Sales	4, 11	(5,911,353)	(42,759)
Capital Receipts used to finance capital expenditure	4, 12	2,000,000	-
Other Movements		13,005,091	7,966,965
Transfers between Capital Fund & CAA to finance capital expenditure	12	625,500	120,000
At 31 March		530,276,689	526,101,099

b Revaluation Reserve

The Revaluation Reserve contains the gains made by the Council arising from increases in the value of its Property, Plant and Equipment and Intangible Assets. The reserve is reduced when assets with accumulated gains are:

- revalued downwards or impaired and the gains are lost;
- used in the provision of services and the gains are consumed through depreciation, or
- disposed of and the gains are realised.

The reserve contains only revaluation gains accumulated since 1 April 2008, the date the reserve was created. Accumulated gains arising before that date are consolidated into the balance on the Capital Adjustment Account.

The purpose of this account is to build up a balance based on the revaluation (upwards or downwards) of individual assets. All such revaluations (excluding impairment losses that have been debited to Surplus/(Deficit) on the Provision of Services are mirrored in Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure. It is a fundamental principle of this account that it never becomes negative. If an asset was held at current value when derecognised, the balance held on the Revaluation Reserve is written off to the Capital Adjustment Account.

Revaluation Reserve		2024/25	2023/24
		£	Restated £
	Note		
At 1 April		248,325,740	231,519,930
Prior year restatement		(232,447)	5,113,000
At 1 April (restated)		248,093,293	236,632,930
Revaluation & Impairment	11	24,562,123	19,659,775
Movements from associates & joint ventures		-	-
Other Movements		(13,005,098)	(7,966,965)
At 31 March		259,650,318	248,325,740

c Pension Reserve

Pension Reserve		2024/25	2023/24
		£	£
	Note		
At 1 April		(7,068,942)	10,648,058
Net Movements on Pension Reserve	4, 20	27,000	(714,000)
Revaluation & Impairment	20	884,000	(16,150,000)
Gas pension & BWUH movement		3,000	(853,000)
At 31 March		(6,154,942)	(7,068,942)

The Pensions Reserve absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for post-employment benefits and for funding benefits in accordance with statutory provisions. The Council accounts for post-employment benefits in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as benefits are earned by employees accruing years of service, updating the liabilities recognised to reflect inflation, changing assumptions and investment returns on any resources set aside to meet the costs.

However, statutory arrangements require benefits earned to be financed as the Council makes employer's contributions to pension funds or eventually pays any pensions for which it is directly responsible. The debit balance on the Pensions Reserve therefore shows a substantial shortfall in the benefits earned by past and current employees and the resources the Council has set aside to meet them. The statutory arrangements will ensure that funding will have been set aside by the time the benefits come to be paid.

d Accumulated Absences Account

The Accumulated Absences Account absorbs the differences that would otherwise arise on the General Fund balance from accruing for compensated absences earned but not taken in the year e.g. staff annual leave entitlement carried forward at the end of the financial year. Statutory arrangements are expected to require that the impact on the General Fund is neutralised by transfers to or from this Accumulated Absences Account.

Accumulated Absences Account		31/03/2025	31/03/2024
		£	£
	Note		
At 1 April		(2,153,896)	(1,730,293)
Difference between finance and other costs and income calculated on an accounting basis and finance costs calculated in accordance with statutory requirements		(89,308)	(423,603)
At 31 March		(2,243,204)	(2,153,896)

e Provisions Discount Rate Reserve

The Provisions Discount Rate Reserve covers the arrangement, put in place by the Department under its amendment to the 2017/18 accounts direction (see DfC circular LG 05/2018), to accommodate changes in the current value of the annual calculation of long term provisions for landfill costs, which arises as a result of changes to the interest rates used to discount these provisions and landfill cash flows being increased for inflation.

Provisions Discount Rate Reserve		31/03/2025	31/03/2024
	Note	£	£
At 1 April		(4,196)	(4,196)
Difference between finance and other costs and income calculated on an accounting basis and finance costs calculated in accordance with statutory requirements		-	-
Other Movements		-	-
At 31 March		(4,196)	(4,196)

27 Significant Trading Operations

The Council considers a trading operation exists where the service it provides is competitive i.e the user always has the choice to use an alternative supplier to the Council and the Council charges the user on a basis other than a straightforward recharge of the Council's costs in supplying the service. The Council uses a variety of charging mechanisms such as quoted lump sums, fixed periodical charges or rates, or a combination of these.

In deciding whether a trading operation is significant the Council takes both financial and non-financial criteria into account.

Financial criteria taken into account in deciding whether trading operations are significant to the Council are:

- the magnitude of each individual trading operation's turnover when compared with the Council's net revenue budget
- the risk of financial loss the Council may be exposed to in providing the service to the user.

Non-financial criteria taken into account in deciding whether trading operations are significant to the Council are:

- the importance of each individual trading operation to demonstrating the achievement of Council targets and improving performance.
- the exposure of the Council to service reputational loss risk by providing the service.
- whether the provision of the service is likely to be of interest to the Council's key stakeholders and their needs.

In applying the aforementioned criteria, the Council considers the letting of industrial estates to be a significant trading operation. The income and expenditure associated with these industrial estates is disclosed below:

Industrial Estate Lettings	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Rental Income	5,471,940	5,412,765
Rental Expenditure	(72,371)	(97,248)
Net Income	5,399,569	5,315,517

These significant trading operations form part of Note 9e to these financial statements.

28 Agency Services

The Council provides administration services to Belfast One BID Ltd, Destination CQ BID Ltd and Belfast Central Business District. These entities pay an administration fee to the Council for these services. This fee amounted to £30,527 (2023/24 £16,488) across the 3 entities.

The council holds bank accounts for Belfast One BID Ltd, Destination CQ BID Ltd and Belfast Central Business District. The total amount held across these bank accounts was £976,063 at 31 March 2025.

29 Joint Arrangements

During 2024/25 Belfast City Council did not make a financial contribution to Beltel LLP relating to the redevelopment of the Belfast Telegraph Building (2023/24 £nil).

The contribution to LLP is included in the Long term Assets of Belfast City Council. This represents 46% of the net assets of the LLP which is included in Belfast City Council's consolidated balance sheet.

The amount in the table below of £3,436,859 represents financial contributions made to date. The underlying value of the asset in Beltel LLP fluctuates year on year depending on market conditions.

The recoverability of this amount is contingent on the market value of the underlying asset at the conclusion of the project.

	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Long term assets	3,231,429	3,231,429
Current assets	242,435	242,435
Current liabilities	(37,005)	(37,005)
Long term liabilities	-	-
Net Assets	3,436,859	3,436,859

On 1 April 2016, the operations of Waterfront Hall and Ulster Hall were transferred to a company BWUH Limited. Belfast City Council hold the entire share capital of this company, 1 ordinary share at £1 each. Belfast City Council entered into an agreement with BWUH Limited under which the Council pays the company a management fee for the operation of Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall. Payments to and from the company are outlined in Note 30f.

30 Related Party Transactions

A Related Party Transaction is a transfer of resources or obligations between related parties, regardless of whether a price is charged. Related Party Transaction exclude transactions with any other entity that is a related party solely because of its economic dependence on the Council or the Government of which it forms part. A related party is one that has the ability to control the other party or exercise significant influence over the other party in making financial and operating decisions. This includes cases where the related party entity and another entity are subject to common control but excludes providers of finance in the course of their normal business with the Council and Trade Unions in the course of their normal dealings with the Council. In addition, where the relationship with the Council and the entity is solely that of an Agency (see note 28) these are not deemed to be Related Party Transactions.

Central government has significant influence over the general operations of the council - it is responsible for providing the statutory framework within which the council operates, provides the majority of its funding in the form of grants and prescribes the terms of many of the transactions that the council has with other parties. Grant receipts outstanding at 31 March 2025 are shown in Note 15b.

As part of their duties, Councillors are appointed to represent the Council in a range of other organisations and further details of these arrangements can be found on the Council's website.

Transactions with related parties not disclosed elsewhere in these financial statements are set out below.

Councillors have direct control over the Council's financial and operating policies. In the 2024/25 financial year the Council commissioned £3,152,863 (2023/24 £3,212,622) of works and services from Visit Belfast in which Councillors have an interest. The Council entered into these contracts in full compliance with the Council's standing orders and codes of conduct.

The Council also paid grants of £2,894,252 (2023/24 £3,916,364) to a number of organisations in which Councillors and Council officers had an interest. These grants were made with proper consideration of declaration of interests.

During 2024/25 the Council had expenditure of £3,728,966 (2023/24 £484,568) to other Councils and income received of £2,996,512 (2023/24 £2,481,414) from other Councils, and £100,640 (2023/24 £401,041) was outstanding at 31 March 2025. These amounts mainly related to services provided.

a Other Organisations

	Councillors	2024/25 £	2023/24 £
Active Communities Network	1	25,760	40,688
Ashfield Girls High	1	2,100	0
Belfast City of Sanctuary	0	0	16,663
Belfast Community Sports Development Network	1	0	34,678
Belfast Film Festival	2	60,000	62,000
Belfast Harbour Commissioners	5	53,857	916,241
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	2	220,300	159,200
Belfast Hills Partnership	1	68,121	72,134
Belfast Orange Hall	1	4,703	0
Belmont Primary School	1	0	1,000
Black Mountain Shared Spaces Project	1	88,939	180,243
Blackie River Centre	2	92,088	122,459
Boy's Brigade	1	4,000	0
Children's Law Centre	1	15,000	0
Colaiste Feirste	1	100,000	0
Colin Neighbourhood Partnership	1	64,076	48,142
Common Youth	1	693	3,432
Crumlin Star Social Club Committee	1	891	0
Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain	1	44,029	43,500
Denmark Community Centre	1	29,594	0
Duncairn Community Partnership	2	6,000	9,020
Felle an Phobail	1	625,029	527,454
Foodstock Charity	1	0	15,156
Gort na Mona GAA	1	2,460	0
Grand Opera House Trust	1	982	3,241
Greater Shankill Partnership Board	1	1,500	53,984
Groundwork	1	2,160	1,920
Hanwood Trust	1	110,969	92,201
Healing Through Remembering	1	1,500	0
Henderson Retail	0	0	1,605
Here NI	1	35,442	7,132
Impact Training	1	3,051	15,194
Glenbank Community Association	1	16,129	0
James Connolly Visitor Centre	1	220	148
Lagan Valley Regional Park	1	70,400	67,000
Lagmore Youth Project	1	22,650	16,630
Ligoniel Amateur Boxing Club	1	2,220	5,260
Ligoniel Improvement Association	1	276,793	444,077
Linenhall Library Board	1	34,750	0
Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group (LORAG)	0	0	176,887
Lower Shankill Community Association	2	6,029	3,120
Mount Eagles/Lagmore Youth & Community Association	1	8,744	24,317
MW Advocate Ltd	1	1,224	0
National Association of Councillors	6	3,560	0
Nettlefield Multi-Sports	1	4,035	736
NI Amenity Council	1	2,330	0
NI Local Government Association	4	118,565	71,385

Open University	1	1,187	299
PIPS Charity	1	20,629	24,000
Queens University Belfast	1	1,387	250
Roden Street Community Development Group	1	226,458	291,910
Rosario Youth Centre	1	2,198	5,584
Royal Society of Ulster Architects	0	0	187
Shankill Housing and Enterprise Ltd	1	8,190	0
Spectrum Centre Trust	1	48,898	24,933
St. Teresa's Youth Centre	1	20,969	4,086
Sure Start	1	800	0
Sustainable NI working group	1	6,000	0
Taughmonagh Primary School	1	4,500	0
Templemore Avenue Schools Trust	1	2,369	3,007
Tullycarnet Boxing Club	1	4,853	4,450
Ulster Orchestra	1	282,581	180,491
Upper Springfield Development Trust	1	188,951	140,320
Visit Belfast	2	3,152,863	3,212,622
Welcome Organisation	1	3,750	0
At 31 March		6,207,477	7,128,986

b Payments to Community Groups

Belfast City Council made payments to the following Community Groups that have Councillors as part of their committee structure:

	Councillors	2024/25	2023/24
		£	£
Eastside Partnership (East Belfast Partnership Board)	1	162,734	137,037
Forward South (previously South Belfast Partnership Board)	4	136,520	133,311
West Belfast Partnership Board	6	398,670	195,064
Total		697,924	465,412

c Joint Committees

Belfast City Council made payments to the following Joint Committees:

	Councillors	2024/25	2023/24
		£	£
Arc 21	1	20,799,228	16,789,193

The origins of arc21 can be traced back to June 1999, when a small number of Council representatives agreed that a joint approach was the best way to deliver an effective waste management strategy for the region. By 2000, 11 Councils had joined together from the eastern Region Waste Management Group, which was eventually renamed arc21.

At present arc21 has successfully been awarded and is managing waste management contracts on behalf of Councils with a value in the region of £200m.

d Greenwich Leisure Limited

Belfast City Council entered into an agreement with Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) for the provision of leisure services. These financial statements include expenses of £9,529,057 (2023/24 £10,732,762) for the provision of these services in the year ended 31 March 2025. During 2024/25 the Council also received a profit share of £639,508 (2023/24 £1,220,190) which has been recorded in reserves.

e Car Loans to Council Officers

The Council makes car loans available to employees who are designated essential car users. The total amount outstanding in respect of car loans to designated employees as at 31 March 2025 was £30,921 (2023/24 £41,710).

f Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Limited

With effect from 1 April 2016 the Council transferred the operations of Belfast Waterfront Hall and Ulster Hall to a new company BWUH Limited with the Council being the sole shareholder in this new company. During 2024/25 the Council invoiced BWUH Ltd for £4,133,236 for expenditure incurred on its behalf and also received invoices from the Company for £3,234,458 mainly for the management fee. At 31 March 2025, £1,273,212 (2023/24 £139,323) was owed to the company by the Council and £555,460 (2023/24 £1,321,695) receivable from the company.

g Beltel LLP

During 2024/25, Belfast City Council did not make a financial contribution to Beltel LLP (2023/24 £nil), relating to the redevelopment of the Belfast Telegraph Building (as outlined in Note 29). The Council is represented by two officers on the Management Board of the LLP and ES BT Holdings Limited is also represented by two members on the Management Board.

Belfast City Council
Group Movement in Reserves Statement for the year ended 31 March 2025

	General Fund Summary Restated £	Other Fund Balances and Reserves £	Capital Receipts Reserves (inc deferred and unapplied) £	Total Usable Reserves £	Total Unusable Reserves Restated £	Total Council Reserves £
Balance as at 1 April 2023	58,829,065	28,329,227	642,458	87,800,750	763,415,446	851,216,196
Movement in reserves during the year						
Surplus/ (Deficit) on the provision of services*	(5,958,798)	-	-	(5,958,798)	-	(5,958,798)
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	-	-	-	-	3,509,775	3,509,775
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	(5,958,798)	-	-	(5,958,798)	3,509,775	(2,449,023)
Adjustments between accounting basis & funding under regulations	6,080,577	9,450	216,000	6,306,027	(872,414)	5,433,613
Net increase before transfers to Statutory and Other Reserves	121,779	9,450	216,000	347,229	2,637,361	2,984,590
Transfers to / from Statutory and Other Reserves	406,628	(406,628)	-	-	-	-
Other movements	(47,000)	-	(129,450)	(176,450)	(853,000)	(1,029,450)
Increase/ (Decrease) in year	481,407	(397,178)	86,550	170,779	1,784,361	1,955,140
Balance as at 31 March 2024	59,310,472	27,932,049	729,008	87,971,529	765,199,807	853,171,336
Movement in reserves during the year						
Surplus/ (Deficit) on the provision of services	835,431	-	-	835,431	-	835,431
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	-	-	-	-	25,446,123	25,446,123
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	835,431	-	-	835,431	25,446,123	26,281,554
Adjustments between accounting basis & funding under regulations	4,061,672	1,261,786	5,962,500	11,285,958	(9,225,219)	2,060,739
Net increase before transfers to Statutory and Other Reserves	4,897,103	1,261,786	5,962,500	12,121,389	16,220,904	28,342,293
Transfers to / from Statutory and Other Reserves	146,254	(146,254)	-	-	-	-
Other movements	228,203	-	(1,753,630)	(1,525,427)	103,953	(1,421,474)
Increase/ (Decrease) in year	5,271,560	1,115,532	4,208,870	10,595,962	16,324,858	26,920,819
Balance as at 31 March 2025	64,582,031	29,047,581	4,937,878	98,567,490	781,524,665	880,092,155

Belfast City Council
Group Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for the year ended 31 March 2025

		2024/25			2023/24		
		Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure	Gross Expenditure Restated	Gross Income Restated	Net Expenditure Restated
Service Expenditure	Note	£	£	£	£	£	£
Strategic Policy & Resources	2	110,265,101	(54,102,376)	56,162,725	94,713,172	(33,098,855)	61,614,317
City Growth & Regeneration	2	76,848,823	(44,075,222)	32,773,601	56,455,885	(26,971,561)	29,484,324
People & Communities	2	148,141,633	(23,818,216)	124,323,417	146,988,485	(23,348,487)	123,639,998
Planning & Licensing	2	10,288,097	(7,103,184)	3,184,913	9,755,547	(6,336,033)	3,419,514
Cost of Services on Continuing Operations		345,543,654	(129,098,998)	216,444,656	307,913,089	(89,754,936)	218,158,153
Other Operating Expenditure	8	5,992,173	(9,902,865)	(3,910,692)	137,193	(5,840,643)	(5,703,450)
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	9	1,166,095	(8,876,526)	(7,710,431)	1,573,218	(9,532,097)	(7,958,879)
Net Operating Expenditure		352,701,922	(147,878,389)	204,823,533	309,623,500	(105,127,676)	204,495,824
Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income	10	2,788,458	(208,447,422)	(205,658,964)	897,462	(199,434,488)	(198,537,026)
(Surplus)/Deficit on the Provision of Services		355,490,380	(356,325,811)	(835,431)	310,520,962	(304,562,164)	5,958,798
(Surplus)/Deficit on revaluation of non-current assets	11			(24,562,123)			(19,659,775)
Surplus/(Deficit) arising on revaluation of available-for-sale financial assets	11			-			-
Remeasurements of the Net Defined Benefit Liability (Asset)	20			(884,000)			16,150,000
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure				(25,446,123)			(3,509,775)
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure				(26,281,554)			2,449,023

Belfast City Council
Group Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2025

		31st March 2025	31st March 2024 Restated
	Note	£	£
Fixed Assets	G4	907,084,916	890,373,053
Long Term Investments		-	129,000
Investment in Associates and Joint Ventures		-	-
Long Term Debtors	G6	276,161	936,759
Contract Assets		-	-
LONG TERM ASSETS		907,361,077	891,438,812
Short Term Investments		-	-
Inventories		222,543	220,813
Short Term Debtors	G6	29,673,054	45,196,930
Cash and Cash Equivalents	G8	62,185,739	20,415,261
Assets Held for Sale		2,650,001	5,770,001
Contract Assets	G6	486,489	556,847
CURRENT ASSETS		95,217,826	72,159,852
Bank Overdraft		-	-
Short Term Borrowing		4,512,476	5,375,701
Short Term Creditors	G7	74,499,992	57,464,717
Provisions		3,593,301	4,265,735
Contract Liabilities		-	35,000
CURRENT LIABILITIES		82,605,769	67,141,153
Long Term Creditors	G7	1,041,472	50,003
Provisions		1,844,093	1,844,093
Long Term Borrowing		28,633,163	33,145,642
Other Long Term Liabilities		6,154,942	7,068,942
Contract Liabilities		-	-
Donated Assets Account		1,914,576	443,856
Capital Grants Receipts in Advance		292,732	733,640
LONG TERM LIABILITIES		39,880,978	43,286,176
NET ASSETS		880,092,156	853,171,335
USABLE RESERVES			
Capital Receipts Reserve		4,139,224	729,008
Deferred Capital Receipts		665,000	-
Capital Receipts Unapplied		111,725	-
Capital Grants Unapplied		21,929	-
Capital Fund		16,607,146	14,409,960
Leisure Mobilisation Fund		534,521	534,521
Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund		9,906,334	10,052,018
Other Balances and Reserves		1,999,580	2,935,552
General Fund		64,582,031	59,310,472
		98,567,490	87,971,531
UNUSABLE RESERVES			
Capital Adjustment Account		530,276,689	526,101,099
Revaluation Reserve		259,650,318	248,325,740
Pensions Reserve		(6,154,942)	(7,068,942)
Accumulated Absences Account		(2,243,204)	(2,153,896)
Provisions Discount Rate Reserve		(4,196)	(4,196)
		781,524,666	765,199,805
NET WORTH		880,092,156	853,171,335

Belfast City Council
Group Cash Flow Statement at 31 March 2025

	Note	2024/25	2023/24
			Restated
		£	£
Net Deficit on the Provision of Services		835,431	(5,958,798)
Adjustment for non-cash movements	G8	62,351,892	25,679,591
Adjust for items included in the net surplus or deficit on the provision of services that are investing and financing activities	G8	(10,670,399)	(5,948,531)
Net cash flows from operating activities		52,516,924	13,772,262
Cash flows from Investing Activities	G8	(5,370,743)	(13,777,393)
Net Cash flows from Financing Activities	G8	(5,375,704)	(5,260,562)
Net increase or decrease in cash and cash equivalents		41,770,478	(5,265,692)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		20,415,261	25,680,953
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		62,185,739	20,415,261

G1 Group Accounts

The Group Accounting Policies are the same as the Council policies and have not been repeated again in these Notes. The exception to this is in relation to Retirement Benefits which have been treated in BWUH Limited as a defined contribution scheme as the liabilities of the NILGOSC scheme remain with Belfast City Council and have been disclosed in Belfast City Council's financial statements.

Since there are no significant changes to the Consolidated Group Balance Sheet as compared to the Council's Balance Sheet, only those notes affected by group transactions have been included.

G2 Combining Entities

Belfast Waterfront Ulster Hall Limited (BWUH Ltd)

Belfast Waterfront Ulster Hall Limited is a company incorporated under the terms of the Companies Acts to operate the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall. The Authority is the principal shareholder in the company holding 1 ordinary £1 shares and representing 100% of the issued share capital. Under accounting standards, the Authority has a controlling interest in this company. The financial results for the company have been included in the group accounts as a subsidiary.

Net assets of the company were £10,963 at 31 March 2025 (2023/24: £11,462). There was no profit/loss on ordinary activities before taxation for the period to 31 March 2025 (2023/24 £nil). No dividend payments were due to, or received by, the Authority in respect of its investment.

As noted in Note 20, the pension asset of BWUH Limited is included in the pension asset of Belfast City Council. The asset was restricted to nil in 2024/25 in accordance with Paragraph 64 of IAS 19.

The latest set of accounts is for the year to 31 March 2025 has an unqualified audit certificate.

BELTEL LLP

For the purposes of economic regeneration as part of the City Centre Regeneration objectives the Council made a financial contribution in the form of a loan totalling £3,436,859 as at year ended 31 March 2025, to Beltel LLP relating to the redevelopment of the Belfast Telegraph building. This contribution represents 46% of the net assets of Beltel LLP which have been included in the Council's group balance sheet and the breakdown of the net assets is included in Note 29 Joint Arrangements.

Gas Pension Fund

The liability of £214,000 in respect of the Gas Pension Fund is disclosed and recognised in Belfast City Council's balance sheet and Note 20 Retirement Benefits disclosures. The Group balance sheet has included the assets and liabilities giving rise to this liability:

	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Long term assets	-	128,930
Current assets	157,693	154,102
Long term liabilities	(371,693)	(500,032)
Net liability	(214,000)	(217,000)

The Council has not consolidated its interests in Belfast Gasworks Management Co Ltd or Arc21 as the Council's share of these balance sheets is not deemed material to the group accounts at this point in time.

Financial Impact of combination

The effect of the inclusion of the subsidiaries and associates in 2024/25 was to increase the Council's reserves and net assets by £10,963 representing the net asset in the consolidating entities.

G3 Adjustments between an Accounting Basis and Funding Basis under Regulations

Amounts included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement but required by statute to be excluded when determining the Movement on the General Fund Balance for the year:

	2024/25		2023/24	
	£	£	Restated £	Restated £
Amounts included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement but required by statute to be excluded when determining the Movement on the General Fund Balance for the year:				
Impairments (losses & reversals) of non-current assets	-		-	
Derecognition (other than disposal) of non-current assets	-		-	
Revaluation increases/decreases taken to Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	(3,576,975)		(1,609,311)	
Depreciation charged in the year on non-current assets	28,933,595	25,356,620	30,529,545	28,920,234
Net Revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute	8,100,274		17,029,101	
REFCUS - Government Grants and other Contributions	(5,855,398)		(15,264,024)	
REFCUS - Direct Financing	(1,971,946)		(1,765,077)	
REFCUS - Capital grants applied	(272,930)	-	-	-
Carrying amount of non current assets sold	5,992,173		137,193	
Proceeds from the sale of PP&E, investment property and intangible assets	(8,036,410)	(2,044,237)	(337,700)	(200,507)
Difference between finance costs calculated on an accounting basis and finance costs calculated in accordance with statutory requirements		-		-
Net charges made for retirement benefits in accordance with IAS 19		18,211,000		17,635,000
Direct revenue financing of Capital Expenditure		(7,562,536)		(9,594,430)
Capital Grants and Donated Assets Receivable and Applied in year		(2,633,989)		(5,610,831)
Capital Grants Receivable and Unapplied in year		-		-
Rates Claw-Back Reserve		-		-
Adjustments in relation to Short-term compensated absences		89,308		423,603
Adjustments in relation to Lessor Arrangements		-		-
Provisions Discount Rate Reserve Adjustment		-		-
Amounts not included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement but required by statute to be included when determining the Movement on the General Fund Balance for the year				
Statutory Provision for the financing of Capital Investment		(9,140,494)		(8,652,492)
Employers contributions payable to the NILGOSC and retirement benefits payable direct to pensioners		(18,214,000)		(16,840,000)
		4,061,672		6,080,577

G4 Fixed Assets

a

Cost or Valuation	Land	Buildings	Infrastructure Assets	Landfill Sites	Vehicles, Plant & Equipment	Community Assets	PP&E Under Construction	Surplus Assets	Total PP&E	Heritage Assets	Assets Held for Resale	TOTAL
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Balance as at 1 April 2024	112,336,504	555,929,618	5,093,674	-	54,310,994	60,835,883	30,998,213	5,446,001	824,950,887	10,108,954	1,863,000	836,922,841
Adjustments between cost/value & depreciation/impairment	-	100,933	-	-	-	(77,061)	-	-	23,872	-	-	23,872
Balance as at 1 April 2024	112,336,504	556,030,551	5,093,674	-	54,310,994	60,758,822	30,998,213	5,446,001	824,974,759	10,108,954	1,863,000	836,946,713
Additions	8,100	7,215,184	-	-	3,976,639	213,358	6,744,958	-	18,158,239	200	-	18,158,439
Donations	16,900	1,106,770	-	-	-	247,050	-	-	1,370,720	100,000	-	1,470,720
Revaluation increases/ (decreases) to Revaluation Reserve	6,740,500	(8,827,628)	-	-	-	94,866	6,189,256	1,000	4,197,994	16,109	-	4,214,103
Revaluation increases/ (decreases) to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	1,268,500	(228,486)	-	-	-	-	1,666,466	-	2,706,480	(6,070)	-	2,700,410
Impairment to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Derecognition - Disposals	(140,000)	-	-	-	(1,212,376)	-	-	-	(1,352,376)	-	-	(1,352,376)
Derecognition - Other	-	(1)	-	-	(7,728)	-	-	-	(7,729)	-	-	(7,729)
Reclassifications & Transfers	180,000	863,529	-	-	309,764	398,044	(9,864,241)	(4,170,000)	(12,282,904)	12,500	11,887,000	(383,404)
Reclassified to(-) / from(+) Held for Sale	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	1
Balance as at 31 March 2025	120,410,504	556,159,919	5,093,674	-	57,377,293	61,712,141	35,734,652	1,277,001	837,765,184	10,231,693	13,750,000	861,746,877

Depreciation and Impairment	Land	Buildings	Infrastructure Assets	Landfill Sites	Vehicles, Plant & Equipment	Community Assets	PP&E Under Construction	Surplus Assets	Total PP&E	Heritage Assets	Assets Held for Resale	TOTAL
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Balance as at 1 April 2024	-	189,098	1,301,614	-	33,034,879	11,237,013	-	-	45,762,604	27,261	-	45,789,865
Adjustments between cost/value & depreciation/impairment	-	(24)	-	-	-	(77,064)	-	-	(77,088)	-	-	(77,088)
Balance as at 1 April 2024	-	189,074	1,301,614	-	33,034,879	11,159,949	-	-	45,685,514	27,261	-	45,712,777
Depreciation Charge	-	21,079,766	169,794	-	4,191,955	2,812,914	-	-	28,254,429	226,232	-	28,480,661
Depreciation written out on Revaluation Reserve	-	(20,230,831)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(20,230,831)	(117,189)	-	(20,348,020)
Depreciation written out on Revaluation taken to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	(762,065)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(762,065)	-	-	(762,065)
Impairment losses/reversals to Revaluation Reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment losses/reversals to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Derecognition - Disposals	-	-	-	-	(1,130,203)	-	-	-	(1,130,203)	-	-	(1,130,203)
Derecognition - Other	-	-	-	-	(6,376)	-	-	-	(6,376)	-	-	(6,376)
Reclassifications & Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Eliminated on reclassification to Held for Sale	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Balance as at 31 March 2025	-	275,944	1,471,408	-	36,090,255	13,972,863	-	-	51,810,470	136,304	-	51,946,774
Net Book Values												
Balance as at 31 March 2025	120,410,504	555,883,975	3,622,266	-	21,287,038	47,739,278	35,734,652	1,277,001	785,954,714	10,095,389	13,750,000	809,800,103

Cost or Valuation	Land	Buildings	Infrastructure Assets	Landfill Sites	Vehicles, Plant & Equipment	Community Assets	PP&E Under Construction	Surplus Assets	Total PP&E	Heritage Assets	Assets Held for Resale	TOTAL
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Balance as at 1 April 2023	112,007,505	535,655,715	5,093,674	-	54,905,004	53,798,478	50,767,894	5,446,001	817,674,271	9,643,064	-	827,317,335
Adjustments between cost/value & depreciation/impairment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,863,000	1,863,000
Prior Period adjustment		22							22	-		22
Balance as at 1 April 2023	112,007,505	535,655,737	5,093,674	-	54,905,004	53,798,478	50,767,894	5,446,001	817,674,293	9,643,064	1,863,000	829,180,357
Additions (Note 11)	1,500	1,457,699	-	-	3,593,458	194,835	11,208,448	-	16,455,940	15,001	-	16,470,941
Donations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation increases/decreases to Revaluation Reserve	27,500	(3,473,458)	-	-	-	-	15	-	(3,445,943)	42,890	-	(3,403,053)
Revaluation increases/ decreases to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	300,000	(509,646)	-	-	-	-	(239,215)	-	(448,861)	(5,290)	-	(454,151)
Impairment to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Derecognition - Disposals	-	-	-	-	(4,139,172)	-	-	-	(4,139,172)	-	-	(4,139,172)
Derecognition - Other	-	-	-	-	(152,460)	-	-	-	(152,460)	-	-	(152,460)
Reclassifications & Transfers	-	22,799,309	-	-	104,165	6,842,570	(30,738,929)	-	(992,885)	413,289	-	(579,596)
Reclassified to (-) / from(+) Held for Sale	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Balance as at 31 March 2024	112,336,505	555,929,641	5,093,674	-	54,310,995	60,835,883	30,998,213	5,446,001	824,950,912	10,108,954	1,863,000	836,922,866

Depreciation and Impairment	Land	Buildings	Infrastructure Assets	Landfill Sites	Vehicles, Plant & Equipment	Community Assets (Restated)	PP&E Under Construction	Surplus Assets	Total PP&E	Heritage Assets	Assets Held for Resale	TOTAL
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Balance as at 1 April 2023	-	201,401	1,131,820	-	33,182,421	8,849,493	-	-	43,365,135	27,261	-	43,392,396
Adjustments between cost/value & depreciation/impairment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Balance as at 1 April 2023	-	201,401	1,131,820	-	33,182,421	8,849,493	-	-	43,365,135	27,261	-	43,392,396
Depreciation Charge	-	23,494,247	169,794	-	3,989,261	2,387,520	-	-	30,040,822	119,740	-	30,160,562
Depreciation written out on Revaluation Reserve	-	(22,943,088)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(22,943,088)	(119,740)	-	(23,062,828)
Depreciation written out on Revaluation taken to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	(563,462)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(563,462)	-	-	(563,462)
Impairment losses/reversals to Revaluation Reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment losses/reversals to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Derecognition - Disposals	-	-	-	-	(4,001,979)	-	-	-	(4,001,979)	-	-	(4,001,979)
Derecognition - Other	-	-	-	-	(134,824)	-	-	-	(134,824)	-	-	(134,824)
Reclassifications & Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Eliminated on reclassification to Held for Sale	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Balance as at 31 March 2024	-	189,098	1,301,614	-	33,034,879	11,237,013	-	-	45,762,604	27,261	-	45,789,865
Net Book Values												
Balance as at 31 March 2024	112,336,505	555,740,543	3,792,060	-	21,276,116	49,598,870	30,998,213	5,446,001	779,188,308	10,081,693	1,863,000	791,133,001
Balance as at 31 March 2025	120,410,504	555,883,975	3,622,266	-	21,287,038	47,739,278	35,734,652	1,277,001	785,954,714	10,095,389	13,750,000	809,800,103

Belfast City Council
Notes to the Group Financial Statements
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

Intangible Assets	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Balance at start of year:		
Gross carrying amounts	21,542,093	20,987,999
Accumulated amortisation	(19,995,915)	(19,626,932)
Net carrying amount at start of year	1,546,178	1,361,067
Additions	107,359	(25,503)
Assets reclassified as held for sale	-	-
Revaluation increases or decreases	-	-
Impairment losses recognised or reversed directly in the Revaluation Reserve	-	-
Impairment losses recognised or reversed directly in the Surplus/ Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-
Amortisation for the period	(452,934)	(368,983)
Other Changes	433,405	579,597
Net carrying amount at end of year	1,634,008	1,546,178

Investment Properties	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Balance at start of the year	97,693,877	96,176,881
Additions	625,500	-
Disposals	-	-
Net gains/losses from fair value adjustments	114,500	1,500,000
Transfers to/ from inventories	-	-
Transfers to/ from property, plant and equipment	(2,700,000)	-
Other changes	(83,089)	16,996
Balance at end of the year	95,650,788	97,693,877

Investment Property	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Industrial Estates	76,540,000	75,770,000
Commercial Units	19,110,788	21,923,877
Balance at end of the year	95,650,788	97,693,877

G5

a Employee Costs and Member Allowances		
Staff Costs	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Salaries and Wages	94,819,460	88,820,646
Employers NIC	9,885,902	8,986,887
Employers Superannuation	18,375,101	16,831,395
Total staff costs	123,080,463	114,638,928

The above staff costs include the costs of voluntary redundancies in 2024/25. These costs total £320,433 (2023/24 £383,187) and are disclosed separately in Table 4 of the Remuneration Report. In addition, agency costs during the year amounted to £7,708,888 (2023/24 £8,589,688)

The Council's contribution rate to the NILGOSC scheme in 2024/25 was 19%. At the last actuarial valuation dated 31

Average Number of Employees - where FTE represents fulltime equivalent employees.

b Average Number of Employees		
	2024/25	2023/24
	FTE	FTE
Strategic Policy & Resources	608	590
City Growth & Regeneration	267	268
People & Communities	1,276	1,206
Planning and Licencing	150	151
Total Number	2,301	2,215

c		
	2024/25	2023/24
	Actual Numbers	Actual Numbers
Full-time numbers employed	2,139	2,039
Part-time numbers employed	556	540
Total Number	2,695	2,579

d Senior Employees' Remuneration		
	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
£50,001 to £60,000	183	149
£60,001 to £70,000	87	74
£70,001 to £80,000	26	2
£80,001 to £90,000	6	6
£90,001 to £100,000	3	5
£100,001 to £110,000	9	8
£110,001 to £120,000	3	5
£120,001 to £130,000	2	-
£130,001 to £140,000	-	-
£140,001 to £150,000	-	1
£150,001 to £160,000	1	-
Total Number	320	250

G6	Debtors		
a	Long Term Debtors	2024/25	2023/24
		£	£
	Government Departments	-	-
	Other Councils	-	-
	Public corporations and trading funds	-	-
	Bodies external to general government	-	-
	Employee car loans	13,177	18,119
	Revenue Grants	-	-
	Capital Grants	-	-
	Interest Receivable	-	-
	Capital Debtors	-	-
	Loans and advances	-	-
	Finance lease debtors	-	-
	Trade debtors	262,984	918,640
	NIHE Loans	-	-
	Other	-	-
	Impairment of loans and receivables	-	-
	Contract Receivables	-	-
	Total Long Term Debtors	276,161	936,759
b	Short Term Debtors	2024/25	2023/24
		£	£
	Government Departments	1,446,650	1,384,978
	Other Councils	100,640	401,041
	Public corporations and trading funds	-	-
	Bodies external to general government	-	-
	Rates finalisation	-	-
	NIHE loans	-	-
	Employee car loans	17,743	23,591
	Revenue Grants	5,973,020	18,548,774
	Capital Grants	8,269,981	6,480,062
	Interest Receivable	-	-
	Capital Debtors	665,000	-
	Value Added Tax	4,382,047	2,218,990
	Prepayments	2,567,182	4,568,566
	Finance lease debtors	-	-
	Other	3,011,865	10,946,522
	Trade receivables	3,759,204	1,699,045
	Impairment loss - Trade receivables	(520,278)	(1,074,638)
	Contract Receivables	486,489	556,847
	Total Short-Term Debtors	30,159,543	45,753,778
	Total Debtors	30,435,704	46,690,537

G7	Creditors		
	a	Short Term Creditors	
		2024/25	2023/24
		£	£
	Government Departments	4,101,146	2,486,587
	Other Councils	463	-
	Public corporations and trading funds	345,516	-
	Bodies external to general government	-	-
	Rates clawback	2,742,451	894,750
	De-rating grant clawback	240,000	-
	Remuneration due to employees	2,879	1,071
	Accumulated Absences	2,243,204	2,153,896
	Receipts in advance	25,580,261	18,324,042
	Trade creditors	1,462,295	3,297,222
	Loan interest	130,824	151,535
	Capital Creditors	6,437,938	2,749,841
	Creditor Accruals	31,213,015	27,405,773
	Contract Payables	-	35,000
	Total Short Term Creditors	74,499,992	57,499,717
b	Long Term Creditors		
	Other creditors falling due after more than one year		
		£	£
	Government Departments	-	-
	Other Councils	-	-
	Public corporations and trading funds	974,994	-
	Bodies external to general government	-	-
	Rates clawback	-	-
	Remuneration due to employees	-	-
	Accumulated Absences	-	-
	Receipts in advance	-	-
	Trade creditors	-	-
	Other	66,478	50,003
	Contract Payables	-	-
	Total Long Term Creditors	1,041,472	50,003
	Total Creditors	75,541,464	57,549,720

G8 Other cash flow disclosures
a Analysis of Adjustments to Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services

Adjustment to surplus or deficit on the provision of services	2024/25	2023/24 Restated
	£	£
Depreciation	28,933,595	30,529,545
Impairment & downward revaluations (& non-sale derecognitions)	(3,576,975)	(1,609,311)
Amortisation (included with depreciation above)	-	-
(Increase)/Decrease in Inventories	(1,730)	85,945
(Increase)/Decrease in Debtors	16,809,193	(14,661,793)
Increase/(decrease) in impairment provision for bad debts	(554,360)	170,839
Increase/(Decrease) in Creditors	17,902,436	6,916,524
Increase/(Decrease) in Interest Creditors	-	-
Payments to NILGOSC	(3,000)	795,000
Carrying amount of non-current assets sold	5,992,173	137,193
AIC/WIP written off to Net Cost of Services	-	-
Contributions to Other Reserves/Provisions	(3,149,440)	3,315,649
Movement in value of investment properties - included above in Impairment & downward revaluations (& non-sale derecognitions)	-	-
Amounts posted to CIES from Donated Assets Account	-	-
Contract Costs	-	-
Contract Assets	-	-
Contract Liabilities	-	-
Deferred revenue	-	-
	62,351,892	25,679,591

Adjust for items included in the net surplus or deficit on the provision of services that are investing and financing activities	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Purchase of short-term (not considered to be cash equivalents) and long-term investments (includes investments in associates, joint ventures and subsidiaries)	-	-
Proceeds from the sale of PP&E, investment property and intangible assets	(8,036,410)	(337,700)
Capital grants included in "Taxation & non-specific grant income"	(2,633,989)	(5,610,831)
	(10,670,399)	(5,948,531)

b

Cash and Cash Equivalents	2024/25	2023/24
	£	£
Cash and Bank balances	3,882,178	8,415,261
Short Term Deposits (considered to be cash equivalents)	58,303,561	12,000,000
Short Term Investments (considered to be cash equivalents)	-	-
Bank Overdraft	-	-
	62,185,739	20,415,261

c	Cash flows from Investing Activities	2024/25	2023/24
		£	£
	Purchase of PP&E, investment property and intangible assets	15,203,201	18,677,435
	Purchase of Short Term Investments (not considered to be cash equivalents)	-	-
	Purchase of Long Term Investments	-	129,000
	Other Payments for Investing Activities	837,941	919,489
	Proceeds from the sale of PP&E, investment property and intangible assets	(8,036,410)	(337,700)
	Proceeds from Short Term Investments (not considered to be cash equivalents)	-	-
	Proceeds from Long Term Investments	-	-
	Capital Grants and Contributions Received	(2,633,989)	(5,610,831)
	Other Receipts from Investing Activities	-	-
	Net Cash flows from Investing Activities	5,370,743	13,777,393

d	Cash flows from Financing Activities	2024/25	2023/24
		£	£
	Cash Receipts from Short and Long Term Borrowing	-	-
	Other Receipts from Financing Activities	-	-
	Cash payments for the reduction of the outstanding liability relating to a finance lease and on-Balance Sheet PFI contracts	-	-
	Repayment of Short and Long Term Borrowing	(5,375,704)	(5,260,562)
	Other payments for Financing Activities	-	-
	Net Cash flows from Financing Activities	(5,375,704)	(5,260,562)

Date of authorisation for issue

The Chief Financial Officer authorised these financial statements for issue on



Subject:	Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 1 st December 2025
Date:	19 th December 2025
Reporting Officer:	Jim Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Godfrey McCartney, Good Relations Manager (6015)

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

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

Insert number

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

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

☐
☐
☐
☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To report to committee on the key issues discussed at the Shared City Partnership meeting held on the 1 st December 2025.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	That the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approve the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on the 1 st December, including:
2.2	<u>Presentation – Reconnected Belfast PeacePlus Project</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Shared City Partnership noted the presentation and recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the presentation.
2.3	<u>Update from Partnership Members</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updates from members are noted in the minutes for further information, following a proposal from the NIHE, the partnership agreed to receive a presentation from the Housing for All Team to be scheduled for 2026.
2.4	<u>Community Recovery Fund Update</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Shared City Partnership noted and agreed the contents of the report; and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also notes and agrees the content of the report. The Partnership further agreed that any underspend in the programme should be aligned to the Area Based Consortia, WULO, and resources subject to satisfactory evaluation and proposal, the partnership requests that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also agrees this proposal which is outlined in the minutes.
2.5	<u>Asylum Dispersal Funding</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Shared City Partnership noted the report and agreed the proposed approach for the future allocation of dispersal funding, subject to confirmation of further funding from the Executive Office and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also notes and agrees proposed approach detailed in report.
2.6	<u>PEACEPLUS – Secretariat Update</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report
2.7	<u>Peace Plus Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report
2.8	<u>Peace Plus Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report
2.9	<u>Community Regeneration & Transformation Thematic Update</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report
2.10	<u>Any Other Business</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key items reported: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Next Meeting: 12th January 13.30 – It was agreed this would be a half day workshop to be held in Girdwood Community Hub, commencing with Lunch; and Key areas of business dealt with at the start of the meeting with the

	<p>remainder of the time to focus on the New Good Relations Strategy, audit and Action Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Good Relations Manager informed the Partnership that the new VCSE Community Panel had met and 2 VCSE Reps have been allocated to the Shared City Partnership: Irene Sherry representing Ashton Community Trust (North) and JP Sukumaran representing Karma Kalakendram (City-wide) ○ The Good Relations Manager reported that following agreement at the November Shared City Partnership meeting for Council to develop a pilot proposal to progress the programme in conjunction with Social Change Initiative (SCI) a proposal has been submitted, further details are in the minutes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Shared City Partnership noted and agreed the items raised under AOB; and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also notes and agrees the items raised.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The Shared City Partnership is a Working Group of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee which consists of Elected members and representatives from various sectors across the city. The minutes from the Partnership are brought before the Committee for approval on a monthly basis.</p>
3.2	<p>The key issues on the agenda at the 1st December 2025 meeting were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership Papers of the 10th November 2025 • Presentation on Reconnected Belfast PeacePlus Programme • Update from Partnership Members • Community Recovery Fund Update • Asylum Dispersal Funding • PEACEPLUS – Secretariat Update • Peace Plus Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update • Peace Plus Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update • Community Regeneration & Transformation Thematic Update • Any Other Business
3.3	<p>More details regarding the above issues and recommendations are included in the following minutes of the meeting attached in Appendix 1: Minutes of the Shared City Partnership from the 1st December 2025, Appendix 2: Presentation on Reconnected Belfast PeacePlus Programme and Appendix 3 Community Recovery Fund Open Call.</p>
3.4	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>All financial implications are covered through existing budgets, and the Good Relations Action Plan is included in the current estimates process.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The recommendations of the Partnership are to promote the work of the Council in promoting good relations and will enhance equality and good relations impacts for the City of Belfast.</p>
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – Minutes of the Shared City Partnership from the 1st December 2025</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Presentation Reconnected Belfast PeacePlus Programme</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Community Recovery Fund Open Call</p>

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SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

Monday 1st December, 2025

MEETING OF SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

Members present: Councillor J. Duffy (Chairperson); and
Councillors Abernethy and McLaughlin.

External Members: Ms. L. Euler, BHSCT
Mr. L. Gunn, NIHE;
Ms. J. Irwin, Community Relations Council;
Rev. G. Kennedy, Faith Representative;
Superintendent A. Hagan
Ms. T. Mimna, Executive Office;
Ms. A. Roberts, Community and Voluntary Sector; and
Ms. A. M. White, British Red Cross.

In attendance: Mr. G. McCartney, Good Relations Manager
Ms. D. McKinney, PEACE Programme Manager;
Mr. D. Robinson, Acting Senior Good Relations Officer;
Ms. L. Dolan, Acting Senior Good Relations Officer;
Ms. E. Kennedy, Project Officer (Good Relations);
Ms. V. Postle, Project Officer (Good Relations); and
Mrs. S. Steele, Members' Services and Digital Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillor Smyth and Ms. B. Arthurs, Ms. C. Guinness, Mr. M. McBride, Dr. Wasif Naeem and Mr. G. Walker.

Change in Membership

The Partnership was advised that Ms. N. Creagh had replaced Mr. P. Anderson as the Department for Communities representative on the Partnership. The Chairperson asked that the Partnership's thanks be recorded to Mr. Anderson for his valuable contribution during his time on the Partnership.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 10th November were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 21st November.

Declarations of Interest

The Chairperson declared an interest in agenda Item 4, Community Recovery Update, in that an organisation with which he was associated, the West Belfast Partnership, was in receipt of funding. As the organisation was not being considered for funding, he was not required to leave the meeting.

The Chairperson also declared an interest, along with Councillor I. McLaughlin, Ms. Roberts and Ms. Irwin, under Item 6, Local Community Action Plan – Mobilisation Update, in that they were associated with organisations delivering projects under the terms of the PEACEPLUS Programme. As the report did not become subject to debate or discussion, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Presentation from Reconnected Belfast PEACEPLUS Project

(Mr. D. Logan, Senior Programme Delivery Manager and Mrs. B Coyle attended in connection with this agenda item).

The Senior Programme Delivery presented the Partnership with an overview of the Reconnected Belfast Project.

He provided detail in respect of the submission of the PEACEPLUS bid and the funding that had been secured of 13.5m for capital works and the animation of the Waterworks and Alexandra Park. He also provided an overview of the numerous engagement sessions that had been held to date and advised that engagement was ongoing.

The officer advised the Partnership that the vision for Alexandra Park and Waterworks Park was to:

'build on their unique natural and cultural significance to be cohesive places where biodiversity thrives, people from all communities are supported and proposer through leisure and recreational activities, and the parks become exemplar city green spaces for Belfast and Northern Ireland.'

He took the Members through the guiding principles and drew their attention to the masterplan and concept designs along with the proposed programming once complete.

The officer concluded by advising that the planning process was ongoing. The Stage 4 Design Team had been appointed, and engagement was ongoing with the City and Neighbourhood Services Department, the Waterworks and Alexandra Park Stakeholder Group, Queens University Belfast Centre for Public Health and Planning and the Department of Justice (DoJ).

The Members discussed the challenges associated with the removal of the interface barrier and the role of the DoJ, along with the importance of community consultation, the need for agreement from the stakeholders and proper animation of the space. The officer advised that the Council was currently waiting to hear back from the DoJ regarding funding.

The Chairperson thanked the officer for attending the meeting and the Partnership noted the information which had been provided.

Members' Update

Ms. White provided the Partnership with an overview on the work of the British Red Cross and the challenges faced by the organisation.

This included detail in respect of orientation/integration support, casework support, the distribution of funding, family reunion support, refugee resettlement, mental health and wellbeing support as well as the provision of weekly social integration activities in central

Belfast. She explained that the work also included Thematic work such as Policy Research Advocacy and the membership on various subgroups, including TEO RRI (Race Relations and Integration) – Racial Equality Subgroup and VCS Refugee Integration Subgroup.

She then provided an overview of some of the challenges faced, as follows:

- Change in Family Reunion Policy for sponsors with protection – pause on family reunion visa applications Appendix family reunion: caseworker guidance - GOV.UK Number of single asylum applicants with no pathway to reunite with families- causing anxiety and continued high number of singles not settled with families. Negative impact for integration- community cohesion;
- Move on period for those granted protection changed from 56 to 28 days- limited time to move on from asylum support- limited support from Home Office Asylum Move on Office- restricted to Belfast. Increase risk of homelessness/destitution given the reduced move on period; and
- NIHE Homelessness Policy change- Full Duty Applicant criteria appears to have changed recently although NIHE has not responded to enquires to confirm such. Housing Rights have approached NIHE and a response is pending. The sector has seen some refugees without access to Public Housing assistance. Potential increase in street homelessness as most newly granted refugees will not have deposit/guarantor to access private sector housing. Increase in pressure to access support services.

She concluded by advising that social integration activities had now moved to the city centre, these were held every Wednesday afternoon at the Food Stock Community Hub. She advised that 4 new volunteers with lived experience of forced migration/displacement would be joining the team soon and it was anticipated that these additional resources would help with the provision of the services.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. White for her update.

Discussion ensued regarding housing matters, specifically access to housing and community safety issues, during which it was agreed that it would be helpful if a representative from the NIHEs 'Housing for All Team' would attend a future meeting to discuss and update on these matters. It was also suggested that it would be useful to hear from a member of staff from their Good Relations Section and for an update to be provided at a future meeting on the internal review processes being undertaken by the NIHE in regard to legislation requirements.

Several Members highlighted the success of the specialist housing officers that had been appointed in the North and West of the City, particularly in dealing with community safety challenges, and endorsed this approach being rolled out in South and East Belfast.

Rev. Kennedy referred to the fact that the faith representative on the Partnership was a rotating position annually, he stated that in an attempt for the faith sector to be closer aligned on common themes throughout the city that representatives from the 4 main Churches had agreed to meet to try and encourage a joined-up approach to Good Relations issues. The group would be co-ordinated by the Rev Karen Campbell, the representatives were keen to try and identify common themes from the Churches and ways that they could work together to try and address issues, such as race relations in the city, he stated that he looked forward to

updating the Partnership. He also took to opportunity to remind the Members about the forthcoming 4Corners Festival which was scheduled for 30th January – 8th February 2026 and encouraged the Members to get involved as there would be a focus on race relations at some of the sessions, more information was available [here](#)

The Partnership noted the update and agreed to hear from representatives from the NIHE to provide updates at future meetings of the Partnership.

Noted.

Community Recovery Fund Update

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Issues

- 1.1 To provide an update on the status and progress of the Community Recovery Fund, previously approved by Council.**

2.0 Main report

2.1 Background

The Deputy Prime Minister of the UK established a Community Recovery Fund to support areas impacted by the public disorder that occurred between July and August 2024, including Belfast. The funds were allocated to the Department of Finance to assist the most affected communities. In Belfast, the City Council's Good Relations Unit, with cross-departmental support, has been responsible for managing the local implementation of this support.

The Community Recovery Fund was delivered through a cross-departmental approach approved and agreed by Council. This involved close collaboration between Officer across internal departments particularly across Neighbourhood Services and external community partners. Neighbourhood Integration Managers led the engagement on consortium bids, ensuring that each project was tailored to meet the specific needs of local areas across the city. Community Development teams also played a vital role by designing inclusive events at community centres that celebrate the city's diversity.

In response to the public disorder during July and August 2024, the Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) implemented targeted in-house initiatives. At the same time, the Good Relations Team oversaw the quotation process and open call for applications. This process revealed the exceptional quality of submissions and showcased the inspiring anti-racism work happening throughout Belfast—initiatives that can now be supported through this funding stream and the opportunities it provides.

2.2 Community Recovery Fund Update
Appendix 1 – Detailed Community Recovery Report
CRF001 – Safer Neighbourhood Officer Community
Engagement Project

This project is delivering strong progress in supporting communities affected by the 2024 public disorder by enhancing safety, reducing harm, and fostering social cohesion across Belfast. Through the deployment of Safer Neighbourhood Officers (SNOs), it addresses antisocial behaviour and hate crimes while promoting inclusion via community engagement, events, and leadership workshops. A particular focus is placed on ethnic minority, migrant, and refugee communities, with collaboration among local partners helping to build trust and resilience.

SNOs are now actively engaging with a range of ethnic minority organisations including Diverse Youth NI, City of Sanctuary, Belfast Islamic Centre, and EMSONI, and have participated in community events such as the Refugee Picnic. With recent changes to SNO work patterns, there is increased potential to connect with more groups and attend further events, strengthening relationships and expanding the project's reach. Together, these efforts are contributing to safer neighbourhoods and a more inclusive, cohesive Belfast.

2.3 CRF002 - Integration and Inclusion
Awarded to: Wheelworks

The programme is designed to promote diversity awareness, challenge stereotypes and misinformation, and support integration within communities. It engages teachers, Boards of Governors, community youth leaders, and young people, equipping them with practical tools to foster inclusion and counter hate. Core elements include training programmes, interactive toolkits, workshops, and youth-led initiatives, with content focused on understanding prejudice, developing critical thinking, building cultural awareness, preventing hate crime, and strengthening relationships. Overall, the programme seeks to create cohesive, informed, and inclusive communities through education and engagement. Progress to date has been very positive. The toolkit is being developed by artists and co-designed with young people from schools and community groups including Blessed Trinity, St Dominics, Donegall Pass Youth Group, and Diverse Youth NI. Feedback from these sessions has been used to finalise the toolkit, ensuring it reflects the voices and experiences of those involved. Wheelworks are now preparing to engage with Schools of Sanctuary, where they will deliver a three-hour twilight workshop on using the toolkit—demonstrating excellent collaboration between two CRF-funded programmes and further strengthening the impact of this initiative.

2.4 CRF003
Belfast City Council Community Centre Programme
– Reaching Out

The Community Development Department has been allocated funds to deliver local neighbourhood projects across both Council-run and independent community centres in Belfast. Progress to date has been encouraging. Of the 26 Council-run community centres, 16 have already advanced their projects, delivering a wide range of initiatives from crafting classes to cultural competency training. All six independent community centres have successfully concluded their programmes, and the first monitoring and evaluation forms received highlight very positive outcomes. Together, these efforts are strengthening inclusion, building community connections, and showcasing the value of collaborative neighbourhood development.

2.5 CRF004
Challenging the Narrative

Edie Shillue Consulting was awarded the contract for *Challenging the Narrative*. The initiative will deliver eight workshops, with two held in each area of Belfast, aimed at training key groups on migration and integration. With strong migrant-led input, the programme focuses on reducing hate and misinformation while building understanding and cohesion across communities.

Progress to date has been very positive. Six sessions have already been completed, with a further three planned for early 2026. In addition, work is underway to develop a training booklet to complement the workshops, ensuring participants have practical resources to support ongoing learning and engagement. Together, these efforts highlight the programme's success in fostering inclusion and challenging harmful narratives.

2.6 CRF005
Expansion of Schools of Sanctuary

The project aims to expand Schools of Sanctuary across South and North Belfast, particularly in areas impacted by racism. Its purpose is to promote social cohesion by making schools more welcoming for refugees and asylum seekers. School communities are supported in adopting inclusive practices and anti-racism education, while the initiative also strengthens partnerships with local stakeholders and provides leadership training. Family support services, including multilingual clinics, further aid integration and positive community relations.

The programme is progressing well, with 14 schools identified and completing their introductory sessions this month. Each of these schools will be buddied with schools that have already achieved School of Sanctuary status, ensuring peer learning and shared best practice. In addition, schools will benefit from the training

toolkit developed by Wheelworks, providing practical resources to embed inclusive approaches and enhance the impact of the initiative.

2.7 CRF006 – Belfast City Council, Economic Development – Business Mentoring, Engagement, and Integration Programme

The initiative aims to boost enterprise and business growth in the WULO area using £20,000 from the Community Recovery Fund. It focuses on engaging the community, promoting entrepreneurship, and supporting existing businesses through drop-in sessions, promotional outreach, and tailored resources, ensuring inclusive access to mentoring and development programs.

2.8 CRF007 - WULO – LORAG Engaged Citizens

The Engaged Citizens project fosters community cohesion and trust in Belfast's Wider University and Lower Ormeau area. It supports those affected by hate crime through inclusive dialogue and cultural celebration. Residents are trained as ambassadors to welcome newcomers and counter harmful narratives. Creative programs and exhibitions highlight shared identities and experiences. The project partners with local groups to ensure sustainable, community-led solutions. This project is progressing well and meeting all targets to date.

2.9 WULO - Forward South Creating a shared vision through building a Shared Space

This project, led by Forward South Partnership, aims to build community cohesion and resilience in South Belfast in response to recent racist hate crimes. It will include storytelling workshops, community dialogues, and discussions with unionist women to address prejudice and misinformation. Activities will take place in an inclusive space supporting services like the Roma Support Hub, with a focus on engaging minoritised and migrant communities through culturally sensitive programming and translation support. The goal is to foster trust, counter disinformation, and promote a shared, inclusive future, again the project is progressing well and meeting all targets to date.

CRF008b - Focused Consortium Projects

3.0 North Belfast - Greater Shankill Alternatives - Community Navigator Support Programme

To support migrant and ethnic minority communities, a Community Navigator will link newcomers to vital services. Workshops and outreach will promote inclusion, safety, and awareness of rights. Hate crime prevention materials and youth engagement will help reduce tensions. Collaboration with local

agencies will strengthen community ties and amplify lived experiences. This project is progressing well and has helped deescalate issues which have arisen within the community.

3.1 South Belfast Consortium – A Celebration of Cultural Diversity

In November 2025, the South Belfast consortium was awarded to the Belfast Bands Forum, with the project now set to begin. The programme sets out a connected series of initiatives designed to strengthen community leadership, promote inclusion, and rebuild trust following the racist hate crime and public disorder that took place in Sandy Row and the Village during the summer of 2024.

- Central to the work is a Community Leadership and Conflict Management Training programme that will create a network of 24 accredited local leaders, drawn from bands, youth groups, and community networks, who will be trained in de-escalation, communication, and inclusion. These leaders will be equipped to mediate conflict, safeguard public spaces, and respond confidently to emerging tensions, ensuring resilience within local communities.
- School and Community Outreach and Tuition Projects will provide creative, educational, and intercultural learning opportunities in schools and youth clubs across South Belfast, including those serving families in Sandy Row and the Village. Through music-making, storytelling, and shared cultural education, children from diverse backgrounds including newcomer and minority ethnic pupils, will gain greater understanding of each other's traditions, building empathy, confidence, and respect from an early age.
- The programme will culminate in *Sounds of Tradition – A Celebration of Cultural Diversity*, a civic event showcasing local and Commonwealth cultures through music, dance, and food, reinforcing the message that Belfast's diversity is its strength.

Together, these initiatives form a comprehensive response to the 2024 unrest, safeguarding communities, preventing future disorder, and rebuilding social trust through education, dialogue, and shared cultural celebration. The combined programme aims to leave a lasting legacy of peacebuilding, integration, and shared pride in the Sandy Row and Village communities.

**3.2 West Belfast - Blackie River –
Newcomer Family Liaison Project**

This initiative aims to support and integrate migrant communities in West Belfast, especially those impacted by the racist hate crime and unrest of July–August 2024. It seeks to foster social cohesion and rebuild trust among migrant, refugee, asylum-seeking, and host communities in the Greater Falls area. By addressing root causes of tension through proactive engagement, the project hopes to prevent future disorder. Key actions include hiring a part-time Liaison Officer, distributing welcome packs, and serving as a bridge between new families and local services. The NFLP continues to make excellent progress. To date, they have engaged with over 50 families, receiving highly positive feedback on our support and services. In response to requests from families, they are now arranging homework assistance to help overcome language barriers and ensure children can thrive academically. They are currently in the process of distributing 50 air fryers as part of their welcoming packs, further enhancing the practical support we provide to new arrivals.

In addition, they have established a strong working relationship with MEARS Housing, who will be sharing data to help them identify and reach families most in need of assistance. This collaboration will enable them to extend their impact and ensure resources are directed where they are most required.

**3.3 East Belfast - East Belfast Alternatives
Connswater Community Recovery Project**

This initiative fosters healing and unity in East Belfast by bridging divides between host and migrant communities. Through dialogue, cultural exchange, and youth engagement, it addresses the root causes of unrest. It empowers minority leaders, promotes trust in public services, and strengthens community networks. The project is progressing well to date.

**3.4 CRF008
Open Call**

Please refer to Appendix 1 for a detailed progress report on the delivery of the Community Recovery Fund.

**3.5 CRF009 – Hate Crime Hardship Programme
Belfast City Council**

The initiative aims to provide practical support to victims of hate crime through the Belfast PCSP's Home Security Service. It is developing sensitive referral pathways with partners like PCSP, PSNI, and Bryson to ensure victims receive both emotional support and home safety measures. Key community groups involved include Association Darfur NI, Afghan Community, and NI Somali Association, among others. This collaborative effort

seeks to enhance personal safety and foster trust within diverse communities.

3.6 Financial and Resource Implications

The proposals in this report are 100% funded through Community Recovery Fund. CRF funded projects have been offered project extensions until 31st August 2026.

3.7 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Implications

These proposals have strong good relations outcomes and complement the work being delivered through the Council's Good Relations Action Plan and the Belfast Agenda.

4.0 Evaluation and Monitoring Reporting Requirements

Internal projects are required to submit Belfast City Council Evaluation and Monitoring Forms. These forms must clearly demonstrate alignment with the aims and objectives of the Community Recovery Fund.

External projects must provide the following:

- **CRF004 and CRF002 required mid-way report – both have been provided and are satisfactory**
- **All other end of project of Belfast City Council evaluation and monitoring form**

Following a query from Ms. AM White regarding the distribution of welcome packs, it was agreed that officers would liaise with the Member directly to clarify that no overlap in the provision of support was occurring with other organisations in the sector.

The Good Relations Manager advised the Partnership that there was an underspend in the programme of approximately £30,000. He also highlighted that following the work on CRF004 there might be the need for resources and asked the Members to consider this when agreeing the reallocation of the monies.

The Partnership agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that:

- the underspend be assigned to the area-based consortia and wider university and lower Ormeau area, with officers progressing on this basis, subject to satisfactory review, evaluation and proposal;
- if required, be permitted to factor in funding from the underspends for resources to CRF004; and
- a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Partnership to provide more detail in respect of what data was being shared with Mears.

Asylum Dispersal Funding

The Project Officer reminded the Members that, since 2023, the Executive Office had provided the Council with Asylum Dispersal Funding to support the delivery of services for people in the asylum process and to assist with their integration and inclusion.

Funding had been fully allocated for the current financial year, supporting nine projects through an open call and two larger-scale projects through a public tender process, however, it was anticipated that further funding would be made available by the Executive Office this year. Given the lead in time required to procure and commission projects, officers had assessed the needs across the city to ensure that, should additional funding be confirmed, projects could be progressed without delay. The Executive Office had advised Councils that future funding should prioritise advice and information hub-type activities for asylum seekers.

The Members were asked to recall from the presentations at November's meeting that two large-scale projects had been commissioned under the current year's asylum dispersal allocation. These included:

- a high-level advice project, delivering in four community organisation settings, across Belfast, providing mobile advice clinics and level 1 immigration advice and casework to people in the asylum process; and
- a training and capacity-building project, aimed at enhancing the expertise and confidence of organisations that had not traditionally worked with asylum seekers, whilst also supporting the development of minority-led organisations.

At that meeting, the Law Centre had highlighted the growing demand from community and voluntary organisations for continued support and training to build capacity in providing advice to asylum seekers and refugees. The International Organisation had also reported significant demand for specialist advice provision, noting the need for services that extended beyond basic signposting. In addition, engagement with partner organisations had indicated that these approaches were delivering a positive impact, and it was felt that the focus on capacity building and delivering advice in new settings across Belfast was creating a level of sustainability. It was therefore proposed that, should further funding become available, the Council would maintain this approach around delivering high quality advice and investing in the capacity of organisations, this would also align with the outworkings and discussion arising from the Good Relations Audit.

The Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agree:

- to commission a specialised advice service through a procurement process to deliver high-quality, targeted support for asylum seekers and refugees;
- to commission a Phase 2 of the Capacity-Building Programme through procurement, aimed at strengthening the skills and confidence of community, voluntary, and minority-led organisations; and
- to reserve a portion of funding for an open call, allowing organisations to propose innovative projects for consideration, thereby encouraging a responsiveness to emerging needs.

It was also recommended to note that, in terms of part 1 and 2 of the proposed approach, officers were proposing that programmes would be commissioned for 2 years, with the possibility of an extension of one further year; break clauses would be in place each year which would be based around a satisfactory review and the budget availability.

Local Community Action Plan Secretariat Update

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide Shared City Partnership members with an update on the mobilisation of PEACEPLUS Belfast Local Community Action Plan (LCAP).

2.0 Recommendations

Members are requested to note the contents of the report; and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also note the content of the report.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Mobilisation

As previously reported, mobilisation of the Action Plan now focuses on the capital and animation elements of the Community Regeneration & Transformation theme, and the Multiculturalism to Interculturalism Lot 1 project.

3.2 Contract Awards and Procurement

The Board is advised that the CCD5 Lot 1 Multiculturalism to Interculturalism project was re-tendered at the end of October 2025. Members should note that the tender closing date has been extended to 8 December 2025 to maximise response.

3.3 Financial Controller

The formal Call Off Contract between Belfast City Council and KPMG has been submitted to SEUPB for approval.

3.4 Action Plan Modification – CRT5 Sanctuary Theatre Animation

Members are requested to note a minor typographical error has been rectified through a formal modification agreed by SEUPB. The project summary contact hours for participants engaged in the CRT5, Sanctuary Theatre animation project was amended from 4 to 3 hours, which aligns with the project narrative. The modification has no impact on the Letter of Offer (LoO).

3.5 JeMS Reporting and Claims

The Partnership is reminded that delays in formal contracting on SEUPB's JEMS system and the contracting of a Financial Controller, has led to a backlog of 7 outstanding claims and reports to be submitted on the system. The claims and reporting process comprises of 3 separate elements, and progress of each element is outlined below:

- 1. Partner Reports** include a small amount of narrative on progress of the Action Plan.
Partner Reports 1 and 2 (1st January 2024 to 30th June 2024) are drafted on the system
Partner Reports 3 and 4 (1st July 2024 to 30th December 2024) are to be drafted in coming weeks.
- 2. Financial Claims** align with the Partner reports and comprises of expenditure to be claimed and supporting evidence eg procurement documents.

Claims Expenditure 1 to 4 (1st January 2024 to 31st December 2024) are drafted on the system. Supporting evidence is to be uploaded over the coming weeks.

SEUPB has agreed that 4 partner reports and claims should be built on the system and submitted in phases once the Financial Controller is contracted. This will allow for claims to be checked, and any clarifications or lessons learned from previous claims be implemented before the next partner report is submitted.

On this basis, the submission deadlines for the first partner reports are fluid and will depend on when the previous report has been reviewed, and feedback received.

- 3. Project Content Reports** include substantial narrative on project progress, including reporting on Horizontal Principles, Target Groups, project activities and deliverables. A timeframe for submission has been agreed with the SEUPB, as follows:

Project Reports 1 to 3 (1st January 2024 to 30th September 2024) – submitted.

Project Reports 4 and 5 (1st October 2024 to 31st March 2025) – being drafted and due for submission by 14th November 2025.

Project Reports 6 and 7 (1st April to 30th September 2025) – due for submission by 12th December 2025.

Project Content Report 8, 1st October to 31st December 2025 is to be submitted by 28th January 2026. This will bring Council on track and in line with the Programme Manual which requests

Project Content Reports are submitted 28 days after the end of the reporting period.

3.6 Communications Process – Delivery partner approvals

The Partnership is advised that a communications checklist is being introduced for delivery partners to complete, when submitting communications materials for approval. The aim of the checklist is to reduce the number of compliance errors before communications material is submitted to Council, and to increase the knowledge and understanding Delivery Partners on the communications regulations.

3.7 Flexibility and Tolerances

As members are aware each project within the Action Plan has distinct KPI targets, deliverables, activities, cohorts and participant numbers which contribute cumulatively to the overall Programme deliverables.

As recently reported, there have been several project requests to realign targets and payment schedules, mainly due to participant retention issues.

Officers approached the SEUPB to discuss project tolerances within participant numbers and contact hours. SEUPB advised that attrition rates for participant contact hours were not permitted within the call document and as such projects must complete what was outlined in the application and Action Plan. It was noted there is a degree of flexibility for participant contact hours within Council's Action Plan, and SEUPB advised that Council should manage the tolerances in line with the application and internal procedures.

A detailed process on project tolerances is currently being developed, and will be submitted for approval by the Board in early 2026.

Members are requested to note that, as an interim measure, the Programme Board agreed to delegate authority to the Good Relations Manager and Programme Manager to consider requests to realign targets and payment schedules and consider contact hour tolerances within 10% of the required hours. It should be noted tolerances to contact hours will not fall below the minimum contact hours of each project.

3.8 Assurance Audit

As previously reported, clarifications for the AGRS audit have been provided and the audit report including recommendations are due in November 2025. The audit report and recommendations will be reported through the PEACEPLUS Governance structure.

3.9 Staffing

Members are advised of resource pressures within the PEACEPLUS team, with three vacancies and an officer on long term sickness absence.

The Project Officer post was re-advertised on 6th November 2025, with interviews scheduled for 4/5 December 2025. Recruitment for a new Project Support Officer is progressing via the reserve list.

Recruitment for a Monitoring and Data Analyst was unsuccessful and a timeline for reissue of the post is being finalised.

3.10 Financial and Resource Implications

All expenditure associated with the PEACEPLUS Action Plan is reimbursed by SEUPB and is eligible from 1 January 2024. As previously reported referenced at 3.6 above, PEACEPLUS claimable expenditure to 30 September 2025 is approx. £1.44m.

3.11 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

The PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan has been screened for equality, good relations and rural needs assessment, and has been screened out.

The Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update

The Partnership considered the following report:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Shared City Partnership with a progress update on projects within the Thriving and Peaceful Communities (TPC) Theme of the PEACEPLUS Belfast Local Community Action Plan (LCAP).

2.0 Recommendations

Members are requested to note the contents of the report and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Project Delivery

An overview of project progress within the TPC theme is outlined below.

3.2 TPC 1 Community Empowerment – Lead Delivery Partner NICVA

Project Partners: Forward South Partnership (FSP), East Belfast Community Development Agency (EBCDA), West Belfast Partnership Board (WBPB), Falls Community Council (FCC), Greater Shankill Partnership (GSP) and Marrowbone Community Association (MCA).

Delivery of 4 sessions of the OCN Level 2 in Community Development progressed during October 2025 with 17 participants from 15 organisations. The sessions focused on community learning for social change and understanding and engaging communities. the OCN course will run until the end of November 2025 and is the first of six courses that will be delivered over the lifetime of the programme.

Local Community Empowerment Plans (LCEPs) have commenced in South Belfast with Stage 1 baselining for LCEP 08 (Balmoral/Botanic, led by FSP) and in for LCEP 09 (Lisnasharragh/Ormiston/Titanic, led by EBCDA).

Discussions on the composition and membership of the City-wide Capacity Building Forum are ongoing, and the Partnership will be updated with any recommendations arising. Members should note that a phased approach to recruitment to the Forum, aligned with recruitment to the LCEPs may be taken forward.

The first Citywide non accredited training session will focus on Facilitation Skills and is planned for December 2025.

NICVA has reported circa 100 wider participants completing target hours. Technical issues relating to NICVA's CRM have been ongoing since July, and some evidence of M&E data has been provided but it has required further cleansing to enable upload onto the BCC system, in line with Programme monitoring requirements. This data upload is due imminently.

3.3 TPC 2 Health & Wellbeing - Lead Delivery Partner Ashton

Project Partners: Shankill Partnership Board, East Belfast Community Development Agency, West Belfast Partnership Board, & North Belfast Community Partnership.

Members are advised that the two change control processes reported last month, (i) Additional Facilitators, and (ii) Membership of the Programme Oversight Group (POG), are

ongoing. The delivery partner noted that if approval was received in November 2025, then delivery would likely commence in January 2025.

Due to the delay in completion of Phase 1 and ongoing clarifications required in relation to an Additional Facilitators approval process, which are delaying the commencement of cohort delivery, a meeting was convened on 6 November 2025 to review project implementation with all key individuals involved with the project. A number of actions were agreed to help create a pathway to commencement of delivery.

A further meeting with the delivery partner on progress is being arranged.

TPC 3 Youth Empowerment, Inspiring Future Belfast

3.4 Lot 1: 9–12 year olds (Juniors) - Lead Delivery Partner Giga Training Project Partner BEAM Creative Network.

As reported in October 2025, 411 participants have completed the project. A key focus during this period has been the accuracy of all Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) and KPI data on the system. Giga has agreed to consider their approach to data gathering/entry to streamline this process moving forward. Giga have also agreed to ensure alignment of KPI's with project content delivery and the development of a young person friendly attitudinal survey is under considered. This is in response to some attitudinal survey questions responses not achieving the 70% baseline.

Giga and partner BEAM Creative have met to plan for project delivery in 2026.

The Phase 2a payment for achievement of deliverables has been processed. The project is progressing towards Phase 2b payment upon completion of all M&E alignment and analysis of KPI data.

3.5 Lot 2: 12–15 year olds (Intermediate) - Lead Delivery Partner Active Communities Network (ACN) Project Partners: Ledley Hall Boys & Girls Club, Lagmore Youth Project and Rosario Youth.

The realigned Phase 1 target of 70 participants have now completed Cohort 1 and attitudinal surveys with an average positive response of 86%.

Social action activity was delivered w/c 27 October 2025. Key themes were poverty, homelessness & period poverty, approximately 400 items were distributed to: Ballynafeigh Community Association, Welcome Centre, Women's Aid and Community Associations including Archway Youth Club,

Shaftesbury Community Hub, Cregagh Youth Centre and Holy Family Youth Club.

As recommended by the Programme Board, officers within Belfast Health Development Unit and the Policing & Community Safety Partnership were informed of the project, and leaflets provided by BHDU were included in the period poverty packs.

ACN and partners have been actively recruiting during this period focussing on schools delivery in North Belfast, with Rosario, Ledley Hall and Lagmore Youth having a youth and community focus in South, East and West Belfast. 60 young people from the youth and community sector and 50 young people from schools have signed up to the project, the participant registrations are to be uploaded to Council's M&E system.

Members are requested to note that ACN has submitted a proposal relating to the increase in costs for cross border residential activity and have proposed the delivery of a NI residential or a cross-border day trip with participants. The proposal is currently under review by Officers in compliance with Programme regulations.

The Board is requested to note there has been a staff restructure within ACN, with new staff members appointed to the management of Lot 2 and a new staff member appointed to the M&E admin post.

The realigned targets for Phase 2a have been achieved and been approved.

3.6 Lot 3: 16–18 year olds (Seniors) - Lead Delivery Partner Streetbeat Youth Project

Project Partner YEHA (Youth Educational Health Advice).

Participant numbers are varying, as a further 3 participants have disengaged due to school workload. As such, 42 young people are now registered and actively participating, with 23 young people having completed the required minimum 80 meaningful contact hours.

All participants have been progressing through the Diversity & Good Relations OCN which is due to complete before Christmas.

The international residential to Poland took place 10 November – 13 November 2025, with 26 young people and 4 staff members. The participants have now completed stage one of the project and are progressing with Stage 2, which includes the delivery of OCN Level 2 Diversity and Good Relations.

Delivery of activity is progressing towards Phase 2a and quarter 2 payment on completion of all M&E alignment.

3.7 Lot 4: 19-25 years olds (Young adults) – Lead Partner GEMS NI
Project Partners: Diverse Youth NI (DYNI), Training Network for Women (TWN).

Recruitment has been ongoing with 26 participants now signed up activity commenced on 6 November 2025. Participant registration data is to be uploaded to Council's M&E system.

TWN has now confirmed ILM modules for delivery to ensure the inclusion of the 25 year age group.

GEMS NI continue to develop links in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Basque region of Spain to explore the development of the international residential element of the programme.

The project launch event is planned for 27 November 2025 at 6:00pm in Training for Women Network's premises.

The Phase 1 contract initiation payment is now complete.

3.8 TPC 4 Sport for Peace - Lead Delivery Partner Active Communities Network

Project Partners: Sport Changes Life Foundation, PeacePlayers NI and Community Sports Network.

New participant groups for Pillar 1 coach education (16–18-year-olds) are progressing with 41 participants currently engaged from St Mary's Grammar School and Ulster University Belfast. Participant registration data is to be uploaded to Council's M&E system.

Participants have commenced the OCNNI qualification in Diversity at St Mary's, coaching and leadership training at UUB. First Aid training was delivered on 7 November 2025 for UUB participants.

A key focus for the coaches is to complete Pillar 1 pre baseline assessments for use in the Pillar 4 research element.

Pillar 2 sports sessions (11-16-year-olds) groups: 290 participants are currently engaged across 7 schools and 1 community project: Nettlefield PS (East), St Matthew's PS (East), Harding Memorial PS (East), St Anne's PS (East), Knockbreda School PS (East), Black Mountain School PS (West), St Joseph's School PS (West), Bridge n Divide Project (North)

Delivery of activities are centred on building confidence, leadership, and resilience through sport, delivered via both primary school and community-based sessions. The needs of the young people in these communities are high and opportunities to try new sports and activities is a key focus.

Members are requested to note that the payment schedule will likely require realignment to reflect the level of achievement for phase 2a. This is currently under review by Officers.

The Board is requested to note there has been a staff restructure within ACN, with new staff members appointed to the management of the Sport for Peace project and a new staff member has been appointed to the M&E admin post.

The project will progress towards Phase 2a and quarter 2 payment on completion of all M&E alignment.

3.9 TPC 5 Employability Language Up – Lead Delivery Partner People1st

Project Partners: Belfast City Mission, Conway Education, Donegall Pass, Fane Street Primary, Food Stock, Footprints, Holy Rosary Primary, Mears, Refuge Language, Russian Speaking Community, Street Soccer NI, The Suitcase Project, Wee Chicks, Windsor Women's Centre.

264 participants have been registered to date, which is 117% of the overall target for the end of the current reporting period. A total of 31 people has completed the required 36 hours across both strands of the project to date, with digital badges issued. Engagement is city-wide, with particularly strong participation in South Belfast and feedback from participants has been positive as evidenced by the post project surveys.

Four new cohorts commenced delivery, with Strand 1 (Vocational Language Courses) focusing on Construction, Health and Social Care, and Customer Service. New partnerships were also developed with Springvale Learning and Fane Street, which will enhance the referral and delivery network. A total of 56 new participants were registered across the cohorts.

In total, 4 participants achieved the required 36 hours across both strands, which is below the target, and follow-up actions are being implemented to identify barriers to completion and improve engagement and retention.

Strand 2 activities have included group discussions, employability workshops, air fryer courses, a walk around Queens University and practical integration sessions designed to build confidence and communication.

As reported last month, a change request was due to be submitted to reflect the realignment of targets, to help rectify a current and projected shortfall in achieved participant targets. This change request has now been received and is under review. The Programme Board and Partnership will be notified of the outcome.

No new cohorts are due to commence in November 2025 as the delivery partner is putting all efforts into the current cohorts

completing the required 36 hours across both strands. Attendance challenges are being managed proactively through learner follow-up and scheduling of adjustments.

3.10 TPC 6 Arts Across the Genres – Delivery Partner Maywe
Project Partners: BEAM Creative Network

Project activity now progressing with 96 participants registered and logged to the project database, with 81 actively participating.

Project 1: Polyphonic

39 participants are now recruited of whom 27 are actively participating, and capacity building sessions have continued with 7 sessions delivered for area groups. Capacity building sessions have focused on Making Music and Art with Meaning, Using Creativity to Deal with Social Issues, Unlocking Confidence through Creativity and Bringing Your Ideas to Life.

Recruitment is continuing with a focus on West Belfast community groups following dropout of West area participants.

Additional sessions have been scheduled for January 2026 to provide additional hours if a further intake is needed post-Christmas.

The co-design and launch event took place on 6 November 2025 where participants will begin to co-design and event-plan for their joint artworks and showcase.

Project 2: Creative Exchange

38 participants are recruited, and actively participating and creative arts and wellbeing are progressing. North, East and West participants are all confirmed, and capacity building sessions have started in East and West, with North sessions commencing on 6 November 2025. Work is ongoing to confirm the South Group, and sessions will begin in Mid-November 2025 until January 2026. Capacity building sessions focus on Who We Are, Colour and Celebration, Nature and Calm, Symbols and Stories, Patterns and Connections and Expression and Celebration.

Project 5: Media Production

The project is fully recruited with 19 participants recruited of whom 16 are actively participating. Capacity Building sessions have been completed, and skills sessions continue in November 2025.

Participants continue to attend and capture imagery and video of Project 1 and 2 sessions for the documentary film and content for socials and newsletter.

3.11 TPC Thematic Steering Group

The quarterly TPC Thematic Steering Group took place on 5 November 2025 in NICVA's Offices. Seven delivery partners were represented at the meeting, with two apologies.

A Theme update was provided, it was highlighted 5 of the 9 projects have inputted data to the M&E system. Some partners outlined they were having difficulty using the system, however, were being supported by the PEACEPLUS team to address these, and other projects are in the recruitment phase.

Opportunities for collaboration were identified between delivery partners; it was agreed that project related activity will be circulated through the TSG distribution list as members agreed to share contact details.

An issues log developed following the last TSG meeting, was reviewed and members agreed with the actions assigned to each issue. It was agreed that two issues: community background target achievement and participant retention across strands were closed as they are included in the TSG risk register. Please see Appendix 1 for TSG Issues Log

All thematic risks are reading as fair or good and no issues were identified for escalation to the Programme Board.

The next meeting is taking place on 4 February 2025 and Ashton Community Trust has agreed to host the meeting.

3.12 Financial and Resource Implications

All expenditure associated with the PEACEPLUS Action Plan is eligible from 1 January 2024.

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

The PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan has been screened for equality, good relations and rural needs assessment, and has been screened out.

At the request of the Chairperson, it was agreed that an e-mail would be circulated to the Partnership to provide clarity on the cross-community background targets in respect of the delivery partners.

The Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update

The Partnership considered the following report:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Shared City Partnership with a progress update on projects within the Celebrating Cultures and Diversity (CCD) Theme of the PEACEPLUS Belfast Local Community Action Plan (LCAP).

2.0 Recommendations

Members are requested to note the contents of the report and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Project Delivery

Projects are at various stages of implementation and an overview of project progress is outlined below.

3.2 CCD1 – Interfaith and Belief Lead Delivery Partner: Corrymeela Community Consortium Partners: Redeeming Our Communities, Belfast Islamic Centre, NI Inter-Faith Forum

Corrymeela continue to develop and strengthen relationships with key faith representatives across Belfast attending meetings with key individuals/organisations and mosques and synagogues.

Recruitment is ongoing across the three key streams. Three online information sessions have been delivered with 60+ individuals expressing an interest. 36 participants are now registered from across the city, north, south, east and west, and from a variety of religions including Buddhist, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Baha’i, Quaker, Protestant and Sikh.

Four co-design sessions are planned for across the 3 streams.

Stream 1: The Reference Team is developed with members from a variety of religions, including Protestant & Interfaith, Muslim, Jewish, Roman Catholic, Hindu and Humanist, to provide expertise on the development of the youth education resources to be delivered to young people in schools and youth settings.

Stream 2: The three Capacity Building sessions are now complete
Stream 3: The Interfaith Walking City Pilot Tour will take place on 9 November 2025.

Members are advised that delivery is behind schedule by approximately 4 months, due to the recruitment of a project

manager and the challenging external factors within this sector. Officers are working closely with the Delivery Partner, through the monthly contract meeting and supplementary meetings on the realignment of Phase 2a and Phase 2b.

3.3 CCD2 – Community Connections Lead Delivery Partner: GEMS NI

Consortium Partners: Business in the Community, Belfast City of Sanctuary, Diverse Youth NI, Migrant Centre NI, Ballynafeigh Community Development Association

As reported in October 2025, work is ongoing with council officers and the delivery partner to confirm Welcome Hub locations within 3 council community spaces. Following agreement in principle to Morton CC as the pilot location, it is anticipated that a full report with all 3 locations confirmed will be provided in December 2025.

Onboarding activities are ongoing for Cohort 1 (Leadership & Mentoring) and Cohort 2 (Facilitators). 28 Eol's were received for Cohort 1 and 20 Eol's for Cohort 2.

Participant activity for Cohort 1 commenced on 7 November 2025, and participant data is to be uploaded w.

Strand 3 recruitment is due to commenced w/c 16th November 2025 and welcome hub recruitment to commence by end of November 2025.

**3.4 CCD 3 – LGBTQIA+ Community Engagement Project - Lead Delivery Partner: The Rainbow Project
Project Partners: Cara Friend, HERe NI**

Members are requested to note that rebranding of the project, Out Connections Belfast, has been approved.

A strategic planning partner, Collaboration Ireland, has been appointed to progress the Strand 2 Strategic Planning element of the project. The launch conference, originally scheduled for 14 November 2025 has been postponed and will now take place in January 2026.

Other activity being progressed includes research scoping, development of comms strategy, and initial scoping for design phase of research strand.

Members are requested to note that two issues were highlighted that require urgent change requests, as follows:

1- Strand 1 & 2 Steering Group & Strategic Planning Membership

To widen the membership of the Project Steering Group and Strategic Planning activity, to increase diversity and representation of the sector by allowing service users to

participate in these activities. There is no impact to the target of 25 participants across the 2 strands.

2- **Realigned Implementation Plan/Gantt Chart and Payment Schedule.**

- To realign some activity targets for Strand 2 (strategic planning), Strand 5 (research) and Strand 7 (conferences) due to delays in staff recruitment. There is no impact to deliverables, or the project completion date.

The Partnership is requested to note that the Programme Board delegated authority for the Good Relations Manager and PEACEPLUS Programme Manager, to consider and approve the change request, subject to meeting compliance requirements, with further detail and the outcome reported to the Programme Board and the Shared City Partnership.

3.5 **CCD4 – Community Empowerment Ex Politically Motivated Prisoners**

Lead Delivery Partner: Coiste na nIarchimí Project Partners: Tar Anall, Action for Community Transformation, Charter NI, and Tar Isteach

The Contract Initiation meeting has taken place, and Initiation actions and start-up detail are to be progressed during the first monthly management meeting, which is scheduled for 17 November 2025.

3.6 **CCD5 From Multiculturalism to Interculturalism**

Lot 1 – Language and Cultural Access

The tender was re-released on 24 October 2025 and was due close on 24 November 2025. The Partnership is requested to note that the closing date has been extended to 8 December 2025 to maximise response opportunities.

3.7 **Lot 2 – Cultural Spaces (Come On Over) Lead Delivery Partner: MayWe**

The project's initiation phase is progressing towards completion. Branding for the project has been approved as Come On Over - Bringing People and Places Together Through Culture.

Members are advised that some cultural spaces have withdrawn, and participation of new venues is now confirmed (in bold) as below.

Originally in bid:	Now confirmed:
The MAC	The MAC
Banana Block	Banana Block
Belfast Intercultural Romanian Community	Belfast Intercultural Romanian Community
An Droichead	An Droichead

Lyric	Eastside Visitor Centre
ASCONI	St Comgall's
	Discover Ulster-Scots Centre
	An Chultúrlann

Officers have considered the cultural spaces and can advise that the venues meet the tender requirements and criteria for participation.

A further 4 venues are to be recruited to reach 12 cultural spaces' target however the activity can commence with a minimum of 6, as specified in the tender. Staff/volunteers from each of these have been confirmed as recruited onto the project steering group and these cultural spaces will also form the basis for the steering group capacity building programme and capacity building for grassroots groups linked to the cultural spaces. The first steering group meeting is scheduled for 20 November 2025.

Project planning documents are being finalised as part of the Phase 1 milestones.

3.8 Lot 3 – Festivals and Flagship Events Lead Delivery Partner: Féile an Phobail

The Councils' M&E data shows 11 participants recruited of whom 4 actively participating.

The Mentoring Programme commenced on 22 October 2025 with an induction event. The first capacity building session for mentors from the festivals sector took place on 6 November 2025 and focussed on Challenges and Opportunities of social media, Digital Marketing Strategy and Cyber Security. The next session will focus on leadership. A next Flagship Steering Group meeting is planned for 25 November 2025.

The delivery partner has advised that needs analysis for the mentor/ mentee element highlighted that OCN accreditation is not required for some participants. Initial discussions indicate that participants achieving OCN accreditation will reduce from 84 to 66 across the Festivals and Flagship Events project. Further information is being sought from the delivery partner.

Members are requested to note that the Programme Board agreed to delegate authority to the Good Relations Manager and Peace Programmes Manager to consider and agree the request with a further report and outcome to the Programme Board and the Shared City Partnership.

The Board is advised that the Flagship Steering Group has identified the 6 events for inclusion in the Flagship Event Small co-designed animation activity, which are currently being considered by Officers.

A press launch and media release for the Mentoring Programme, Flagship strand, and Capacity Building Programme is being planned for late November 2025.

The project implementation plan/ payment schedule is being finalised which will complete Phase 1 Contract Initiation and Planning documentation.

3.9 Lot 4 – Culture and Shared Built Heritage - Lead Delivery Partner:
Arts Ekta
Project Partners: Cairde na Cille, Kabosh Theatre

Delivery of the OCN Level 2 Tour Guiding classroom-based lessons continues in Belfast Met. For the Civic Voices Theatre Programme, the first workshop programme (North Belfast cohort) has been completed, and its performance took place 30th October at Duncairn Arts Centre. As part of the Burial Traditions Programme, workshops and animation events were delivered at Shankill Graveyard and Giant's Ring.

Planning and concept development for the Faith-based Trail Programme also took place with activity due to commence in November 2025. Planning has commenced for Phase 2 concept plans for Events, Tours & Burial Traditions Programme.

3.10 CCD Thematic Steering Group

The quarterly CCD Thematic Steering Group took place on 4th November 2025 in GEMS NI Offices.

All seven delivery partners within this theme were represented. Opportunities for collaboration were identified and a process is being developed for communicating project related activity, such as launch events, conferences, and opportunities for participants progression from one project to another, throughout the groups within the thematic area.

It was also identified that each organisation has services, over and above PEACEPLUS activity, that other groups could potentially use within their projects, such as provision of tours, museums, facilitation. A directory will be developed outlining services and products available to procure from each organisation.

All thematic risks are reading as fair or good and two issues were raised for escalation as follows:

Issue 1: M&A supporting evidence requirements.

Clarification is requested on what supporting evidence should be required for M&A quarterly payment approval. A delivery partner raised concerns that Phased Payment evidence was being aligned to these payments and was holding up payments relied on for salaries.

The Programme Manager is liaising with the Project Managers to ensure consistency and clarity on requirements, and this can be communicated to delivery partners.

Issue 2: Community background terminology

Concerns that 'catholic, protestant, other' does not truly reflect the nature of community background of many individuals within communities.

Clarification was provided at the meeting that terminology was based on the 2021 Census and SEUPB terminology and are required by the funder, as part of the Letter of Offer. It is proposed that guidance is issued to delivery partners to provide clarity for participants on the terminology, with a recommendation that completion of the questions is facilitated to address concerns and ensure the maximum completion rate.

Please see Appendix 1 for CCD TSG Issues Log.

The next meeting is taking place on Tuesday 4th February 2025 and MayWe have agreed to host the meeting in 2 Royal Avenue.

3.11 Financial and Resource Implications

All expenditure associated with the PEACEPLUS Action Plan is eligible from 1 January 2024.

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

The PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan has been screened for equality, good relations and rural needs assessment, and has been screened out.

The Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

Community Regeneration and Transformation Thematic Update

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Shared City Partnership with an update on delivery of the Community Regeneration and Transformation Theme of the PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan (LCAP).

2.0 Recommendations

Members are requested to note the contents of the report and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also note the contents of the report.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Capital Update – Design

As previously reported, design teams have been appointed for all 5 CRT projects and meetings with Design teams and each project Steering Groups and stakeholders have now taken place.

3.2 Design teams have provided delivery programmes and timelines for each project outlining key steps, such as. planning, tender preparation, contractor procurement, construction. Property & Projects are reviewing the timelines to provide as realistic timeframes as possible. This will enable the finalising of Animation tender documentation aligned with best estimates of capital timelines.

Members are advised that processes are being developed to manage Compensation Events (CEs). SEUPB has advised that in the interim, any CE's are to be submitted to the JS Case Officer for approval.

A request for additional works in the form of surveys which sit outside of PEACEPLUS scope has been raised through the Council's Finance Working Group/Oversight to ensure there is a financial allocation in place for these works, possible CEs, and/or ineligible spend. This arrange is similar to those agreed for PEACE IV projects including Forth Meadow Community Greenway, Shankill Women's Centre and Black Mountain Shared Space.

3.3 Procurement Update - Animation

Project Managers are progressing tender specification and ITT documentation for each procurement.

Property & Projects and the respective Design Teams have provided an update on expected timeframes for delivery, so this will enable the detail in the animation programme to be finalised and procurement to progress. The Board should note that there may be some slippage from the timelines provided in October's report due to these refreshed best estimates for the capital timelines.

3.4 Governance update

The first meeting of the Capital Project Board took place on 30 October 2025, key points for discussion included governance, terms of reference and membership.

Members are requested to note the key actions that are being progressed, as follows:

- correspondence should be issued to SEUPB (from Director of Neighbourhood Services) regarding representation of SEUPB and CPD on the Capital Project Board.
- the governance model should be reviewed and representation to include relevant CNS officers, and that the approval process is clearly outlined.
- Lines to take should be developed for each project.
- Site visit for the Board should be arranged.

External Project Steering Groups for each project have been established and continue to meet regularly with PMU and PEACEPLUS Officers in attendance.

Capital and Animation updates

3.5 CRT1: LGBTQIA+ Hub

As previously reported the Mechanical & Engineering Assessments are underway.

Members should note the interdependency of the 2RA ground floor is a key factor in progressing the project, and to date there is no confirmation on plans for the 2RA ground floor. The next steering group meeting is scheduled for 13th November 2025.

Discussions are ongoing regarding legal agreements to ensure delivery of the animation activity through enhanced service provision.

3.6 CRT2: Annadale:

An internal meeting of the Annadale Steering Group took place on 15 October 2025 to discuss project timelines and introduce the Design Team. Discussions included the funding required for the 3G pitch (which is not within the PEACEPLUS funding allocation). Members are requested to note that the pitch will be included in the design masterplan for readiness should funding becoming available.

It was agreed that the scope of the PEACEPLUS project and planning approach was clearly outlined at the Stakeholder Meeting on 17 November 2025. It was also outlined that the site

will be a Council asset subject to booking in line with Council policy was highlighted.

Procurement for preliminary activity (event management training) will be progressed over the coming months for a supplier to be in place to begin delivery in February 2026.

The design and construction timeframes will inform the timeline and delivery of the animation programme and enable procurement to progress.

The next Steering Group meeting is scheduled for 10 December 2025.

3.7 CRT3: Distillery Street:

Discussions continue regarding maintenance responsibilities relating to land ownership on the development site.

The issue of the animation tender, due 31 October 2025, has been delayed ensuring alignment with the design team and construction timelines, which are critical. The Board should note that procurement for animation will be progressed w/c 5 January 2026 with delivery commencing in May 2026.

3.8 CRT4: Access to the Hills:

Discussions and scoping of the routes are ongoing and the possibility of a phased approach is being considered, similar to Forth Meadow Community Greenway.

It is anticipated that procurement for animation activity will be progressed over the coming months. As noted above, updated timeframes for design and construction will inform the procurement approach for the animation programme. The next steering group meeting is scheduled for 26 November 2025.

3.9 CRT5: Sanctuary Theatre

As previously reported, no planning is required for the Sanctuary Theatre capital works.

SEUPB have approved an amendment to correct a typographical error within the minimum contact hours (3 hours) for CRT5 Sanctuary Theatre animation activity.

The updated design and construction timeframes will enable procurement for the animation activity to be finalised and progress by end of November 2025.

3.10 Forth Meadow Community Greenway Signage Update

Members are reminded that installation of signage along Forth Meadow Community Greenway is progressing.

Beacons will be installed January/February 2026 across the Greenway. Interpretative and wayfinding signage is currently out to tender, and it is envisaged that a new signage contractor will be appointed by December 2025.

Members are requested to note that wording for the final panel to be installed outside the new Transport Hub, Grand Central Station, is outlined in Appendix I. The panel wording outlines key locations along the Greenway and will include a map of the Greenway route. The wording has been agreed by Corporate Communications and SEUPB.

Members should also note minor modifications to the titles of two previous agreed narratives as follows:

- 1 - 'Gunning for Victory' to 'Sporting Heroes Victory'
- 2 - 'Bullets to Church Bulletins' to 'Ballygomartin Bulletins'

The content of the narrative remains as agreed, and the title changes better reflect the content and locations.

3.11 Financial and Resource Implications

All expenditure associated with the PEACEPLUS Action Plan is eligible from 1 January 2024.

3.12 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

The PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan has been screened for equality, good relations and rural needs assessment, and has been screened out.

The Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

Any Other Business

The Good Relations Manager advised the Partnership that the new Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise Panel had met, and it had agreed to allocate two representatives to the Shared City Partnership, as part of its Community Planning role. The officer reported that Ms. Irene Sherry representing the Ashton Community Trust and JP Sukumaran representing Karma Kalakendram (city-wide) would be invited to all future meetings, if the Partnership agreed the appointments.

The Good Relations Manager advised that, as reported last month, the Social Change Initiative (SCI) was undertaking a pilot programme focusing on building the capacity and

competence of women in the Unionist Community and the organisation had expressed an interest in working with the Council to progress the initiative.

The officer advised that a proposal, valued at just over £7000, had now been received from the SCI which was focused on supporting community activists working in South Belfast. He detailed SCI had been supporting work with community activists working in South Belfast (Donegall Road/Sandy Row/Donegall Pass/Annadale areas) through a partnership with the Forward South Community Partnership. The work was focused on current challenges and opportunities around community cohesion, working through women activists and local stakeholders.

The Good Relations Manager advised that the budget for this was available within the current Good Relations Action Plan.

The proposal was to hold a residential for some 15 women community activists in February 2026 to focus on the following issues:

- to support and develop the needs of women community activists from these areas;
- to identify priority issues that are of concern at local community level both in relation to community needs and future community cohesion; and
- Agree action points that will offer a programme of support and development for local activists to take account of the current needs and changing demographics of the local areas.

The Partnership agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that:

- Ms. I. Sherry and Mr. JP Sukumaran be appointed as external Members to the Shared City Partnership; and
- funding of £7000.00 be granted to the Social Change Initiative to run a residential for women, which would be funded from the current Good Relations Action Plan budget.

Date of Next Meeting

The Partnership was reminded that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Monday, 12th January, 2026.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the next meeting of the Partnership would be held at Girdwood and that this would be an in-person meeting only, with lunch provided. The meeting of the Shared City Partnership would take place at 1.30 p.m. and this would be immediately followed by a workshop for Members of the Partnership which would run until 4.30 p.m. to enable the Members to consider the new Good Relations Strategy, Audit and Action Plan.

Chairperson

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Reconnected Belfast

Shared City Partnership

1 December 2025



Belfast
City Council



PEACEPLUS
Northern Ireland - Ireland

Co-funded by the



European Union



UK Government



Northern Ireland
Executive

Project Background

Reservoir Safety Programme



- Council's statutory requirement to maintain the reservoirs
- £1.6m committed from council's capital programme

Reconnected Belfast

- Submission of PEACEPLUS bid in September 2023
- Investment Area 1.4: Re-imaging Communities which seeks to 'create a more cohesive society through an increased provision of shared spaces and services, which will benefit and embed peace and reconciliation.'
- Secured €13.5m for capital works and animation of Waterworks and Alexandra Park
- 7,080 participants from different communities engaged jointly within new shared spaces



Engagement

- Visioning and engagement exercise (Summer 2023)
 - Workshops and interviews with key stakeholders
 - 3.99k visits to Your Say Belfast Page
 - Over 1,200 responses to the survey
- Pre-planning consultation (Jan-March 2024)
 - 4 public sessions in range of venues
 - 3 tailored sessions (access, youth, women and girls)
 - 2.48k visits to Your Say Belfast Page
 - Over 280 responses to the survey
- Continued engagement and Design Information Sessions (Spring 2025)
 - 5 public sessions in range of venues



Belfast
City Council



Vision

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Alexandra Park and Waterworks Park will build on their unique natural and cultural significance to be cohesive places where biodiversity thrives, people from all communities are supported and prosper through leisure and recreational activities, and the parks become exemplar city green spaces for Belfast and Northern Ireland.



Belfast
City Council



Guiding Principles

1. Cohesive connection (celebrating USPs)
2. Active use of Open Space for Recreation & Play
3. Inclusive, Shared and Safe Space
4. Biodiversity and Climate Change
5. Animation of the parks / community engagement
6. Exemplar Approach and Delivery
7. Destination parks



Masterplan & concept designs



Belfast
City Council





Reconnecting Waterworks and Alexandra Park

- Proposed improvements to current facilities
- New features proposed
- Enhanced entrance to include new/upgraded railings, gates, street furniture and signage
- Secondary entrance upgrade
- New or reopened entrance
- New lighting
- Cycle stand

Westland Community Centre to be developed separately under Urban Villages Initiative

New pathway

Path realignment and new footbridge

Dog park with agility equipment
Timber D rail fence with hedge planting

Species rich grassland with mowed paths throughout

Accessible decking/viewing area with proposed amenity grass and tree planting

3m wide asphalt footpath

Proposed eco-trail within existing woodland - 1.5m impacted gravel path with tree protection system. Alignment to be agreed.

Replacement platforms

Wall to incorporate public art

Proposed floating ecosystems

Existing walls of tree pits to be re-rendered and seated top

Existing steps to be removed and planted with grass to tie in with existing embankment

New seating wall to replace existing wall

Decking area/ events space

Wetland planting with compacted gravel paths

3m wide exposed aggregate path

River channel to be restored

Minimal vegetation clearance

New 3x3 basketball court

Accessible ramp incorporated in steps

New building including community space, toilets and Changing Places facility

Picnic area with canopy

Upgraded play park

Existing building to be refurbished and extended

Existing pitch replaced with new 3g surface

Road resurfaced including pedestrian crossing
(subject to DfI approval)

New box culvert

Footpath resurfaced

Upgraded playpark with 1.2m bow top railing

Event space with reinforced grass and pop up power units

New building with toilet and changing places

Footpaths to be resurfaced

Realigned footpath

Vegetation cleared
Existing bridge to be replaced

Section of Peace wall to be replaced with sculptural corten steel fence
Gates to be integrated within structure

Pitch relocated and extended with new cover installation

Play park upgrade

Proposed play sculpture with fencing and picnic area

Refurbishment of existing weir and dam embankment

Reopened pathway

Viewing space with seating

Existing bridge to be replaced

Programming

- Capacity Building and Leadership Programme
- How to Manage and Implement Events Training Programme
- Events Programme
- Sports Facilities Games Programme
- Schools Programmes
- Biodiversity Education Programmes
- Cultural Learning Programmes
- Health and Wellbeing Programmes



Belfast
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Interface Barrier



Interface Barrier



Belfast
City Council

Current status

- Planning application process ongoing
- Stage 4 Design appointed
- Ongoing engagement
 - City & Neighbourhood Services
 - Waterworks and Alexandra Park stakeholder group
 - Queens University Belfast Centre for Public Health and Planning
 - DoJ

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Timescales

Milestone	Dates
Detailed design	December 2025
Planning approval	Spring 2025
Works commence	Summer 2026
Works complete	Summer 2027
Animation	Summer 2027 - 2029

Community Recovery Fund – Open Call	Project Description
ACSONI Amount Awarded: £17,900	ACSONI are now no longer in a position to fulfil this training. Council officers are in the process of reclaiming the first payment.
Annadale Community Centre Amount Awarded: £18,400 Potential Completion Date: 31 August 2025	<p>The project responds to increased hate speech and division following the 2024 public disorder in South Belfast. It aims to rebuild social trust and cohesion through inclusive community engagement.</p> <p>A part-time Community Engagement Officer has been hired to lead outreach and programme delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities include leadership training, volunteer management, and inclusive programme design due to commence in January 2026. Media literacy workshops will target misinformation about migrants and refugees for both youth and adults. ACC are currently securing a facilitator to deliver this training. <p>The initiative fosters mutual understanding between host and migrant communities through shared activities. The goal is to create a safer, more inclusive community where diversity is embraced and respected.</p>
Voicing the Void Amount Awarded: £19,600 Potential Completion Date: 31 August 2025	<p>The project addresses the aftermath of 2024's public disorder in Belfast, focusing on hate crime, racism, and community division.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It uses trauma-informed restorative storytelling to foster empathy, inclusion, and healing across newcomer and host communities. Four 10-week storytelling courses will engage 36–40 participants, including refugees, asylum seekers, and local residents. The first two of these courses have been completed. Participants will earn accredited OCN qualifications and develop leadership, advocacy, and public speaking skills.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities include storytelling workshops, resilience training, creative media production, and public events. • Outreach will be delivered through school sessions, community events, and digital campaigns. • The project is co-designed with partners like PBNI, ArtsEkta, Queen's University, and the PSNI. <p>It promotes integration by empowering marginalised voices and challenging harmful narratives. Public events and media outputs will raise awareness and promote upstanding behaviour against hate.</p>
Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum Amount Awarded: £11,900 Potential Completion Date: 31 August 2025	<p>The project addresses the needs of minority ethnic residents in North Belfast, particularly in Cliftonville and Lower Oldpark, following the 2024 public disorder.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It aims to reduce hate crime, build trust with statutory services, and promote integration through structured engagement. • Key issues identified include barriers to accessing services, low trust in authorities, and widespread misinformation about Muslim communities. • The programme includes thematic workshops on housing, benefits, education, healthcare, and hate crime reporting, with interpreters and direct agency engagement. • History and myth-busting sessions will challenge stereotypes and foster cross-community understanding. • Accredited hate crime and hate speech training will be delivered to residents and service providers, empowering them as peer leaders. • Visual signposting materials in multiple languages will be co-produced and distributed to improve access to key services. • The project is delivered in partnership with the Northern Ireland Muslim Culture Association (NIMCA), ensuring grassroots involvement. • Activities will be hosted at Cliftonville Community Centre and Girdwood, with a focus on dialogue, inclusion, and cultural awareness.

<p>Upper Andersonstown Community Forum Amount Awarded: £7,150 Potential Completion Date: 31 August 2025</p>	<p>The project responds to increased hate crime and racial tension in Belfast, particularly targeting the Syrian Muslim community but not (exclusively) after the 2024 public disorder.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a partnership with “Happy Life Together N.I.” (HLTNI), a Syrian family support group, to promote integration, safety, and cultural understanding. • The project will provide HLTNI with office space and access to meeting rooms for 9 months at Tullymore Community Centre. • Activities include cultural awareness workshops, Syrian cooking sessions, and discussions on hate crime legislation and Section 75. • A Level 1 OCN-accredited Community Safety Awareness course will be delivered to 10 participants, enhancing their confidence in engaging with statutory services. • Youth and community groups will participate in joint workshops to build relationships and understanding with the Syrian community. • Evaluation will be conducted through surveys and feedback, with political representatives invited to key events to reinforce community support.
<p>Dreamscheme NI Amount Awarded: £8,160 Potential Completion Date: 31 August 2025</p>	<p>The project targets young people in South Belfast, especially those from Belvoir and Milltown estates, affected by the 2024 public disorder and exhibiting racist attitudes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It partners with Breda Academy, a diverse school with over 40 nationalities, to support newcomer pupils and foster inclusion. • Activities include one-to-one mentoring, small group workshops, and after-school youth cafés to build empathy and challenge prejudice. • The programme addresses social exclusion, bullying, and emotional distress among migrant-background students. • It promotes integration between Protestant/Loyalist youth and newcomers through relationship-based interventions. • Youth leadership is developed through training in communication and project delivery, empowering participants to co-lead sessions. • The project is co-designed with school staff and young people, ensuring responsiveness to real needs and experiences.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships with community safety officers and youth services ensure alignment with broader anti-hate crime efforts. • The initiative aims to reduce future disorder, rebuild social trust, and create a more inclusive, resilient school and community environment.
NI Food to Go Amount Awarded: £16,400 Potential Completion Date: 31 August 2025	<p>The project responds to hate crimes targeting migrant-owned food businesses in South Belfast during August 2024, aiming to rebuild trust and cohesion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will deliver nine multicultural food and cultural events across Belfast over nine months, starting January 2026. • Events will showcase cuisines, music, and traditions from newcomer communities alongside local Belfast culture. • The programme is coordinated by the NI Food to Go Association, representing 1,200 food businesses, one-third of which are ethnic minority-owned. • Events will be held in both affected areas and neutral city centre venues to promote inclusivity and safety including St George's market. • The project includes skills development and entrepreneurship support for migrant food businesses, in partnership with Belfast Met and the Council's Enterprise Team. • Activities will feature cookery demos, taster sessions, workshops, and cultural performances linked to Belfast's UNESCO City of Music status. • Communications will be multilingual and community-driven to ensure broad engagement and accessibility.
West Belfast Partnership Board Amount Awarded: £16,000 Potential Completion Date: 31 August 2025	<p>The project addresses rising racial tensions and hate crimes in West Belfast, particularly affecting newcomer and asylum-seeking families.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It aims to build integration and social cohesion between newcomer and host communities through community-led initiatives. • Activities include co-designed training programmes, a "Community Neighbourhood Guide," and a "Good Neighbour Agreement" tailored to five Neighbourhood Renewal Areas.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project will engage 50 participants (10 per area) from both minority ethnic and local communities, including youth and emerging leaders.
Northern Ireland Somali Association Amount Awarded: £11,385 Completion Date: 31 August 2025	<p>The project supports refugees and asylum seekers, mainly from Somalia but also from Sudan, Eritrea, Syria, and other communities in Belfast.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It responds to the fear and disruption caused by the 2024 race-related violence, which led to the suspension of community services and increased anxiety. The initiative includes 10 workshops covering racism awareness, supporting children, online safety, legal rights, and bystander intervention. A final cultural community event will bring together migrant and local residents to promote understanding through food and storytelling. Workshops will be delivered in English, Somali, and Arabic to ensure accessibility and cultural relevance. <p>The project is community-led and co-designed with members who have lived experience, ensuring it meets real needs. It aims to empower individuals with practical tools to respond to racism, report hate crimes, and support others. The programme strengthens intergenerational support by working with both parents and young people.</p>
Market Development Association Amount Awarded: £16,000 Completion Date: 31 August 2025	<p>The project addresses racial tensions and lack of integration in the Market area of Belfast, where diverse communities live side by side but with limited interaction. It aims to reduce hate crime and promote social cohesion through two strands: a local multicultural programme and a citywide partnership training initiative.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strand 1 includes a 6-week multicultural cooking course where participants share traditional meals, fostering dialogue and cultural exchange. This strand also includes anti-racism and political economy training, encouraging participants to explore racism at personal, cultural, and structural levels.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strand 2 involves seven partner organisations from across Belfast in an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) course. • The ABCD approach focuses on community strengths and assets, empowering residents to lead inclusive development and challenge discriminatory narratives. • The project is supported by the Belfast Community Research & Innovation Network (BCRIN), which includes partners from diverse neighbourhoods and Queen's University. The 7 partners have undertaken this training with positive outcomes reported as a result.
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Rosario Youth Club Amount Awarded: £17,268.44 Completion Date: 31 August 2025	<p>The project targets young people aged 14–17 in the Ballynafeigh/Ormeau area, which has a high number of newcomer and minority ethnic residents affected by racism and hate crime. It aims to reduce future disorder and rebuild social trust through a shared programme of youth work activities focused on inclusion and good relations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered in partnership with St Malachy's Youth Centre, the programme will engage 24 young people identified as vulnerable to exploitation and involvement in unrest. • Activities include groupwork sessions, cultural celebration events, art creation, pro-social outings, and a residential experience. • Young participants will become community inclusion ambassadors and co-create a community inclusion charter to promote long-term cohesion. • The programme will explore the causes, impact, and consequences of hate crime, racism, and discrimination through structured workshops. • It promotes empathy, critical thinking, and experiential learning to challenge misinformation and encourage understanding across cultures. • Monthly cultural events and art sessions will celebrate diversity and foster positive relationships within the community. • The project includes training in leadership, advocacy, and teamwork, empowering young people to influence peers and contribute to policy.
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<p>Féile an Phobail Amount Awarded: £18,500 Completion Date: 31 August 2025</p>	<p>The project responds to the 2024 public disorder in Belfast by addressing its root causes—social division, racism, and community disconnection—through inclusive, community-led programming. It aims to rebuild trust and cohesion by engaging children, youth, and the wider community across political, cultural, and religious backgrounds in arts, cultural, sporting, and educational activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key components include community connection workshops, anti-racism education campaigns, storytelling and cultural events, and youth exchange programmes to foster empathy and understanding. • A Diversity Ambassadors Programme will train and mentor young people, especially from minority ethnic backgrounds, to become community leaders and role models. • The project includes cultural orientation workshops, mentorship schemes, and collaborative community projects like public art and gardens to promote integration and shared achievement. • It uses innovative methods such as dialogue circles, youth-led debates, and community mapping to explore and challenge hate speech, stereotypes, and misinformation. • Activities are designed to be inclusive and accessible, with continuous feedback and adaptation to ensure relevance and impact across diverse communities.
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Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum Thursday 11th December 2025

Attendance

Members:

Councillor Michael Long
Councillor Sarah Bunting
Councillor Brian Smyth
Councillor Ciaran Beattie
Councillor Séamas de Faoite

Apologies: Councillor Natasha Brennan, Alderman Sonia Copeland

Officers:

John Walsh, Chief Executive
Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Strategic Director of Corporate Services
Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance
Nora Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Damien Martin, Strategic Director of Place & Economy
David Sales, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services
Sinead Grimes, Director of Property and Projects
Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration & Development
Jim Girvan Director of Neighbourhood Services (for Items 1,2 & 8)
Pól Hamilton, Lead Officer, Community Provision (for Items 1 & 2)
Joanne Delaney, Portfolio and Programme Coordinator (secretariat)

1. Summer Community Diversionary Programme - Dr Jonny Byrne

The Chief Executive welcomed Dr Jonny Byrne who presented an update on the Summer Community Diversionary Programme along with the emerging findings from the review of the programme in 2025. Members discussed the key principles of the programme, the criteria against which applications would be assessed and the funding model options for the programme for 2026. There was detailed discussion in relation to the options presented and the challenges faced this year and the need to consider some flexibility within the programme for future years. It was also agreed that engagement was needed with communities in some parts of the city in advance of the application process opening. Officers to further consider the points raised and the feedback provided by Members in advance of a report being brought back for consideration in January.

2. Bonfire Update - Dr Jonny Byrne

Dr Jonny Byrne also presented an update on the the Bonfire programme and outlined the proposed governance arrangements going forward and outlined the proposed timeline for engagement with the relevant stakeholders. It is anticipated that a Memorandum of

Understanding would then be drawn up between the partners. An update will be brought back to the forum as this work progresses.

3. Finance Update

The Director of Finance provided an update on the setting of the district rate for 2026/27. He advised that Director challenge meetings in relation to the draft departmental estimates, growth proposals and efficiencies had now concluded. Members were advised at a high level of the growth proposals, the efficiency proposals emerging from the recent Efficiency and Transformation workshop and the Capital Financing position.

The Director also advised that the first draft Estimated Penny Product (EPP) had been notified to Councils and he outlined the detail of which incorporating the outcome of Reval 2026 which will be included in the Rates report to December SP&R Committee to quantify the impact on the revenue estimates for 2026/27 and the medium term.

It was noted a further Transformation and Efficiency Workshop will be held in January 2026 and that Party Group Briefings will also be arranged for January in order for the level of the District Rate to be set for 2026/27 by the 15 February 2026.

4. Sponsorship Request – Lewis Crocker

The Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services provided a briefing in relation to a request received for sponsorship for the Lewis Crocker fight proposed to be held at Windsor Park in 2026 and advised that a similar request had also been made to NI Executive. The Director outlined the sponsorship arrangements previously provided for the Carl Frampton fight on the Titanic slipways in 2014. Members discussed the socio-economic benefits for the city from hosting large scale sporting events but also highlighted funding concerns for amateur boxing organisations which needed to be taken into consideration when considering this request. It was noted that the Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services would further explore in terms of joint funding from the NI Executive and an update to be brought back once engagement has taken place. In relation to the issues raised about amateur boxing it was noted that a Boxing Strategy report will be brought to December SP&R Committee for Members consideration.

5. Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026

The Strategic Director of Place & Economy provided a brief update in relation to the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann work programme. The Director of Communications, Marketing & External Affairs also presented the marketing approach for the event and outlined the marketing & communication activity taking place and the channels being utilised in order to build momentum. Members also noted the strategic phasing across the markets outlined and the timeframes in which this would take place.

6. Assembly Rooms Cluster update

The Director of City Regeneration & Development provided an update on the work ongoing following the acquisition of the Assembly Rooms and adjacent properties, specifically the engagement with the World Monuments Fund. The Director outlined the detail of the proposed Memorandum of Understanding with World Monument Fund which has been reviewed by Legal Services and subject to agreement at a future SP&R Committee, will form the intentions of the Council's partnership with World Monument Fund. It was noted that a visit to the site would be arranged for Party Group Leaders.

7. Planning Update

The City Solicitor updated the Forum on a number of planning matters which were currently live. An issue was raised in relation to a specific site and the City Solicitor agreed to follow up on this with Planning Service.

8. AOB

Update to Standing Orders

A Member raised a query in relation to the amendment to the standing orders on the process for reconsidering decisions which have been subject to call in and the ongoing legal proceedings. The City Solicitor provided an update and agreed that recent correspondence received from the Minister for Communities referred to at November SP&R would be circulated to Party Group Leaders for information. Given the complexities involved it was agreed a high level summary would also be circulated.

Proposal to host Large Scale Event

The Strategic Director of Place & Economy provided a briefing for Members on a request received to be a host city and partner in a large scale event in Belfast in 2028 and potentially

2030. The Director provided an update on the background to the request, the partnership package proposed and the indicative cost of hosting the event. Following discussion in relation to the financial implications, budgetary constraints and resource requirements given existing obligations it was noted that further exploratory work is required in relation to the extent of funding commitment from other sources. The Director to follow up and a report brought back to a future meeting.

Loftlines Site Visit

The Director of City Regeneration & Development referred to the postponement of the scheduled visit for Party Group Leaders to the Loftlines development. It was noted that a rescheduled visit would be arranged with the invite to be opened up to all Members. The Director highlighted the timescales involved in order to accommodate the visit and will follow up after the meeting.

Display of Flags

The Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services referred to the display of flags in some council owned assets. The Director advised that local engagement had taken place however the flags still remained in place. A list of the sites discussed to be circulated following the meeting and a report on next steps to remove the materials to be brought to a future SP&R Committee.

Victoria Square

The Chief Executive provided an update on the investigation regarding some of the apartments at Victoria Square and the temporary closure of Montgomery Street following information received regarding safety concerns. Members noted that the closure of Montgomery Street was and still remains a precautionary measure, taken in the interest of public safety. It was noted that the recommendation remains that Montgomery Street remains closed while the investigations continue.

Illuminate request

The City Solicitor outlined for Members an illuminate request received for Holocaust Memorial Day on 27th January 2026. Members noted the request would be agreed under the City Solicitors delegated authority.

Leisure Transformation Programme

The Director of Property & Projects advised that following recent party group briefings on the proposed next steps for the next phase of the Leisure Programme a best practice visit to look at how leisure facilities are delivered in London is being organised for early 2026. Members

discussed the benefits of the visit in identifying potential unique selling points for the next phase of the programme. The itinerary and dates will follow from the Director imminently.

Masterplan for Girdwood

The Director of Property & Projects referred to the Girdwood Masterplan for the Girdwood site giving an update on the current status of the remaining elements including the leisure development and the mixed-use site which is being led by the Department for Communities. Members agreed in principle to Officers engaging with the Department to progress the mixed use site. Further updates will be brought back in due course.

Communications

The Director of Communications, Marketing & External Affairs advised that communications for the upcoming Holiday arrangements including bin collections had been issued. Members noted and agreed to amplify the messaging.

A Member raised a query in relation to communication on planning application updates that was circulated to Members and it was noted this would be followed up with the Director of Planning and Building Control.

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Belfast
City Council

Subject:	Requests for use of the City Hall
Date:	19 December 2025
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Christopher Burns, Interim Functions and Exhibition Manager

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 40px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime 									
<p>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								

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

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	This paper, together with the attached appendix, contains the recommended approach in respect of each of the requests by external organisations for access to the City Hall function

	rooms received up to 28 November 2025.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the recommendations as set out in Appendix 1.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Background Information</u>
3.1	The current criteria for use of the function rooms used to review external applications is set out below.
3.2	<p>Functions permitted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • functions which support other events in the city and which are of demonstrable economic benefit to Belfast whether organised by the council or not. • functions which demonstrably enhance the city's image nationally or internationally as a desirable commercial, business or tourist destination. • functions designed to celebrate or commemorate a notable achievement or significant anniversary (25, 50, 100 years) by an organisation or body with close links to the city or province. • functions organised by recognised local community or voluntary sector groups for non-profit and non-political purposes.
3.3	<p>Functions not permitted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conferences, meetings, seminars, performances, wedding receptions, private parties or receptions and similar booking requests in the prestige function rooms. • functions, which have as their principal purpose the generation of commercial gain for the organisers. Charity-fundraising functions are managed by the Lord Mayor's Office. • functions which have no compelling links to the council or the city specifically and which could instead use local private sector facilities. • functions which have as their primary purpose the advancement of any political or religious cause or campaign or are otherwise potentially contentious or involve significant reputation risks for the council. • functions which involve exceptionally large or disruptive set-ups or pose a real and tangible risk to the fabric of the building or grounds.
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.4	Committee will recall that at its meeting on 24 th May 2024, it considered an update on the City Hall Income Generation Project. Committee was advised that charging for the use of the Council's function rooms will be considered as part of a later stage of this project. This will include looking at a review of the current pricing structure and the provision of hospitality.

	Pending this work being brought to Committee, delegated authority was given to the City Solicitor and Director of Legal & Civic Services to depart from the existing charging structure and negotiate room hire charges for commercial type events.
3.5	The standard charging structure will apply to the events listed in the Schedule at Appendix 1 up until the end of the current financial year. Events from April 2026 onwards will not have prices confirmed to organisers until conclusion of current review.
	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.6	None, any recommendations for hospitality will be met from existing budgets.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.7	None.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Schedule of function requests received up to 28 November 2025.

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DECEMBER 2025 CITY HALL FUNCTION APPLICATIONS

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE
Indian Women's Association	1 March 2026	International Women's Day Celebrations – an event to celebrate local women with speeches, group discussion and cultural entrainment Numbers attending - 120	B & D	£300
Forge Integrated Primary School	11 April 2026	Forge Integrated Primary School 40th Anniversary Gala Ball – School community celebration event to mark milestone with reception, dinner, presentations and entertainment. Numbers attending - 250	C	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	26 May 2026	Launch of Newly Co-produced Dementia Information Booklet with round table discussion; guests to include community/ volunteer sector and Dementia Acute services. Numbers attending - 80	D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
African Caribbean Community Network (ACCN) and Minorities Recognition Award Northern Ireland (MRANI)	6 June 2026	Africa Day 2026 will be a vibrant cultural celebration designed to honour and showcase the rich diversity, unity, and contribution of African communities living in Belfast and across NI. The event will gather the local community for a day of music, art, dance, food, and cultural exchange. Numbers attending – 300	B & D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Operational Research Applied to Health Sciences (ORAHS)	23 July 2026	Operational Research Applied to Health Sciences Conference Dinner with drinks reception, dinner, awards and entertainment. Main conference being hosted by QUB. Numbers attending – 200	A	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Ulster Youth Orchestra	16 August 2026	Post-Ulster Hall Concert Reception will follow earlier that week a performance at the Konzerthaus in Berlin, as part of the prestigious Young Euro Classic Festival. The reception will recognise this notable achievement. Number attending – 120	C & D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>

DECEMBER 2025 CITY HALL FUNCTION APPLICATIONS

Thiepval Memorial Loyal Orange Lodge 1916 (Lodge of special purpose)	21 November 2026	Thiepval Memorial LOL 1916 – 30 Year Anniversary Celebration with reception, dinner, awards and presentations Numbers attending – 150	C	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
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All-Party Working Group on the City Centre

Friday, 5th December, 2025

MEETING OF THE ALL-PARTY WORKING GROUP ON THE CITY CENTRE

Members present: Councillor de Faoite (Chairperson);
Alderman McCullough; and
Councillors Groogan and Long.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration;
Development;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services;
Mr. E. McConville, Director of External Affairs,
Communications and Marketing;
Ms. D. Kelly, Programme Manager; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

Election of Chairperson

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor Long and

Resolved – that Councillor de Faoite be elected Chairperson until the
Council's Annual General Meeting in 2026.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 7th March were agreed.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Presentations

Under the Bridges and Sailortown

(Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager, attended in connection with this item).

The Working Group noted the contents of a presentation regarding Council-led projects which were being progressed under the Belfast Waterfront Promenade Framework. These projects sought to improve connectivity and links between the city centre, City Quays/Sailortown and the Waterfront itself; and sought also to provide enhanced recreation spaces in areas in the vicinity of the M3 bridge.

Local Policies Plan

(Mr. D. O’Kane (Acting Planning Manager), Mr. M. Smithson (Senior Planning Officer), Ms. J. Doherty (Senior Planning Officer) and Mr. M. Whittaker (Senior Planning Officer) attended in connection with this item).

The Acting Planning Manager presented an overview of the housing and environmental planning proposals for central Belfast, focusing on the need for strategic zoning, site utilisation, and policy adjustments to meet with housing demands, support economic activities and preserve environmental assets. He pointed out that the proposals aimed to create a balanced and sustainable urban environment which addressed the needs of residents and businesses alike while protecting the area’s natural and built heritage.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

Governance Update

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy provided an update on the progress which had been made with external partners through the City Centre Leadership Coordination Group. He reported that the engagement process had included a workshop which examined opportunities and challenges with a view to identifying and agreeing on short, medium and longer-term interventions which the group could collectively support and drive forward.

The Working Group was advised that that a forthcoming meeting would be held to review the output report and to seek agreement across partners on the recommendations. It was anticipated that an update report in this regard would be submitted to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, or the Working Group itself, in the new year.

Noted.

Communications Update

The Director of External Affairs, Communications and Marketing updated the Working Group on the recent activity which the corporate communications department had undertaken in promoting events and developments within the city centre. He stated that the department would continue to promote the city centre with a consistent and positive message and he outlined highlights from 2025, together with forthcoming events in 2026.

The Working Group noted the update.

Future Meetings

Discussion ensued on the items which had been included on the agenda and a Member suggested that the role and remit of the working group needed to be reassessed and should be considered as part of the governance review. The Member indicated that the work of the group needed to be Member-led and meetings should seek to consider, in detail, each of the themes identified previously as priorities.

As such, he added that the relevant Committees receive updates and suggested that proactive site visits should form part of agendas and further steps taken to enhance cross-party attendance at future meetings.

Noted.

Dates of Future Meetings

The Working Group agreed to defer consideration of this item.

Chairperson

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City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group

Tuesday, 18th November, 2025

THE CITY HALL/CITY HALL GROUNDS INSTALLATIONS WORKING GROUP MINUTES

Members present: Councillor Flynn (Chairperson); and
Councillors Beattie and de Faoite

In attendance: Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Mr. C. Burns, Functions and Exhibitions Officer;
Ms. K. Mullen, Programme Delivery Manager;
Ms. J. Murray, Civic Services Manager; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Member Services and Digital Support
Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported from Councillor Murray.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 13th August, 2025 were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Review of City Hall Exhibition

Following a walkabout of the Exhibition space the Members complimented the use of the space and discussed potential improvements to the area. The Director of Property and Projects encouraged the Members to contact her directly if they had any suggestions.

The Members also noted the improvements to the gift provisions within the shop and encouraged officers to arrange to have bookmarks and prints of the stained-glass windows available, where copyrights permitted.

Noted.

Update on Works to Cenotaph

The Members were advised that essential repair works to repoint the Cenotaph monument were due to commence mid-January 2026 for a period of 6-8 weeks, this timescale would be weather dependant. The Cenotaph would be closed during these works with no access to the public which would be publicised via social media.

Noted.

Cathedral Gardens and Belfast Blitz Memorial

The Working Group considered the undernoted report:

1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

To provide an update on Cathedral Gardens Scheme which includes a memorial to Belfast Blitz.

2.0 Recommendations

The Working Group is asked to

- Note that works to Cathedral Gardens which includes a new memorial to the Belfast Blitz will commence Christmas 2025 with planned completion Winter 2026
- Note the progress with the design and manufacture of the new Belfast Blitz Memorial
- Note that the design of the new piece in line with previous agreements around public art is confidential and not to be shared in advance of official unveiling
- Note that NIWM (Northern Ireland War Memorial) have agreed a list of names for inclusion on the new Memorial
- Note that once a final programme has been received from the contractor a planned programme of opening events will be worked up for Members' consideration.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

Members will recall that Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 21 October 2022 agreed that Cathedral Gardens (to include the Blitz Memorial) be moved to Stage 3 – Committed held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return. The procurement process has now concluded with a contractor appointment having been made. It is expected that works will commence late November/December with the erection of hoarding around the site. Planned at this stage is expected Winter 2026. Regular updates are provided to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

A new memorial to the Belfast Blitz has been included as part of that scheme and will be the final works package to be delivered. Officers have been engaging with the NIWM to finalise a design which received planning on 11 February 2025. Ralf Sanders is the artist who has been working as part of the Design Team to bring the memorial to life. Members will be aware that NIWM are making a financial contribution to the cost of the new piece. Members should be aware that in keeping with arrangements put in place for other new public art pieces that details of the design are embargoed in advance of the official unveiling. NIWM have agreed to adhere to this precedent.

The memorial will take the form of a bronze high relief on York Street side with a mirrored polished stainless steel side facing Cathedral Gardens. NIWM Board at its meeting on 18 September 2025 approved the final list of 952 names of known fatalities of the Belfast Blitz for inclusion on the Blitz memorial. The names of the 952 known fatalities will be listed in alphabetical order. NIWM have established an adjudication panel, with members of the public being invited to make comment on those they feel should be included.

Once a more detailed construction programme has been received from the contractor Officers will engage with all stakeholders to put in place a planned programme of events for the official opening of Cathedral Gardens and arrangements to mark the installation of the new Belfast Blitz Memorial. Further details will be brought back to Installations: City Hall/City Hall Grounds.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

Budget – £5 million (overall capital budget)

Resources – Office time as required to work up proposals

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications

As required.

The Working Group noted the update provided.

Gary Moore Statue

The Working Group was reminded that, at the January meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, it had agreed that the Council would explore land availability for the possible installation of a Gary Moore statue within the Cathedral Quarter and that the item be referred to the Installations Working Group for its consideration.

The Programme Delivery Manager advised that officers had met with a representative of the Wild Frontier Memorial Trust in relation to the potential for a Gary Moore Statue to be installed in Belfast, the Trust proposed to crowd fund the statue to

celebrate Mr Moore's contribution to blues and rock. An artist had been appointed to progress the design and installation of the statue and a wax mould was currently at a foundry in Edinburgh. She reported that, once the final mould had been signed off by Mr Moore's family, it was proposed that the images would be shared via social media with a view to securing sufficient funding to make the bronze statue. It was agreed that the officer would circulate the images to the Members of the Working Group via e-mail.

The Trust had asked that the Council consider identifying a suitable piece of land for installation and agree to take on the associated ownership and management/maintenance responsibility, similar to the arrangements put in place for the Rory Gallagher statue. The Members were advised that the Trust had suggested that Cathedral Gardens be considered as the most suitable location for the statue. The Members noted that officers were currently engaging with both the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and Department for Communities (DfC) to confirm landownership of a potential location on the corner of Hill Street and Gordon Street. The location was near to the Oh Yeah Music Centre who had Gary Moore memorabilia included within their exhibition.

The Working Group agreed to recommend the inclusion of a Gary Moore Statue as an Emerging Project – Stage 1 on the Council's capital programme.

City Hall Christmas Tree – Verbal Update

The Civic Services Manager advised the Members that the procurement process for the artificial Christmas Tree had completed, the AJC Group Limited had been awarded the contract at a cost of £77,500.00, this included delivery and installation costs for 2026.

In response to a Member's query as to why an artificial tree was being purchased instead of a real tree, the officer explained that, over that past few years, the structure of the real Christmas trees had been weaker due to changes in the climate and that an artificial tree would be more sustainable.

Noted.

Stained Glass Window Health Service – Verbal Update

The Programme Delivery Manager advised that the procurement exercise for the stained glass window was due to close on Friday, 21st November, an update would be provided in due course.

Noted.

Understanding Grief Through the Pandemic – Verbal Update

The Programme Delivery Manager advised that, alongside Memory Stones of Love/Cruse Bereavement Support NI, an event was being held, Understanding Grief Through the Pandemic, on Tuesday, 9th December from 9.00 -11.00 a.m. in the Long Gallery, Stormont Buildings, Belfast, this event was being sponsored by John Blair, Alliance MLA. Elected Members were invited to attend and an e-mail would be circulated to all Members.

The Members also briefly discussed suitable locations for a memorial to those lost during the covid pandemic and asked that when considering this matter further that the Council's park would also be considered as potential locations.

Noted.

Fire Doors at Glass Lift/Stained Glass Windows

The Civic Services Manager advised that it would not be possible for the double fire doors to be relocated to further down the corridor due to adherence to the Council's fire regulations, however, going forward they could be left open with the access rope moved which would enable members of the public to view the stained glass windows. In the event of a fire alarm the doors would automatically close.

Noted.

Chairperson

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