

**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**

### **- REPORTS TO FOLLOW**

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet both online and in-person, in the Lavery Room - City Hall on Friday, 19th June, 2026 at 9.30 am, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

### **AGENDA:**

#### **4. Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**

(d) Accessibility and Inclusion Update (Pages 1 - 8)

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

(a) Audit and Risk Panel Annual Report to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee including Draft Annual Governance Statement (Appendix B - Pages 9 - 36)

(c) Commercial and Procurement Services Social Value Working Group Update (Pages 37 - 84)

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<b>Subject:</b>	Accessibility and Inclusion Update
<b>Date:</b>	19 June 2026
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Corporate Services Nora Largey, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Russell Connelly, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer

<b>Restricted Reports</b>									
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
<p><b>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</b></p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Information relating to any individual</li> <li>2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual</li> <li>3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)</li> <li>4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter</li> <li>5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained</li> <li>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</li> <li>7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime</li> </ol>									
<p><b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b></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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<b>Call-in</b>	
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To provide SP&R with an update on the legislative framework around disability and our strategic approach to accessibility. The eventual aim of the development of a strategic approach is to make the city more accessible to all D/deaf, disabled and neurodiverse people and to everyone who lives, works or visits Belfast, irrespective of their service access requirements. This will be a long-term strategy to place accessibility at the heart of how we design and deliver all our services.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note the update in this report; and</li> <li>• Note that an updated version of the Disability Action Plan will be presented to SP&amp;R Committee in August 2026 for the purposes of public consultation.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p>Over one in four people in Belfast live with a disability. Disability impacts not only the individual but also members of their families, sometimes in a caring role. Now is the right time to develop a more strategic approach to accessibility. The impact of disability is different if you are young or old, having caring responsibilities or don't speak English as your first language. The need for a focus on accessibility isn't new, in the last decade it has come in from the margins as inequalities are better understood, with disabled people often highlighting the unequal opportunities that are afforded to them. Data provided from official sources such as the 2021 Census, with standardised definitions of disability as 'health impairment' are now set alongside social media, where global influencers, promote their disability as part of their identity, bringing voices to the label. Types of disability are often categorised into physical, sensory, hidden and intellectual, with legal definitions focusing on the impact.</p> <p>Over the past decade there has been a shift in understanding from the medical model of disability to the social model, which in turn has increased public awareness of the barriers faced by D/deaf, disabled and neurodiverse people in participating in everyday life. There is a clear need for an ambitious strategy which will shift the emphasis from the medical model, where disability is viewed as a problem stemming from the individual, in sharp contrast the social model highlights the environmental barriers which exclude and discriminate. Any shift in public attitudes is challenging, and the strategic approach will need to be delivered over an adequate timeframe.</p>
3.2	<p><b>Why do we need an accessibility strategy when we have a Disability Action Plan?</b></p> <p>Our Disability Action Plan, which is a legal requirement with an internal focus, and is overseen by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Around 2018 Belfast City Council had addressed the limitations placed upon disability by the legal boundaries of the Disability Action Plan and shared our ambitions to develop a more strategic, external approach.</p>

ECNI explained that due to legislation the Disability Action Plan and any strategy should be separated. Frustrations with the complexity of the legal framework contributed, in part, with the prominence of diversity initiatives focused on specific groups of people. A strategic approach to accessibility will also allow us to display civic leadership on the promotion of all of Belfast's citizens, working through an evidence-based approach.

Developing a strategic approach to what is currently called the 'Roadmap to an Accessible City', will build on existing council work and contributions to accessibility within the city, we will also review our current approaches and start new work where it is needed. The strategy will bring added value to initiatives being delivered throughout Departments and aim to harmonise approaches through the city, aiming to bring together best practice and working in partnership to identify where work still needs to be done. We will listen, learn and lead bringing human stories to the statistics.

### 3.3 **How does Belfast City Council currently promote accessibility?**

Disability inequalities and accessibility measures are mainstreamed, led by each Director within their own Departments. Outlined below are a range of actions delivered across Council, although it should be noted this is not an extensive list.

#### **1. Promoting accessibility through funding**

- Targeted grant initiatives, including 'The Sounds Atypical Music Grant Scheme', funded by Council and delivered by University of Atypical for Arts and Disability. Schemes such as this are central to the UNESCO City of Music status, we are proud to offer some fantastic music-led grant schemes within the city.
- Funding initiatives like 'Suitcases and Skies' performed by adults with learning disabilities, coming together from groups across north, south, east and west Belfast. This was part of the Belfast Local Community Action Plan supported by Peaceplus, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body

#### **2. Promoting accessibility through services**

- In April 2024 council commissioned an external consultant to carry out an audit of play value and accessibility at all council-maintained playgrounds. The scores allocated for each playground relate to existing features, types of play opportunities available and their accessibility for a range of age groups and abilities.
- The Play Value & Accessibility Audit (2024) now informs sites selection under PIP and is used as a design guide to help deliver more accessible playgrounds going forward.
- Council's Play Equipment Supply Contract (2021-2026) allows us to procure equipment for use in playground improvement works. The supply contract will be retendered in the coming months and will include an additional five items of accessible equipment e.g. wheelchair accessible, swing, see-saw and trampolines, providing a wider palette of equipment to improve accessibility in playgrounds.
- Communication Boards, displaying symbols to help children with limited language skills express themselves, are currently being installed in all council-maintained playgrounds, work is expected to be complete by the November 2026.
- In 2020 council installed special needs swing-seats in all playgrounds with suitable swing frames. There are now support swing-seats in more than 50 council-

maintained playgrounds across the city. Installation of support swing-seats will continue to be delivered under PIP.

- An Accessible Signage Working Group, comprised of council officers, consultants and representatives from Council's Disability Advisory Panel was set up in January 2026 to design a fully accessible entrance sign for use in the Reconnected Belfast project (Waterworks and Alexandra Park). It is hoped this sign could be used as a template in other parks and open spaces.
- Capital funding has been secured to develop a new accessible, sensory play facility at Woodvale Park on the site of the disused bowling green. It is envisaged that this project can be used as a pilot for other projects moving forward.
- Changing Places facilities have been agreed for Waterworks and Alexandra Park as part of the Reconnected Belfast project; a feasibility study is currently underway for another Changing Places facility in proximity to the Woodvale Park Sensory Garden site.
- Capital funding has been secured to improve accessibility at Musgrave Park Therapy Garden. Improvements include installation of wheelchair accessible equipment and a sensory trail; completion is due in June 2026.
- Accessible bin lifts and braille on bins
- RADAR keys
- Zoomobile, which is an accessible buggy that can carry one wheelchair user and four non-wheelchair users, or four non-wheelchair users.
- Designing routes in our parks for wheelchair accessibility
- ICC Belfast, Waterfront Hall and Ulster Hall were one of the first venues in Belfast and Northern Ireland to receive the Autism NI Impact Award.
- The venues also hold the Bronze Diversity Mark accreditation and are on track to achieving silver accreditation.
- City Hall, Belfast Castle, Belfast Zoo and Malone House are Autism Impact Award Champions and accredited as autism-accessible, welcoming environments.

### **3. Promoting accessibility through Council led city-wide initiatives**

- The Belfast Promise includes commitments to make your business more inclusive for disabled people, noting 'it is not only the right thing to do. It makes good business sense'.
- Our Inclusive Tourism initiative roles out in 2025 provides support for tourism businesses to help them become more inclusive. This was the first support of its kind in Northern Ireland. The funding, awarded as a voucher, could be used to improve the visitor experience in small, but practical, ways, through staff training and awareness raising, support with navigating websites or booking tickets, or to upgrade signage or marketing materials.

### **4. Promoting accessibility through communications**

- Video relay services
- Continuing to improve the accessibility of the Council's website

- The role out of Makaton boards in play parks set out above
- Sign posting to other accessible service providers

## **5. Promoting accessibility through strategic partnerships**

All our strategies have accessibility to promote inclusion embedded in them

- The Belfast Agenda
- Corporate Plan 2025-2028
- Local Development Plan
- Inclusive Growth Strategy
- Social Value Procurement Policy
- Resilience Strategy
- Belfast Region City Deal
- A Bolder Vision for Belfast
- Belfast Economic Strategy 2022-2030

## **6. Promoting accessibility as an employer**

- Council holds the Silver Diversity Mark in recognition of our commitment to promoting equality and diversity within our workforce.
- Council provides reasonable adjustments through its recruitment and selection process and operate a Guaranteed Interview Scheme.
- Council holds the AAA\* Disability Positive accreditation from Employers for Disability NI in recognition of our employment-related disability good practice. Members of our Employee Resourcing team are accredited as 'Disability Positive'.
- Our ABLE staff network meets quarterly and is open to all council staff who consider themselves to have a disability; as well as carers, allies or supporters of people with disabilities.

### **3.4 What is an 'Accessible City'?**

With such emphasis on accessibility being 'for everyone; the first steps in developing a strategic approach includes defining the problem you want to solve. We have explored the need for specific focus throughout opportunities including the Disability Advisory Group and International Day for Persons with Disabilities events. From the December 2025 event the evaluation showed:

- The diversity of disability with over twenty different types listed from attendees
- 63% of attendees had experienced a barrier which excluded them, a friend, or family member from accessing work or social life in Belfast.
- An average of 85% of attendees rated the event as found the event content, usefulness, rated the event highly or excellent.
- Twenty-four different reasons were listed displaying pride at Belfast's efforts for disability inclusion and accessibility. These included going beyond legislation and hearing lived experiences.

- There are knowledge gaps on disability inclusion and accessibility, including engaging with people with lived experience of disability, economic benefits of inclusion and ableism.
- Barriers being addressed through our departments include:
  - o Communication
  - o Attitudinal
  - o Physical/Architectural
  - o Technology
  - o Systemic/Policy

Defining what we mean by Belfast as an accessible city will be key to the success of the strategy through clear communication as well as establishing data baselines. If not defined 'accessibility' becomes a new buzzword for good customer service. Emphasising the impact of the process, the Centre for Ageing notes:

Accessibility can mean a variety of different things, from wheelchair access to comprehensive information. For the historic city of Chester, becoming an accessible city has been a careful, long-term process - with real rewards.

A common framework for definition is provided by the European Commission, who organizes the Access City Award, to reward EU cities that are prioritizing accessibility for persons with disabilities. Although Belfast was a past recipient of an award for the sensory garden at Musgrave Park, we are no longer eligible to enter. Nonetheless, the Access City Award provides a vision:

Accessibility is a master-key that opens the door to the city's services, buildings and spaces, so persons with disabilities can take the lead of their lives, live independently and fully participate in the community.

Cities are key actors to ensure accessibility, as they have a direct impact on our everyday life and needs as citizens. A city is accessible when persons with disabilities can, for instance:

- go around the streets and enjoy public areas, such as parks and playgrounds.
- get in public buildings like hospitals, town halls, libraries, and sports halls.
- get the bus, tram and metro to go to work or meet friends.
- communicate with the local administration in person, by phone or online.
- get information in ways that they can read and understand.

The Royal Town Planning Institute recognises the increasing lack of accessibility in sustainable design, with climate change becoming prevalent vulnerable people are being left behind. Transport is again listed as a key concern highlighting the role of barriers in excluding disabled people.

### 3.5 **Next steps - how is the strategy being developed?**

Legal and Civic Services will lead the overall development, delivery and monitoring of the accessibility strategy. This cannot be achieved without the co-operation from all

departments. Collaboration between departments was key to the success of the International Day for Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) in 2025. A meeting of Directors nominees for the IDPD 2026 Planning Group will be held in the coming weeks.

Commitments towards accessibility are actively being delivered and the development of a strategy for changes in education, culture and service delivery must be done in tandem with business as usual.

As a response to the IPDD 2025, training with an Accessibility Consultant was organised and delivered to P&P and CNS. An output of this training has been the inclusion of new Accessibility requirements within the appointment of all integrated design teams on behalf of the council.

The new requirements will see the appointment of an Accessibility Consultant with a view to promoting inclusive design and access for disabled people and incorporate their recommendations. The Accessibility Consultant will be registered with the National Register of Access Consultants (NRAC) and should will undertake a review of the designs at each applicable design stage.

The aim is to ensure that capital projects delivered by the Council are providing inclusive design and access that exceeds the regulatory requirements and minimum standards. Council departments are working together to truly strive toward making Belfast a more inclusive and accessible city for all.

Key 2026 milestones:

- Autumn - Public consultation for the Disability Action Plan including external engagement on a strategic approach to accessibility with key stakeholders
- November: launch of Disability History Month on the theme 'Disability, Politics and Democracy
- December: International Day for Persons with Disabilities event

These milestones align with the 2027-28 programme of actions reported to the Disability Working Group and further updates will be brought back to SP&R in due course.

Members are asked to note the contents of this report and that an updated Disability Action Plan to reflect the Council's strategic ambitions will be presented to Committee at its meeting in August.

3.6

**Financial and Resource Implications**

Disability and accessibility, like all equality and good relations matters are mainstreamed throughout Council, meaning that the Director of each Departments is responsible for development actions within their remit. As the SRO for disability, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services has oversight of the legislative framework for disability and accessibility as well as strategic direction.

Members will be aware that there is an ongoing service review in the Council's Equality & Diversity Unit. This review has been focussed on ensuring there are sufficient resources to drive the Council's ambitions in relation to accessibility and to better co-ordinate the work that is being undertaken across the Council.

The outcome of this review will be presented to Committee in the coming months.

3.7	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>As an employer, a civic leader and provider of goods, facilities and services Belfast City Council is bound by a legal framework around anti-discrimination and the promotion of equality and good relations. Our current approach satisfies the legal requirements, and the development of an accessibility strategy will display commitment as a civic leader representative of all our citizens.</p>
4.0	<p><b>Appendices - Documents Attached</b></p>
	<p>None</p>

## Audit and Risk Panel

Tuesday, 9th June, 2026

### MEETING OF AUDIT AND RISK PANEL

Members present: Councillor R. McLaughlin (Chairperson);  
Alderman Rodgers; and  
Mr. D. Wilson (External Member).

In attendance: Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Strategic Director  
of Corporate Services;  
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and  
Civic Services;  
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;  
Ms. C. Sherridan, Director of HR;  
Ms. H. Lyons, Corporate Finance Manager;  
Ms. C. O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk  
Services;  
Mr. M. Whitmore, Audit, Governance and Risk  
Services Manager;  
Mr. Liam Mulholland, Audit, Governance and Risk  
Services Manager;  
Ms. E. Eaton, Corporate Health and Safety Manager; and  
Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

Also attended: Mr. C. McGeown, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

#### **Election of Chairperson**

Moved by Councillor R. McLaughlin  
Seconded by Alderman Rodgers, and

Resolved – “That Councillor R. McLaughlin be elected to serve as Chairperson for the Audit and Risk Panel until the date of the Annual Council Meeting in 2027.”

#### **Apologies**

An apology for inability to attend was reported for Councillor Groogan.

#### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 10th March, 2026, were approved by the Panel.

#### **Declarations of Interest**

Mr. Wilson declared an interest in the item under the heading “External Member Recruitment” in that he was the current external Member of the Panel but remained in the meeting whilst the item was being discussed.

**Terms of Reference**

The Panel noted the Statement of Purpose and Terms of Reference.

**Absence Rates Y/E March 2026**

The Director of HR summarised the undernoted report to the Panel:

**“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 four, April 2025 – March 2026.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Audit Panel is asked to note the contents of this report and to agree the proposed absence target as set out in section 3.7.**

**3.0 Main report**

**3.1 Key corporate indicators:**

**At the end of quarter four:**

- The Corporate target for 2025/26 was 14.58 days per full time equivalent (FTE). The Council’s average sickness absence rate stands at 15.29 days per FTE. This is an increase of 0.71 days compared to absence for the same period last year (14.58 days).**
- A total of 35283.59 working days were lost due to sickness absence. This accounted for 6.8% of the total working days available.**
- The table below provides a summary of how departments performed against the target. Three departments did not meet the corporate target of 14.58 days for quarter four.**

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 9th June, 2026**

Departments	Total days lost (FTE)	Total Employees (FTE)	Average number of days lost per FTE	Variance	% of workforce	% of absence
City and Neighbourhood Services	23846.62	1317.98	18.09	3.51	57.13%	67.59%
City and Organisational Strategy	1054.83	98.2	10.74	-3.84	4.26%	2.99%
Corporate Services	1143.65	136.69	8.37	-6.21	5.92%	3.24%
External Affairs Comms & Marketing	140.23	25.56	5.49	-9.09	1.11%	0.40%
Finance	267.07	49.44	5.40	-9.18	2.14%	0.76%
Human Resources	108.68	34.47	3.15	-11.43	1.49%	0.31%
Legal and Civic Services	2853.31	167.26	17.06	2.48	7.25%	8.09%
Place and Economy	4050.70	357.07	11.34	-3.24	15.48%	11.48%
Property and Projects	1818.50	120.36	15.11	0.53	5.22%	5.15%
Grand Total	35283.59	2307.03	15.29	0.71		

**3.2 Additional Absence information:**

- There was an increase in the number of staff with no absence this year (43.30%), compared to last year (42.68%).
- There has been a significant increase of (1205.8 days or 5.2%) in absence classified as long term (20+ days) this year (24251.33 days) compared to the same time last year (23045.53 days).
- The number of days lost per FTE slightly increased in quarter four (3.84 days) when compared to quarter three (3.81 days), see figure 1.
- Depression/anxiety/stress (33.61% of total days lost) and musculo-skeletal (24.75% of total days lost) continue to be the top two reasons for absence. Refer to figure 2 for further information.
- From 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, 2830 cases of sickness absence were recorded. Discretion was reported as having been applied to 468 of these cases (16.54%) and accounted for approximately 30.69% (or 10827.44 days) of the total absence for 2025/26. Refer to figure 3 for further information.
- Due to competing demands and requirement for Corporate HR (CHR) and departments to conduct in-depth absence report testing for the new absence reporting module on Resourelink, monthly spot check meetings did not take place in January 2026 for all departments, and the March meeting did not take place for CNS again due to testing of the new absence reporting module. Issues were identified in how absences were being managed in 77 cases. These were discussed in detail with departments during quarter four. Refer to figure 4 for further information.
- Approximately 13.49% of absence (4760.62 days) is recorded as disability related. 62.19% of disability related absence was managed as long term. Employees who reported absence with Depression / Anxiety / Mental health conditions (40.79% or 1942.09 days),

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 9th June, 2026**

**Fibromyalgia (10.52% or 501 days) and Cancer (8.01% or 381.20 days) accounted for over half (59.3%) of all disability related absence days. Refer to figure 5 for further information.**

- **Eighteen employees met the trigger for a Stage four/FAH.**
  - **Two employees were ill health retired (IHR) prior to their hearing being convened.**
  - **Discretion was applied to ten cases where a decision was taken not to proceed to hearing:**
    - **two cases were due to additional medical information being requested**
    - **two cases were due to employees undergoing cancer treatment**
    - **one case was due to disability related absence**
    - **one case involved work related stressors**
    - **one case was due to an employee undergoing significant surgery and recovery**
    - **one case involved an employee recovering from a stroke**
    - **one employee was off due to pregnancy/maternity related reasons**
    - **one case involved an employee commencing a career break**
  - **One employee resigned before their hearing convened**
  - **One case is due to be heard in May 2026.**
  - **Three cases proceeded to final stage hearing with two employees given a final opportunity to improve their attendance and the other employee was dismissed.**
  - **One case was non-compliant with the Attendance Policy.**
- **Throughout the year, a total of 36 employees were dismissed due to absence (ten by way of stage four/final hearing and 26 by way of IHR). This was an increase of one case when compared to 2024/25.**

**3.3 Departmental improvement plans and Absence reporting to DMT:**

**CHR has not had the ability to review departmental improvement plans for quarter four. This is due to the ongoing absence reporting testing for Resource Link which has been ongoing since February 2026. All departments have returned their quarter four improvement plans.**

All departments returned their absence dashboards for January, February and March 2026.

CHR will review departmental improvement plans for 2025/26, to enable the review of 2026/27 plans and will suggest changes where necessary. A progress report on how departments are implementing and monitoring its 2026/27 improvement actions will be provided to CMT at the end of quarter one 2026/27.

#### **3.4 Conclusion**

There was an increase in sickness absence of 0.71 days in 2025/26 (15.29 days) when compared to 2024/25 (14.58 days).

The Council's top two reasons for absence are SDA and Musculoskeletal (appendix six), SDA increased by 14% and Musculoskeletal decreased by 1.6% when compared to last year. The increase in SDA equated to 1476.17 days and the reduction in Musculoskeletal equated to 142 days FTE working days.

It should be noted that whilst three departments did not achieve the corporate target of 14.58, there were substantial reductions in departmental absence.

Human Resources decreased by 5.61 days when compared to 2024/25 (8.76 days to 3.15 days), Property and Projects decreased by 4.16 days (19.27 days to 15.11 days), Legal and Civic Services decreased by 0.73 days (17.79 days to 17.06 days), External Affairs Comms and Marketing Dept decreased by 0.56 days (6.04 days to 5.49 days), and Place and Economy decreased by 0.36 days (11.70 days to 11.34 days),

A key area of focus for all departments in 2026/27 will be to ensure consistent application of the Attendance Policy – particularly in relation to the use of discretion and the scheduling of absence hearings in accordance with the Policy.

#### **3.5 Health and wellbeing (H&WB) activity has continued to build through 2025/2026. The H&WB programme delivered 92 events attended by 1606 staff.**

CHR was supported by the Internal Communications team to help promote and increase awareness to all staff including those at frontline locations. Follow up emails were forwarded by CHR to Department Leads closer to the date of the event to further promote. 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

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 9th June, 2026**

**Champions. The programme and wellbeing hub “Staywell” is also promoted via posters on staff noticeboards. How to access Health and Wellbeing events and initiatives is now signposted to staff in a number of training courses to include the Corporate Induction, Disability Awareness and My Action Plan.**

**In 2025/2026 CHR continued to raise awareness of stress and mental health via the new Employee Assistance Provider, Lena by Inspire with 111 staff attending this training and a further 23 staff attending a stress less session delivered by Employers for Disability. Lena by Inspire also delivered nine bite size sessions ranging from grief and loss, time to talk and mental health and menopause with 132 staff attending these sessions. Six sessions of Mindful Movement were delivered, attended by 91 staff.**

**A specific focus for the year was addiction and a number of training sessions and initiatives were delivered to raise awareness. Alcohol Drugs and Gambling Awareness for managers and employees was delivered to 12 staff, and 10 staff attended a session on Dry January and beyond. CHR will continue to focus on addiction going into 2026/2027 with a session on a mindful approach to alcohol organised for May 2026.**

**Another key area of focus was Suicide Awareness. The Lighthouse Charity delivered a Suicide Awareness and Prevention session at Duncrue. Suicide Awareness training is available on interlink and suicide awareness is covered in the Mental Health First Aid training. 24 staff have completed this training.**

**CHR continued to partner with Business in The Community (BITC) to deliver it’s popular ‘Healthier You’ and ‘Future Proof your Health’ webinars. 12 topics were covered and attended by 243 staff, with 90 of those attending the 15-minute desk yoga sessions to help release muscular tension from the upper body.**

**For frontline staff, the Keeping Well Van attended five CNS sites with a total of 70 staff receiving a 30-minute health check. From these, several GP referrals were recommended. 28 staff attended health checks for office-based staff. A further two CNS site visits have been booked for Duncrue and Roselawn for 2026/2027.**

**Promotion of wellbeing themes such as International Epilepsy Day and Eating Disorder Awareness Week were used to specifically promote awareness sessions including one live event on epilepsy attended by 20 staff and a webinar delivered**

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 9th June, 2026**

by Beat, attended by five staff. International Women's Day was marked with an event in the City Hall attended by 125 staff and men's health was highlighted as part of the 'Movember' campaign with three webinars attended by 26 staff that included a focus on testicular and prostate cancer.

Three retirement and pension awareness events were delivered to 122 staff. NILGOSC also promoted a number of pension webinars throughout the year.

City Hall hosted the Blood Transfusion Service (NIBTS) for a staff session in June 2025 as part of World Blood Donor Week. 100 staff attended on the day helping to enable the NIBTS to meet the demand from hospitals for lifesaving donated blood.

The Council's H&WB programme continues to be supported by our Learning and Development programme with 44 staff attending the Understanding the Attendance Policy sessions. CHR delivered ten sessions on management skills attended by 117 staff, notably; Essential Skills for Line Managers, Skills for Performance Management; Dealing with Difficult Conversations and Conflict Resolution within your Team.

Active Travel events and initiatives remain available and well supported as we continue to work with Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (NI) (formerly Sustrans) and partners to introduce active travel initiatives.

**2026/2027**

CHR will continue to raise awareness of the stress, mental health and musculoskeletal support that is available with a specific focus on these areas. Plans are in place to promote the Council's team of Mental Health First Aiders and for frontline staff, we will continue to promote and signpost to the range of support available and deliver events at frontline locations to encourage participation.

**3.6 Target**

The corporate target for 2025/26 was 14.58 days. The Council's absence figure for 2025/26 was 15.29 days. This was an increase of approximately 5% on the previous year.

It is proposed that the Council target remains at 14.58 days for 2026/27.

**4.0 Resource Implications**

**4.1 Directors are asked to ensure that:**

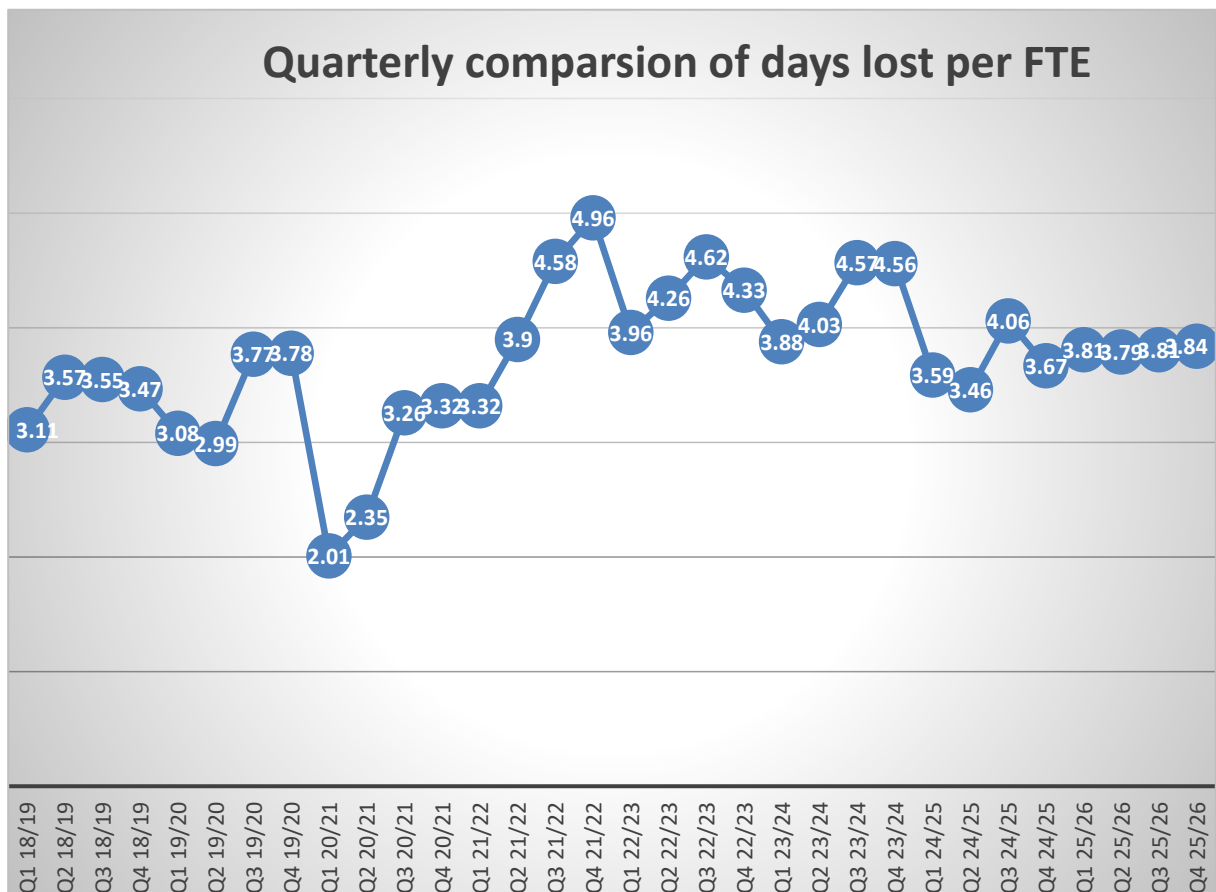
- Attendance management continues to be an item on DMT agendas and related matters discussed and appropriate actions taken forward.
- Resources are in place to ensure that adequate monitoring and review is in place at department level.
- The agreed approach to the management of discretion and issuing of warnings is implemented in their department.

**5.0 Equality and Good Relations Implications**

**5.1**

- Approximately 13.49% of absence (4760.62days) is recorded as disability related and 62.19% of disability related absence was managed as long term. The use of discretion and reasonable adjustments is considered in such cases.

**Figure 1:**



**Figure 2:**

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 9th June, 2026**

Reason for absence	Total days lost (FTE)	% of total days lost
Stress. depression, anxiety	11858.80	33.61%
Musculo-skeletal	8733.32	24.75%
Stomach, digestive, etc	3653.24	10.35%
Infections, inc colds & flu	3516.61	9.97%
Chest and respiratory	1719.45	4.87%
Other	1375.93	3.90%
Heart, blood press, circ, etc	1236.63	3.50%
Neurological, inc headaches	1103.66	3.13%
Genito-urinary, inc menstrual	888.82	2.52%
Eye, ear, nose & mouth/dental	810.88	2.30%
Infections, Covid19	190.09	0.54%
Pregnancy related	144.63	0.41%
Indust/Other	51.53	0.15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35283.59</b>	

**Figure 3:**

Reason for discretion	Total days	% of total
Disability / Underlying medical condition	724.11	19.64%
Deferred pending OH	674.12	18.28%
Hospitalisation	492.25	13.35%
Mental Health	284.02	7.70%
Planned Surgery and recovery	238.18	6.46%
Bereavement	213	5.78%
Unresolved employee relations issues	204.91	5.56%
Industrial Injury	161.63	4.38%
Returned to work in line with OH	134.33	3.64%
Violence at work	130.94	3.55%
Emergency Domestic Responsibilities	109.17	2.96%
Previous long service and clear record	83.95	2.28%
Broken / Fracture bone(s)	83.84	2.27%
Infectious disease	63	1.71%
Pregnancy / Maternity related	50	1.36%
Work related stress	34.51	0.94%
Personal stressors	5	0.14%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3686.96</b>	

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 9th June, 2026**

Total days lost in quarter four (January to March 2026)	9009.01
% of total days lost where discretion applied in quarter four	40.93%
Average days off per occurrence of discretion in 2025/26	23
Total days lost where discretion was applied in 2025/26	10827.44
% of total days lost between April 2025 and March 2026 where discretion was applied	30.69%

**Figure 4:**

Department	Number of cases
City and Neighbourhood Services	22
City and Organisational Strategy	4
Corporate Services	0
External Affairs Comms & Market	1
Finance	0
Human Resources	3
Legal and Civic Services	30
Property and Projects	13
Place and Economy	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>

**Figure 5:**

Actual disability	Total days lost	% of Total disability related absence	Managed as LTA	% of actual absence managed as LTA	% of Total Absence
Depression / Anxiety / Mental health conditions	1942.09	40.79%	998.66	51.42%	5.50%
Fibromyalgia	501	10.52%	232	46.31%	1.42%
Cancer	381.2	8.01%	374.7	98.29%	1.08%
Chronic back condition	224.58	4.72%	11.08	4.93%	0.64%
Chronic heart condition	218.68	4.59%	183	83.68%	0.62%
Sciatica	214.02	4.50%	214.02	100.00%	0.61%
Chronic back condition	168.73	3.54%	164.73	97.63%	0.48%
Chronic fatigue syndrome	151.62	3.18%	151.62	100.00%	0.43%
Stroke	132.01	2.77%	132.01	100.00%	0.37%

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 9th June, 2026**

Polymyalgia rheumatica	122.43	2.57%	122.43	100.00%	0.35%
Epilepsy	91.5	1.92%	49.5	54.10%	0.26%
Parkinsons	82.77	1.74%	82.77	100.00%	0.23%
Osteoarthritis	82.68	1.74%	55.32	66.91%	0.23%
Chronic hip condition	56.96	1.20%	56.96	100.00%	0.16%
Other*	390.35	8.20%	131.99	33.81%	1.11%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4760.62</b>		<b>2960.79</b>	<b>62.19%</b>	<b>13.49%</b>
Total absence end of Q4 25/26	35283.59				
Disability related absence at Q4 2025/26	4760.62				
% of absence lost due to disability	13.49%				
% of disability related absence managed as LTA	62.19%				

\*Other includes a total of 23 conditions that each individually account for less than 1% of total disability related absence.

The Panel noted the report and agreed that the Council absence target would remain at 14.58 days for the year 2026/27.

**Corporate Health and Safety Performance Report**

The Corporate Health and Safety Manager provided the Panel with an update on the corporate health and safety performance and activities for the quarter ending 31st March, 2026.

She updated the Panel on progress against key performance indicators, employee and non-employee accidents and health and safety statutory agency enquiries and correspondence, then she summarised the following health and safety data:

- Implementation of Health and Safety and Fire Safety recommendations;
- Employee and non-employee accidents; and
- Health and Safety statutory agency enquiries and correspondence.

She provided the Panel with a summary of the business of the Health and Safety Assurance Board activity during 2025/26 and highlighted the following key points;

- The Health and Safety Assurance Board met three times in 2025/26 (May, December and March);
- At each of the meetings, the Board received a quarterly health and safety performance report that included similar content to the Audit and Risk Panel's quarterly health and safety reports;
- In May 2025, reports were additionally considered on the draft annual corporate health and safety plan; the annual

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 9th June, 2026**

review of performance for 2024/25; assurance on the key risks of asbestos, legionella and fire safety; and the March corporate health and safety committee minutes;

- In December 2025, reports were additionally considered on six monthly claims report April – September 2025; assurance on the key risks of control of contractors, work related violence and event safety; the annual review of key health and safety risks and the September corporate health and safety committee minutes; and
- In March 2026, reports were additionally considered on the annual review of the Health and Safety Policy Statement; the annual review of the Board's Terms of Reference; and the December corporate health and safety committee minutes.

The Chairperson (Councillor R. McLaughlin) welcomed the increase in reporting of work-related violence incidents and attributed the higher figure to staff having been encouraged to report and stated that he hoped that this would continue to be encouraged through the implementation of the People Strategy.

The Panel noted the report.

**AGRS Progress Report May 2026**

The Audit, Governance and Risk Service (AGRS) Manager provided the Panel with an overview of the following ten assignments which had been finalised during the period from March to May, 2026:

- Grants;
- Police and Community Safety Partnerships;
- Fixed Assets;
- Developer Contributions;
- Gifts, Hospitality and Potential Conflicts of Interest;
- Stores (year-end);
- Internal Audit of the Corporate Risk on Bereavement Services;
- Internal Audit of the Corporate Risk on Equality and Diversity;
- CNS Case Management System – Process to Develop Specification; and
- Belfast Region City Deal – Programme Management Office.

He reported that one of the assignments had received an opinion of "Major Improvement Needed", one received the opinion of "Substantial" and five had received the opinion of "Some Improvement Needed". He explained that two of the assignments were not standard assurance audits and therefore did not require an assurance opinion.

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 9th June, 2026**

He stated that 71% of planned activity had either been completed or substantially completed which was a reduction in comparison to the previous year's figure of 80%, he attributed this to significant resource pressures within the section throughout the year.

He listed the audits in progress and explained that the Audit, Governance and Risk Service continued to provide advice and consultancy services to management.

Following a request from the Panel at its previous meeting, the AGRS Manager provided a summary review of those outstanding actions that were high priority and any that might subject the Council to an increased level of risk. Two areas were considered to be potentially subject to increasing levels of risk, that is, information management and overtime. He stated that the service would continue to send management regular updates of their outstanding actions and would perform a follow up exercise in quarter four of 2026/27.

In response to a question from a Member with regard to how the analysis of high priority recommendations was being filtered through the organisation, the Deputy Chief Executive explained that it was being reported through the Audit and Assurance Board, Corporate Management Team, Departmental Management Teams and was also being fed into the Departmental Plans.

The Panel agreed that a report be brought to the next meeting of the Panel that would outline the actions which has been undertaken in relation to Gifts, Hospitality and Potential Conflicts of Interest, given that it had received an opinion of "Major Improvement Needed".

The Panel noted the content of the report.

**Corporate Risk Management**

The Head of AGRS provided the Panel with an overview of the undernoted report:

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

- 1.1 To present the Audit Assurance Board with the Corporate Risk Dashboard summarising the key updates from the risk review for the QE March 2026, including an update on the new corporate risk regarding the Fleadh Cheoil.**
- 1.2 To update the Board on compliance with the Risk Strategy, based on the annual assurance statements for QE March 2026, completed by senior management.**
- 1.3 To provide the Audit & Risk Panel with an update on business continuity management arrangements, including the YE position regarding compliance with the policy; the completion of BCM plans for the Fleadh period and the completion of Fuel Resilience returns for the critical services.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

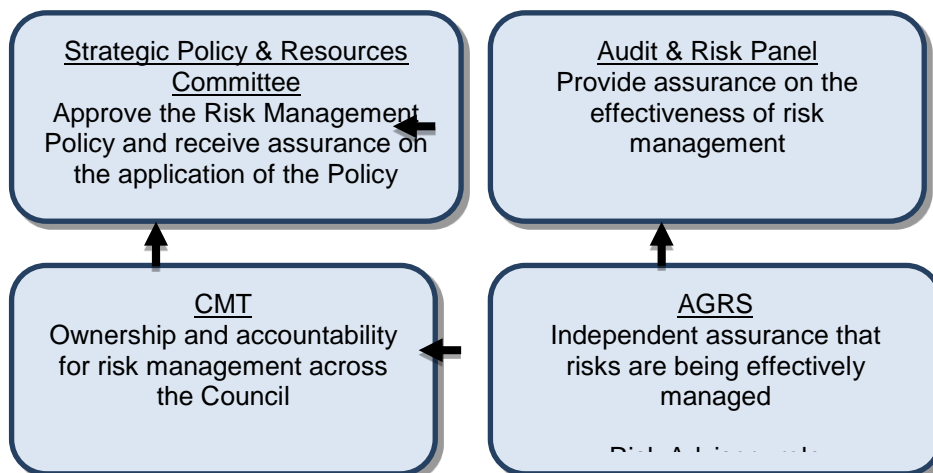
**2.1 The Panel are asked to:**

- a) Note the corporate risk management dashboard and agree the updates for QE March 2026, including an update on the new corporate risk regarding the Fleadh Cheoil.
- b) Note the assurances from senior management regarding compliance with the Risk Strategy, based on the assurance statements for QE March 2026.
- c) The current position regarding the YE position on compliance with the policy; the completion of BCM plans for the Fleadh period and the completion of Fuel Resilience returns for the critical services.

**3.0 Main report**

**Summary of BCC Risk Management Arrangements**

- 3.1 The aim of our Risk Strategy is to improve our ability to successfully achieve our objectives and deliver services to the communities to which we are accountable, by having a clear understanding of the key risks that could prevent us from delivering our priorities and putting in place measures to manage these risks.
- 3.2 An overview of the respective risk management responsibilities of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, the Audit and Risk Panel, the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and AGRS is outlined below



**Corporate Risk Management update for QE March 2026**

**3.3 AGRS has met with risk owners to support them in their quarterly review of the corporate risks. The information from these meetings was used to prepare the Corporate Risk Management Dashboard for the QE March 2026 (appendix A) which sets out:**

- **Corporate risk analytics – risks reviewed, risks by category, risks within risk appetite, risk actions implemented / not yet due / overdue, movement in risk assessment**
- **Key corporate risk updates for the quarter**
- **For each corporate risk, a summary of progress made to manage the risk and actions implemented in the quarter**

**3.4 The Panel is asked to note the following corporate risk updates:**

- **Regarding the new corporate risk Fail to deliver a safe and inclusive Fleadh Cheoil and realise benefits in line with the agreements and budget. The Risk Owner, the Strategic Director of Place and Economy has reviewed and agreed the risk action plan. The risk is currently assessed as High, however there are planned mitigations relating to finance, capacity / capability, decision making, health and safety, inclusion, affordability, partner buy-in, communications, contracts, promoters, feedback, business as usual, campsite oversight, business continuity and safeguarding, that aim to reduce the risk level down to Moderate.**
- **In addition CMT has asked that consideration is given to combining the current two corporate risks on Information Governance and Strategic Approach to the Use of Data and links with the Electronic Data and Records Management project – the City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services has indicated that management will consider the framing of this proposed new risk at the May 2026 meeting of the Information Governance Board.**
- **There has been no changes to the risk assessment for the 15 corporate risks.**
- **Four actions to manage the corporate risks were implemented in the quarter including:**

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 9th June, 2026**

- Security processes and controls in place assessed against the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSE) Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF) to identify gaps and shortfalls in cyber security and resilience in the council.
- External Security Operations Contract has been put in place with an external provider which will help to address the recommendations from the CAF.
- Internal Steering Group established to strengthen alignment and integration between BRCD Digital Programme, Innovation City Belfast strategy, Smart Belfast Urban Innovation (SBU) Framework and Council's Belfast Economic Strategy.
- £2m BRCD funding secured for grants programme to maximise the benefits of the BRCD Centres of Excellence.
  
- The corporate risk on Asset Management does not yet have a mitigation plan in place. The Director of Property and Projects is the Risk Owner for the corporate risk on Asset Management and for ensuring that a risk action plan will be prepared. This will be informed by the gap analysis against the NIAO guide 'A Strategic Approach to the Use of Public Sector Assets – A Good Practice Guide for Local Government in Northern Ireland' which was completed by AGRS and reported to the Audit and Risk Panel in December 2024.
  
- The Director has drafted Terms of Reference for the Strategic Asset Management Board (SAMB). Asset Management is one of the workstreams in the Transformation and Efficiency Programme and as such the Terms of Reference for the Strategic Asset Management Board are linked to the Terms of Reference for the Transformation and Efficiency Board, which are being developed.

**Horizon Scanning**

**3.5** Horizon scanning is built into the quarterly corporate risk management review process – no new matters were raised. Horizon scanning activities should:

- Allow consideration of relevant information and any response that is required.
- Raise awareness of matters that could impact on longer term council and city plans, strategies and priorities.
- Enable Council to influence and challenge thinking on how to address city challenges.

**Annual Assurance Statements on compliance with the risk management strategy**

- 3.6 All Chief Officers and relevant senior managers completed an Annual Assurance Statement confirming compliance with the Risk Strategy, based on the assurance statements for QE March 2026.

**Business Continuity Management (BCM)**

**BCM policy requirements**

- 3.7 The table at appendix B sets out the year-end 2026 position on compliance with the requirements of the BCM policy.
- 7 of the 17 critical services completed their BCM exercise
  - 7 of the 17 critical services completed their Report on their BCM exercise
  - 3 of the 17 critical services completed their Report on the Update of their BCM Plan
  - 16 of the 17 critical services have reviewed and updated their Business Impact Analysis (note that 1 of the 16 completed returns is awaiting Director review and sign off).
- 3.8 Critical Services have been reminded of the need to begin planning how to exercise their BCM plans during 26/27.
- 3.9 The Business Continuity Group has been re-established and meets twice a year, with the next meeting scheduled for 15 June 2026.

**BCM over the Fleadh period**

- 3.10 In tandem with the work ongoing across the Council to deliver the Fleadh, Members and management will also need assurance that the Council can continue to provide its critical services during the period of the Fleadh from 2 to 9 August. We have asked each of the Council's Critical Services to complete a return to assess the impact of the Fleadh and set out the measures in place to manage the impact.
- 3.11 As of 2 June, 14 of the 17 critical services have completed their Fleadh BCM return (note that 5 of the 14 completed returns are awaiting Director review and sign off).

**BCM and Fuel Resilience**

- 3.12 The Executive Office (TEO) is currently completing a piece of work considering the impact of continuing and sustained

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 9th June, 2026**

increases in the cost of fuel and each Council has been asked to complete a template to identify critical internal and contracted services which may be impacted.

As of 29 May, all of the 17 critical services have completed their Fuel Resilience return.

- 3.13 The return was submitted to the Regional Officer: Local Government Civil Contingencies on Tuesday 2 June 2026, to enable collation of all submissions into a single local government submission that will be considered by SOLACE in June prior to returning to TEO.

**Business Continuity Management policy review and update**

- 3.14 AGRS has substantially completed the review and update of the Business Continuity Management policy and has liaised with Human Resources to confirm how the updated policy should proceed through the Industrial Relations Framework. AGRS aims to take a report on the updated policy to the September meetings of the Board / Panel.

**Financial & Resource Implications**

None known at this time.

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

None known at this time.”

In response to a question from a Member with regard to horizon scanning in relation to the corporate implications of new legislation, the City Solicitor explained that, when consultations were issued, they were brought to the Corporate Management Team and assigned to the relevant Director to take forward and reported through the relevant Committee.

The Panel noted the report.

**Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services  
Annual Assurance Statement**

The Head of AGRS presented the Panel with the following report:

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

Each year the Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS) prepares an annual assurance statement. The statement is a professional opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council’s risk, control and governance

arrangements, and this opinion is one of the sources of assurance that the council relies on for its annual governance statement.

- 1.2 The main purpose of this report is to present the Head of AGRS' annual assurance statement for 2025/26.
- 1.3 In addition, as recommended by the Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector, the Panel is asked to explicitly discuss the Chair's assessment of the independence and objectivity of the Head of AGRS.

## 2.0 Recommendations

- 2.2 The Panel are asked to note the Head of AGRS' annual assurance statement for 2025/26, as attached at Appendix A.
- 2.2 As recommended by the Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector, the Panel is asked to explicitly discuss the Chair's assessment of the independence and objectivity of the Head of AGRS.

## 3.0 Main report

### Key Issues

#### The Head of AGRS' Annual Assurance Statement

- 3.1 The Head of AGRS' assurance statement is set out at section 2 of the attached report and information to support the opinion provided is provided in section 3 of the report. This opinion is one of the sources of assurance that the council relies on for its review of the effectiveness of the Council's system of internal control in the annual governance statement.
- 3.2 The Head of AGRS' assurance statement reflects the findings arising from audit work during 2025/26 as reported to the Board / Panel on a quarterly basis during the year (through audit progress reports, risk review reports and recommendation monitoring reports) therefore detailed findings / recommendations have not been reproduced in this report. However, a summary of audit reports completed is provided in Section 3 of Appendix A.
- 3.3 As reported to the Board / Panel in March 2026, AGRS completed a self-assessment of conformance with the new Global Internal Audit Standards, the Internal Audit Code of Practice and the UK Public Sector Application Note. The outcome of this self-assessment concluded that on balance AGRS generally conforms with the Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector. A small number of

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 9th June, 2026**

non-conformances have been reported through the governance structures and relate to:

- Non-conformance with four requirements relating to the Chair of the Audit and Risk Panel having a direct role in the reporting line, appointment and removal, performance appraisal and remuneration of the Head of AGRS. While the Head of AGRS has the authority to report directly the Chair whenever necessary and the Chair is involved in the appraisal and recruitment of the Head of AGRS, it would not be appropriate for the Chair to have a direct management role.
- Partial conformance with one requirement relating to the Quality Assurance and Improvement Plan (QAIP). While an external assessment is undertaken every five years, it is not feasible for the QAIP to be assessed annually by someone independent of the delivery of the audit plan.
- Partial conformance with two requirements and AGRS has developed improvement actions to fully conform with these requirements related to making the AGRS Charter publicly available and reviewing and updating the documented AGRS methodologies.

- 3.4 The following improvement action arose from the self-assessment against the new Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector that was reported to the Panel in March 2026: *Ensure that where the tenure of the chief audit executive exceeds seven years, The Audit and Risk Panel explicitly discuss annually the chair's assessment of the chief audit executive's independence and objectivity.*

To address this improvement action, I bring the Board / Panels attention to the fact that I was appointed to the role of Head of AGRS on 1 October 2018 and have been in the post almost eight years. I ask the Panel to explicitly discuss the Chair's assessment of my independence and objectivity.

3.5 **Financial & Resource Implications**

None

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

None.”

The Panel noted the Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services' annual assurance statement for 2025/26 and agreed with the Chairperson's positive assessment of the independence and objectivity of the Head of AGRS.

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 9th June, 2026**

**Code of Governance**

The Head of AGRS explained that the Audit, Governance and Risk Service had facilitated the annual review and update of the Council's Code of Governance by asking management to:

- review and update the governance arrangements set out in the Code of Governance;
- confirm that the arrangements were operating effectively in practice; and
- identify any improvement actions.

She reported that management had provided updates to the Code and, where applicable, had identified improvement actions. She summarised the following main updates to the Code.

She stated that a number of improvements were quite complex to implement and that whilst work had been undertaken to progress those improvements, they remained ongoing.

The Head of AGRS explained that the CIPFA Solace Addendum to the "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework" which had been issued in May, 2025, recommended that the *"local code should be a public document or webpage, easily identifiable on the authority's website. It should be a useful reference for both officers, elected representatives and the public to understand how governance works and the authority's commitment to good governance. Where an authority does not publish a local code, it will need to explain the elements set out above in its AGS"*

She reported that the Head of Digital Services had raised concerns about making any system/security related information publicly available as it could potentially give cyber attackers an understanding of what controls the Council had in place.

She stated that it was recommended that the Code of Governance not be published on the Council's website as there was sufficient information in the Annual Governance Statement to enable the public to understand how governance works and the Council's commitment to good governance, and the Head of Digital Services' concerns.

The Panel approved the updated Code of Governance for Belfast City Council and agreed that it would not be published on the Council's website.

**Draft Annual Governance Statement 2026**

The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services referred the Panel to the Annual Governance Statement for the Council for 2025/26 and explained that the disclosures in the statement were based upon consideration of the Council's corporate risks, significant events and disclosures made by Chief Officers in their individual annual assurance statements.

She pointed out that, in May, 2025, CIPFA SOLACE had issued an Addendum which advised authorities to ensure that the Annual Governance Statement should contain additional detail on the annual review of the effectiveness of its system of internal control, namely:

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 9th June, 2026**

- An executive summary, to include an overall opinion on whether governance arrangements were fit for purpose;
- An assessment of effectiveness, setting out how the overall opinion had been arrived at;
- Where governance needed to improve, including an action plan.
- How governance had been improved over the current financial year; and
- A forward look on governance.

She reported that the Audit Assurance Board had considered and reviewed the range of information that they received and concluded that its review of the effectiveness of the Council's system of internal control allowed them to form an overall opinion that the Council's governance arrangements were fit for purpose, were adequately aligned to support the delivery of the corporate plan and meet the responsibilities for value for money, support to delivery each of the seven principles of good governance and allowed it to provide assurance to the Audit and Risk Panel that the Council's governance arrangements were fit for purpose.

In turn, the Panel confirmed that its review of the effectiveness of the Council's system of internal control had allowed them to form an overall opinion that the Council's governance arrangements were fit for purpose; were adequately aligned to support the delivery of the corporate plan and meet the responsibilities for value for money; support and deliver each of the seven principles of good governance and allowed it to provide assurance that the Council's governance arrangements were fit for purpose.

The Panel approved the draft Annual Governance Statement for the Council for 2025/26 and agreed to the disclosure of the significant governance issues contained in the statement, and for a note to be added that would explain that the summary Code of Governance within the Annual Governance Statement set out the key elements of the Council's governance framework and was based on a detailed Code of Governance which had not been published because the summary version would enable the reader to understand how governance works and the Council's commitment to good governance, and because publication of some of the information within the Code had the potential to enable a cyber-attack.

**Fraud and Raising Concerns / Corporate Fraud Risk Assessment –  
Annual Report and Policy Update**

The Audit, Governance and Risk Services Manager reported on the number of cases in which the Council policies for fraud and raising concerns had been applied, the nature of the allegations and the outcomes of the subsequent investigations, including actions taken to address underlying issues.

He explained that a register of cases was maintained and that the dedicated raising concerns email inbox was monitored daily and that a significant proportion of the emails received related to service delivery and operational matters which had been redirected to the Customer Hub or relevant department to be addressed.

He summarised the types of concerns under the following five main headings:

- Code of Conduct;

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 9th June, 2026**

- Fraud and Financial Impropriety;
- Health and Safety;
- Service Delivery; and
- Other.

He explained that there were 18 corporate fraud risks within the Corporate Fraud Risk Assessment, that there were mitigation plans in place for each and they had been reviewed and updated by the relevant Directors during 2025/26. He added that, whilst the level of fraud risk remained unchanged for 16 of the fraud risk areas, management had updated the action plans to include additional mitigations.

He updated the panel on key changes which had been made following the reviews of the Raising Concerns Policy and the self-assessment checklist of the CIPFA Code of Practice for Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption (2014).

The Chairperson (Councillor R. McLaughlin) welcomed the increase in reporting of concerns and the work undertaken by AGRS in relation to Fraud and Raising Concerns which further highlighted its independence and objectivity.

The Panel:

- Noted the updates on fraud, raising concerns and related cases handled in 25/26;
- Noted the annual review and update of the Corporate Fraud Risk Assessment;
- Agreed to request that City Regeneration and Development develop a Fraud Risk Action Plan for Acquisitions and Disposals;
- Noted the review of the Raising Concerns and Fraud and Bribery policy;
- Noted the review of the NIAO Good Practice Guide on Raising Concerns and related checklist; and
- Noted the review of the CIPFA Code of Practice for Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption (2014).

**Cyber Security Assessment Update**

The Head of Digital Services provided the Panel with a summary of the key findings and priority recommendations that had arisen from the Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF) Compliance Assessment which had been completed in January, 2026.

He explained that the report found that, overall, the Council had demonstrated a developing but credible level of cyber resilience and that the principal opportunity for improvement was not the introduction of new controls but the formalisation, documentation and assurance of existing practices and that by strengthening governance, standardising processes and improving evidence of effectiveness, the Council could materially reduce cyber risk and move towards a more resilient and sustainable cyber security posture.

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 9th June, 2026**

He pointed out that the CAF report noted that there were areas for improvement regarding Elected Members and cyber security.

A Member requested that consideration be given to quarterly mandatory training for Elected Members that would be delivered through a different mechanism than was currently in place.

The Panel noted the report and agreed that the City Solicitor would consider the requirement for Elected Members to undertake cyber security training as part of the Governance Review.

**Performance Improvement Update**

The Strategic Performance Manager presented the undernoted report to the Panel:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report**

**1.1 To update the Panel on our compliance with the statutory performance duty and to obtain approval of the 2025-26 NIAO Audit and Assessment Report for Belfast City Council.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Panel is asked to approve the NIAO Audit and Assessment Report 2025-26 attached at Appendix 1.**

**3.0 Main report**

**Background**

**3.1 The respective duties of councils and the Local Government Auditor (LGA) are set out in the Part 12 of the Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014 and are summarised as follows:**

**Councils**

**3.2**

- Have a general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions.
- Set improvement objectives for each financial year.
- Publish a self-assessment before 30 September annually, that takes account of guidance issued by the Department for Communities.

**Local Government Auditor (LGA)**

**3.3**

- Audit the Council’s assessment of its performance for 2024-25 and its improvement plan for 2025-26 in accordance with section 93 of the Local Government

**Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the Act) and the Code of Audit Practice for local government bodies.**

- **Perform an improvement assessment for 2025-26 at the Council in accordance with Section 94 of the Act and the Code of Audit Practice.**
- **Produce a report to comply with the requirement of section 95(2) of the Act.**

#### **NIAO audit and assessment**

- 3.4 As part of this process the NIAO officials undertook detailed audit fieldwork between October to December 2025 when Council officers offered a series of site visits and meetings as well as collating and presenting a substantive amount of evidence to demonstrate the council's improvement journey.**

#### **Audit opinion**

- 3.5 Following this fieldwork, the Local Government Auditor completed and presented to Council a NIAO Audit and Assessment Report 2025-26 (attached at Appendix 1). In this report, the Local Government Auditor has certified performance arrangements with an unqualified opinion and concluded that in relation to improvement planning and publication of improvement information, the Council:**

- **Complied with its duties in relation to both in accordance with section 92 of the Act.**
- **Acted in accordance with the Department for Communities' guidance.**

**The Local Government Auditor also conducted an improvement assessment and confirmed that the Council:**

- **Has discharged its duties under Part 12 of the Act.**
- **Has acted in accordance with the Department for Communities' guidance sufficiently.**
- **Has demonstrated a track record of ongoing improvement.**
- **Is likely to comply with Part 12 of the Act during 2025-26.**

#### **NIAO Recommendations**

- 3.6 The Local Government Auditor did not make any recommendations for improvement under section 95(2) of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014.**

#### **Special Inspection**

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 9th June, 2026**

**3.7 The Local Government Auditor concluded that, under section 95(2) of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014, a special inspection would not be required.**

**4.0 Financial & Resource Implications**

**Audit fees in relation to the audit of the Performance Improvement Planning process have been accounted for in the NIAO Annual Audit Strategy.**

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

**There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this report.”**

The Panel

- Noted the update provided;
- Approved the Quarter 4 performance report for 2025/26; and
- Noted that a detailed year-end Performance Assessment report for 2025/26 would be provided to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting in August, before ratification by full Council on 1st September, 2026, and publication on the Council's website before the statutory deadline of 30th September, 2026.

**Annual report from Audit and Risk Panel to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee**

The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services provided the Panel with an overview of the Draft Audit and Risk Panel Annual Report to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

The Panel noted the report.

**NIAO Code of Audit Practice and Statement of Responsibilities**

The Director of Finance referred the Panel to the following two documents which had been issued by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO):

- Code of Audit Practice; and
- Statement of Responsibilities of Local Government Auditor and Local Government Bodies.

He stated that the NIAO had requested that the Code of Audit Practice and the Statement of responsibilities of Local Government Auditor and Local Government Bodies be brought to the attention of the Panel.

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 9th June, 2026**

The Panel noted the Code of Audit Practice and the Statement of responsibilities of Local Government Auditor and Local Government Bodies.

**External Member Recruitment**

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the current contract for the external Member of the Audit and Risk Panel was due to expire in November, 2026, and that approval was being sought for a process to appoint a new external Member to the Panel and the arrangements for the recruitment panel.

The Panel:

- Noted that Mr. Wilson's contract was due to end and approved the proposed process to appoint an external Member to the Panel; and
- Agreed that Alderman Rodgers be nominated to sit on the recruitment panel alongside the Chairperson, the Director of Finance and the Director of HR and/or the City Solicitor.

**Date of next meeting**

The Panel noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Friday 11th September, 2026.

Chairperson

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<b>Subject:</b>	Social Policy Working Group – CPS Papers June 2026
<b>Date:</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> June 2026
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Sharon McNicholl Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Corporate Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Lewis Murray, Strategic Category Manager, Commercial and Procurement Services 'CPS'

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	To update Members on the papers presented to the Social Policy Working Group 'SPWG' on 2 <sup>nd</sup> June 2026. Papers include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Social Value Delivery Report which sets out the delivery of social value outcomes via BCC tender competitions awarded in accordance with the Council's Social Value Procurement Policy 'SVPP'</li> <li>2. Draft Sustainable Procurement Policy &amp; Strategy Document for Members consideration before proceeding with a public consultation exercise.</li> </ol>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the attached papers
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Social Value Delivery Report</b>
3.1	The Social Value Delivery Report is typically provided every 2 months to the SPWG in line with the scheduled meetings and then a copy is shared to Members at the SP&R Committee.

	This report covers the Reporting Period 1 <sup>st</sup> November 2025 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2026 (4 months).
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Draft Sustainable Procurement &amp; Strategy Document</b>
4.1	<p>At SPWG in June 26 Members were provided a copy of the draft Sustainable Procurement Policy &amp; Strategy Document and an update on progress since the last SPWG in Feb 26.</p> <p>The progress update included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Details on feedback received from further stakeholder engagement regarding the draft policy including internal stakeholders, top 100 suppliers, Go Social Stakeholder Group and a workshop with local social enterprises.</li> <li>• Plans to move to a 12 week public consultation exercise regarding the draft policy starting July 26.</li> </ul> <p>Members approved the way forward</p>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</b>
5.1	None
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</b>
6.1	The Sustainable Procurement Policy & Strategy Document will be subject to an equality screening and rural need assessment before proceeding to public consultation
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	<p>Appendix 1 - SPWG Report - SVPP Delivery Report June 26</p> <p>Appendix 2 - SPWG SV (Appendix) June 26</p> <p>Appendix 3 - Draft Sustainable Procurement Policy &amp; Strategy Document</p>



Subject:	Social Value Procurement Policy Delivery Report
Date:	2 <sup>nd</sup> June 2026
Reporting Officer:	Noleen Bohill, Head of Commercial and Procurement Services 'CPS'
Contact Officer:	Lewis Murray, Strategic Category Officer, CPS

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
	<p>To update the Social Policy Working Group 'SPWG' on the delivery of social value outcomes via open tender competitions awarded in accordance with the Council's Social Value Procurement Policy 'SVPP'</p> <p>The report also provides an update on tenders awarded by Property &amp; Projects department where, due to project funding rules, social value has been considered and included in accordance with the CPD Buy Social Model.</p>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
	<p>The SVPP was approved by Committee in April 22 with full application of the SVPP from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.</p> <p>A copy of the SVPP can be found here - <a href="https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/social-value-procurement-policy">Social Value Procurement Policy (belfastcity.gov.uk)</a></p> <p>To help Officers and suppliers understanding the SVPP and how to apply this to applicable tender competitions, the Commercial and Procurement Services 'CPS' team has developed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Online guidance on interlink which takes Officers through key considerations in line with the SVPP.</li><li>• A new Supplier Guidance document was launched in September 23 which includes step by step guidance for suppliers in how to offer social value as part of their tender and how their social value offers are evaluated (new innovative approach). This was developed taking on board key learnings since the SVPP was launched.</li><li>• Social value evaluation training based on the new approach developed from September 2023. This was rolled out during October 23 to January 24. This is now included in CPS evaluation training.</li></ul> <p>A link has been provided below to the interlink guidance (within the link you can access the guidance which should open as a Microsoft Sway document)</p>

[Social value procurement guidance now available \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

As outlined in the guidance to Officers application of the SVPP is considered in 2 key parts:

**Part 1** – For all tender competitions valued over £30k, consideration by Officers about whether to:

1. Reserve the tender competition to a social enterprise/ VCSE sector taking into consideration levels of market competition in this sector
2. Include organisational behaviours (i.e., ethical procurement, environmental and HR policies and procedures) taking into consideration relevance of these policies and procedures to the goods, services or works being purchased and relevance to the market. When selected for inclusion in the tender these social value organisational behaviours are mandatory pass/fail questions for suppliers to demonstrate rather than scored questions.

Note for all tender competitions valued over £30k the following is included as mandatory (in addition to the above in Part 1):

1. Payment of the Real Living Wage by suppliers to their employees
2. The prohibited use of zero hours contracts by suppliers

**Part 2** – the inclusion of a social value weighting (10% or 15%) and scoring for tenders valued over £30k for tenders post-April 23

The social value offer made by suppliers using the list of social value initiatives and points is then evaluated and scored with a minimum scoring threshold required to be met.

### **CPD Buy Social Model**

The CPD Buy Social Model is applied where external central government funding of 50% or greater is provided for a capital/ works project managed by Property & Projects.

Further information on the CPD Buy Social Model can be found here:

[PPN 01/21 - Scoring Social Value | Department of Finance \(finance-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

[Social Value - \(buysocialni.org\)](#)

The CPD Buy Social Model is broadly similar to the Council's SVPP in terms of achieving the social value outcomes. See comparison table set out in Annexe 1 (see below at end of report) which provides an overview of the similarities/ differences in key areas.

<b>2.0</b>	<b>Reporting Period</b>
	<p>It is intended that this report is produced every 2 months in line with scheduled SPWG meetings.</p> <p>This report covers the Reporting Period 1<sup>st</sup> December 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 (4 months) align with scheduled SPWG meetings in 2026.</p>

3.0	<b>Main report</b>
	<p>Appendix 1 of this report set out details of tenders valued over £30k which have been awarded during the Reporting Period and associated SVPP data/information.</p> <p>Appendix 1 includes:</p> <p><u>Table 1 - Tenders awarded during Reporting Period</u></p> <p>This sets out details of tenders awarded during Reporting Period and whether SVPP was applied or not.</p> <p>For ease of reporting this shows tenders awarded by Commercial and Procurement Services 'CPS' team and the Property &amp; Projects department.</p> <p><u>Table 2 – Summary of key data and findings associated with application of SVPP</u></p> <p>This shows a summary of key findings from the tenders set out in Table 1; in particular a summary of the Part 1 SVPP considerations i.e. reserved contracts and social value organisational behaviours.</p> <p><u>Table 3 - Summary of Supplier's Social Value Offers (Evaluated submissions)</u></p> <p>This shows a summary of the tenders that included a social value weighting (10/ 15%) and the social value offers put forward by suppliers for evaluation as explained under Part 2.</p> <p>A summary of each applicable tender has been set out in the table.</p> <p><u>Lessons Learned and Continuous Improvement</u></p> <p>A Social Value Review Team has been established to review how the SVPP is being implemented and any lessons learned that need to be applied following conclusion of tender competitions. Areas the team are currently reviewing include, but not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Trends in the use of Reserved Contracts and any further guidance required for Officers on when these should be used</li> <li>2. Trends in the selection of Social Value Organisational Behaviours by Officers when using the Social Value Toolkit and any further guidance required for Officers on when these should be applied</li> <li>3. The quality of social value offers by suppliers (the evaluated submissions) and if further guidance is required in terms of how these are evaluated by Officers. In addition any further guidance required for suppliers to improve their understanding of BCC expectations in line with Belfast Agenda aims and associated strategies.</li> </ol> <p>The Social Value Review Team will meet every 2 months in line with scheduled SPWG meetings and the production of this report.</p> <p>The content/ format of this report will be reviewed with further information included as more social value data becomes available i.e. social value delivery by suppliers using SIB reporting database.</p>

<b>4.0</b>	<b>Summary</b>
	<p>Members of the SPWG are asked to consider the content of this report and provide feedback (positive or negative) on the data/ information contained in this report and how the SVPP is being applied.</p> <p>This feedback can then be considered by the Social Value Review Team and associated guidance updated for Officers and suppliers when applying the SVPP.</p>
	<b>Appendices</b>
	<p>Appendix 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Table 1 - Tenders awarded during Reporting Period</li> <li>• Table 2 – Summary of key data and findings associated with application of SVPP</li> <li>• Table 3 - Summary of Supplier’s Social Value Offers (Evaluated submissions)</li> </ul>

**Annexe 1 – Comparison between BCC’s SVPP and CPD Buy Social Model**

<b>Key Criteria</b>	<b>BCC SVPP Approach</b>	<b>CPD Buy Social Model Approach</b>
Consideration of Reserved Contracts	Mandatory consideration with rationale document for inclusion/exclusion noted in Social Value Toolkit	Mandatory consideration. Sourcing toolkit provides guidance on how to apply.
Social Value Organisational Behaviours	See comparison table below	See comparison table below
Social value weighting	<p>Applied to all applicable tenders valued over £30k from April 23.</p> <p>Social value weighting determined by cost criteria for tender i.e.</p> <p>If cost criteria is &gt;50% then social value weighting is 10%</p> <p>If cost criteria is ≤50% then social value weighting is 15%</p>	<p>Applied to above threshold tenders (applicable Procurement Act) for works. – £4.3m (approx.)</p> <p>For Services – above £500k</p> <p>Supplies not included.</p> <p>Min 10% social value weighting</p>
Minimum Social Value scoring threshold	<p>If 10% social value weighting then minimum 7% out 10% required</p> <p>If 15% social value weighting then minimum 11% out 15% required</p> <p>Suppliers who fail to meet this threshold are excluded from award of tender.</p>	Not included
Real Living Wage	Mandatory from April 23	Mandatory requirement
Prohibited use of zero hours contracts	Mandatory from April 23	Not included

Social Value Organisational Behaviours comparison

<b>BCC SVPP Approach</b>	<b>CPD Buy Social Model Approach</b>
<p>BCC currently include the following requirements as mandatory for all suppliers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Compliance with the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998</li> <li>2. Compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015</li> <li>3. Prompt payment of suppliers/ supply chains</li> </ol> <p>Using the Social Value Toolkit (as explained under Part 1) Officers then consider the inclusion of the following social value organisational behaviours in the tender:</p> <p><u>1. Ethical Procurement and Fair Treatment of the Supply Chain</u></p> <p>Suppliers are to demonstrate they have a procurement policy and/or corporate social responsibility policy which clearly sets out the supplier’s commitment to ethical procurement practices and fair treatment of your supply chain including associated training/ communication to staff.</p> <p><u>2. Environmental Management Systems</u></p> <p>Suppliers are to demonstrate they have an environmental management system in place i.e. ISO14001 or equivalent.</p> <p><u>3. Single Use Plastics Policy</u></p> <p>Suppliers are to demonstrate they have a single use plastics ‘SUP’ policy which clearly sets out the supplier’s commitment to managing and reducing the use of SUP in their business operations including associated training/ communication to staff.</p> <p><u>4. Donating/ Recycling equipment to the VCSE sector</u></p> <p>Suppliers are to demonstrate they have a policy in place which clearly sets out their commitment to supporting the VCSE sector through donating/ recycling equipment (e.g. ICT equipment)</p> <p><u>5. Equality and Diversity Policy</u></p>	<p>From the 1 September 2021 the following requirements are mandatory;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. compliance with relevant employment, equality and health and safety law and human rights standards;</li> <li>2. adherence to relevant collective agreements; and</li> <li>3. adoption of fair work practices for all workers engaged in the delivery of the contract.</li> </ol>

Suppliers are to demonstrate they have an equality and diversity policy and/or relevant HR policy which clearly sets out their commitment to equality and diversity in the workplace including associated training/ communication to staff.

7. Development, Health and Wellbeing of Employees

Suppliers are to demonstrate their commitment to the development, health and wellbeing of their employees by providing at least 3 of the following points i) to v):

i) evidence that employees are offered fair and equitable terms of employment including sick pay, holidays, pension and set working hours;

ii) evidence of having a learning and development policy in place which shows commitment to the personal and career development of your employees;

iii) evidence of having in place employee appraisal procedures in place including regular employment engagement;

iv) evidence of offering employees flexible working to support a healthy work life balance i.e. flexible working hours or working from home option;

v) evidence of having in place policies/ initiatives to support the mental and physical health of your employees e.g. offer employee counselling services or occupation health support service.

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**Table 1: Tenders awarded during Reporting Period**

Table 1a: Tenders awarded by Commercial and Procurement Services Team 'CPS'

Ref	Contract Title	Contract Type	Value	Successful Supplier	SVPP applied (Y/N)	If No - Reason why?	Reserved Contract (Y/N)	Social Value Weighting % applied
T2710	Supply and Delivery of Small and Medium Panel Vans x 7	Supplies	£183,731.80	Donnelly Bros Belfast	N	External Framework Used	N	N/A
T2705	Hire of Ulster University Belfast Campus (York Street) for use during Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026 inclusive of setup and de-rig (STA)	Services	£200,215.00	Ulster University	Y	N/A	N	N/A*
T2643(1)	Tools for Togetherness Programme	Services	£33,333.00	Irish Architecture Foundation	Y	Short duration project < 6 months	N	10%
T2643(2)	Tools for Togetherness Programme	Services	£33,333.00	Robin Price	Y	Short duration project < 6 months	N	10%
T2643(3)	Tools for Togetherness Programme	Services	£33,333.00	Phillip McCrilly	Y	Short duration project < 6 months	N	10%
T2718	Hire 2 x 7.5T Glass Collection Vehicles (STA)	Services	£40,000.00	Stewart Commercial	N	STA/Direct Award	N	N/A
T2706	Hire of the MAC Arts Centre (STA) Fleadh	Services	£41,160.00	MAC Arts Centre	Y	N/A	N	N/A*
T2673	Fleadh Cheoil Hire of Accommodation	Services	£265,280.00	Hastings Group	Y	N/A	N	N/A*
T2694 (3)	Curation of Fringe Programme for Fleadh 2026 Lot 3	Services	£200,000.00	174 Trust - The Duncairn	Y	N/A	N	15%
T2694 (2)	Curation of Fringe Programme for Fleadh 2026 Lot 2	services	£150,000.00	MayWe	Y	N/A	N	15%
T2654	Provision of Dog Kennelling facilities and other related services	Services	£320,000.00	Nutts Corner Boarding Kennels	Y	N/A	N	15%

Ref	Contract Title	Contract Type	Value	Successful Supplier	SVPP applied (Y/N)	If No - Reason why?	Reserved Contract (Y/N)	Social Value Weighting % applied
T2150u	Development and Coordination of the Belfast Employability & Skills Provider Network (ITT under T2150 DPS)	Services	£140,000.00	West Belfast Partnership Board	Y	N/A	N	15%
T2694 (1)	Curation of Fringe Programme for Fleadh 2026 Lot 1	Services	£50,000.00	Statement Productions Ltd	Y	N/A	N	15%
T2625	West Belfast District PCSP Community Safety Initiative	Services	£166,000.00	Upper Springfield Development Trust	Y	N/A	N	15%
T2555(4)	T2555 Lot 4 Hire of Vehicles, Mobile Plant & Glass Collection Vehicles- Telehandler	Services	£250,000.00	Baloo Hire Centre (Briggs Ltd)	Y	N/A	N	10%
T2691	The provision of a robust medical plan to cover all medical eventuality that may occur at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026 and 2027 (STA)	Services	£80,000.00	Dr Aisling Diamond / First Medic Events Ltd	N	STA/Direct Award	N	N/A
T2671	Provision of Porterage and Storage Services	Services	£90,000.00	Delivery Services & Storage Ltd	Y	N/A	N	10%
T2516	Supply and Delivery of Waste Collection Sacks	Supplies	£600,000.00	Techniclean Supply/TA Blake and White	Y	N/A	N	10%
T2716	Hire of Grounds Maintenance Machinery with Operator	Services	£130,000.00	Clive Richardson Ltd	Y	N/A	N	10%
T2652	Management and delivery of a Belfast Citywide Appeals Service	Services	£1,080,000.00	Advice Space	Y	N/A	N	15%
T2646 (L1)	Supply and delivery of high-quality bedding plants	Supplies	£480,000.00	Hannas Nursery	Y	N/A	N	15%
T2619	PEACEPLUS Financial Controller	Services	£80,000.00	KPMG	N	External Framework Used	N	N/A
T2646 (2)	Maintenance, removal and emptying of floral displays service	Supplies	£340,000.00	Hannas Nursery	Y	N/A	N	10%
T2704	Provision of a Case Management Solution for NIHMO	Services	£85,000.00	Idox Software Ltd	N	External Framework Used	N	N/A
T2708	Support and Maintenance of Web Recruitment Service - Eploy	Services	£124,800.00	ITS Software Systems Ltd t/a Eploy	N	External Framework Used	N	N/A

Ref	Contract Title	Contract Type	Value	Successful Supplier	SVPP applied (Y/N)	If No - Reason why?	Reserved Contract (Y/N)	Social Value Weighting % applied
T2672	Provision of software, licensing, maintenance, support and upgrade of Corporate HR and Payroll System (STA)	Services	£1,261,400.00	Zellis UK Limited	N	STA/Direct Award	N	N/A
T2595	Provision of a Security Operations Centre Service	Services	£1,000,000.00	Softcat	Y	N/A	N	10%
T2663	Provision of Temporary Agency Workers via Crown Commercial Services framework	Services	£1,500,000.00	Various Suppliers	N	External Framework Used	N	N/A
T2695	Medical and First Aid Services for Fleadh	services	£700,000.00	St John Ambulance	Y	N/A	N	15%
T2637	Campsite for Fleadh	Services	£1,700,000.00	Nord Events	Y	N/A	N	15%
T2683	Provision of reusable period products scheme	Supplies	£105,000.00	Cheeky Wipes/Cheeky Baby Products Ltd	Y	N/A	N	15%
T2656(1)	Removal, transportation and emptying of skips and hook lift containers	Services	£5,700,000.00	Avenue Recycling	Y	N/A	N	10%
T2656(2)	Removal, transportation and emptying of skips and hook lift containers - Hire of Skips	Services	£300,000.00	Avenue Recycling	Y	N/A	N	10%
T26713	Procurement of the Cisco Secure Connect Service	Services	£130,409.77	BT PLC	N	External Framework Used	N	N/A
T2698	Support and Maintenance of E-Bravo tendering solution (STA)	Services	£111,145.79	Bravosolutions UK Limited	N	STA/Direct Award	N	N/A
T2697	Belfast Stories Specialist Financial Support	Services	£100,000.00	KPMG LLP	N	External Framework Used	N	N/A
T2697(b)	Belfast Stories Specialist Legal Support	Services	£100,000.00	Trowers & Hamlin LLP	N	External Framework Used	N	N/A
T2724	Supply and Delivery of 6 x 7.5ton column lifts	Supplies	£37,000.00	Search Workshop Supplies Ltd	N	STA/Direct Award	N	N/A
T2649	Provision of a Production Management Service for City Council events and activities	Services	£500,000.00	Show Inc UK	Y	N/A	N	15%
T2714	Upgrade and contract extension of the Content Management System (CMS) which supports all BCC websites	Services	£325,000.00	Professional Granite Consulting Ltd	N	STA/Direct Award	N	N/A

Ref	Contract Title	Contract Type	Value	Successful Supplier	SVPP applied (Y/N)	If No - Reason why?	Reserved Contract (Y/N)	Social Value Weighting % applied
T2722	Provision of Audio Visual Equipment	Supplies	£200,000.00	XMA Ltd	N	External Framework Used	N	N/A
T2702	Collection and Treatment/Recycling of Hard Plastics from Household Recycling Centres	Services	£800,000.00	R Heatrick Ltd	Y	N/A	N	10%
T2721	Provision of IT Technical Research and Guidance	Services	£72,300	Gartner UK Limited	Y	N/A	N	10%
T2680	PEACEPLUS Sanctuary Theatre Animation Project	Services	£85,100.00	The Bright Umbrella Drama Co	Y	N/A	N	15%
T2701	Provision of fuels; Diesel, Gas Oil, Kerosene & Ad Blue	Supplies	£175,000.00	Nicholl (Fuel Oils) Ltd	N	External Framework Used	N	N/A
T2701	Provision of fuels; Diesel, Gas Oil, Kerosene & Ad Blue	Supplies	£175,000.00	LCC Group Ltd	N	External Framework Used	N	N/A
T2662	Provision of Temporary Agency Resources – Neutral Vendor Model	Services	£19,000,000.00	Matrix SCM	Y	N/A	N	10%
T2712 (Lot 1)	Provision of Insurance Services Lot 1 - Combined Liability	Services	£442,505.00	Intact Insurance	N	External Framework Used	N	N/A
T2712 (Lot 3)	Provision of Insurance Services Lot 3 - Motor Fleet Insurance	Services	£317,660.00	Intact Insurance	N	External Framework Used	N	N/A
T2712 (Lot 4)	Provision of Insurance Services Lot 4 - Crime Insurance	Services	£84,248.00	Intact Insurance	N	External Framework Used	N	N/A
T2712 (Lot 5)	Provision of Insurance Services Lot 5 - Pollution Liability Service	Services	£65,252.00	Chubb European Group SE	N	External Framework Used	N	N/A
T2699	Provision of an email filtering service	Services	£150,000.00	Softcat PLC	Y	N/A	N	10%
T2711	Online security awareness training and provision of phishing tests	Services	£69,000.00	Softcat PLC	Y	N/A	N	10%
T2732	Provision of AR Exhibit and associated equipment at City Hall	Services	£51,500.00	BT PLC	N	External Framework Used	N	N/A

Ref	Contract Title	Contract Type	Value	Successful Supplier	SVPP applied (Y/N)	If No - Reason why?	Reserved Contract (Y/N)	Social Value Weighting % applied
T2734	Installation of 26 SMART compactor litter bins - ESPO framework 615_25	Supplies	£77,870	Future Street Smart Waste Ltd	N	External Framework Used	N	N/A
T2717	Provision of a Construction Information database	Services	£40,000.00	Allium UK Holding Ltd t/a Accuris	N	STA/Direct Award	N	N/A

\* Contracts awarded using STA or Direct Award mechanism. SV offer negotiated with supplier but not evaluated using % weighting.

Table 1b: Tenders awarded by Property & Projects

Ref	Contract Title	Contract Type	Value	Successful Supplier	SVPP applied (Y/N)	If No - Reason why?	Reserved Contract (Y/N)	Social Value Weighting % applied
ITT 8513	USEL Recycling Storage Facility - Main Works Contractor	Works	£453,310.00	RMC Building Services Ltd	Y	Short duration project < 6 months	N	10%
ITT 39012	Main Contractor for Ardoyne Youth Enterprise	Works	£2,539,274.59	QMAC Construction Ltd	N	Funded project - CPD guidance/SIB Buy Social rules apply	N	N/A
ITT 39059	Tender for City Hall Health Service-Stained Glass Window	Works	£30,100.00	Alpha Stained Glass Ltd	Y	Short duration project < 6 months	N	10%
ITT 39089	BCC Reservoir Safety Inspections & Reporting	Services	£55,085.00	AECOM Ltd	Y	N/A	N	10%
L1BCC10	L1BCC10 - NRF_Refurbishment & New Build Extension for GVRT TREECO NI	Services	£112,640.00	Collins Rolston Architects Ltd	Y	N/A	N	10%

**Table 2: Summary of key findings/ data**

Key area/ criteria	Summary/ Key Findings
Total number of tenders awarded during Reporting Period	61 tenders awarded
Total number of tenders awarded where SVPP was fully applied	31 out of 61 tenders (51%)
Summary of reasons why SVPP was not fully applied	7 out of 30 – STAs/ Direct Awards 17 out of 30 – an external framework was used to award contract therefore restricted to framework evaluation criteria which did not permit including social value 1 out of 30 – externally funded projects procured in line with CPD guidance/SIB Buy Social. Considered below threshold and therefore unable to include social value. 5 out of 30 - Short duration projects – open ended SV questions asked, and SV Delivery plans agreed
Number of Reserved Contracts	0
Social value organisational behaviours selected for inclusion in tenders.	Ethical Procurement Policies - included in 15 out of 31 tenders Environmental Management Systems - included in 13 out of 31 tenders HR Policies - included in 24 out of 31 tenders  Although inclusion of these policies is considered by Officers on a tender by tender basis depending on the scope of the requirement, the Social Value Review Team will review guidance to ensure it is clear when to include these organisational behaviours in tenders; particular areas where there are low levels of inclusion.

page 52

**Table 3: Summary of Supplier's Social Value Offers (Evaluated submissions)**

T Ref	Successful Supplier	Social Value Initiatives																
		Number of employment weeks* (FTE) created for Apprenticeships	Number of employment weeks* (FTE) created for Priority Groups	Number of employment weeks* (FTE) created for Students	Employability or skills initiatives to support Priority Groups	Initiatives to enhance employability of young people	Use of a social enterprise or co-operative in the supply chain (in relation to contract)	Initiatives to support VCSE organisation	Initiatives to improve good relations between people from different religious, political, racial & ethnic backgrounds	Initiatives to reduce or prevent crime (including hate crime) and/or ASB	Initiatives to reduce or prevent health related inequalities	Initiatives to increase participation in sports related activities	Initiatives to increase participation in arts related activities	Reduce carbon emissions associated with energy supply	Reduce carbon emissions associated with transportation	Improve waste management, including recycling, upcycling and supporting the circular economy	Improve resource efficiency	Enhance environmental natural resources and biodiversity
T2705	Ulster University				ü	ü												
T2706	MAC Arts Centre				ü													
T2693	Hastings Group				ü	ü												
T2694 (3)	174 Trust - The Duncairn				ü													
T2694 (2)	MayWe				ü			ü										
T2654	Nutts Corner Boarding Kennels						ü				ü							
T2150 u	West Belfast Partnership Board												ü	ü				
T2694 (1)	Statement Productions Ltd						ü											
T2625	Upper Springfield Development Trust			ü														
T2555 (4)	Balloo Hire Centre (Briggs Ltd)								ü			ü						
T2671	Delivery Services & Storage Ltd							ü				ü		ü				

		Social Value Initiatives																
T Ref	Successful Supplier	Number of employment weeks* (FTE) created for Apprenticeships	Number of employment weeks* (FTE) created for Priority Groups	Number of employment weeks* (FTE) created for Students	Employability or skills initiatives to support Priority Groups	Initiatives to enhance employability of young people	Use of a social enterprise or co-operative in the supply chain (in relation to contract)	Initiatives to support VCSE organisation	Initiatives to improve good relations between people from different religious, political, racial & ethnic backgrounds	Initiatives to reduce or prevent crime (including hate crime) and/or ASB	Initiatives to reduce or prevent health related inequalities	Initiatives to increase participation in sports related activities	Initiatives to increase participation in arts related activities	Reduce carbon emissions associated with energy supply	Reduce carbon emissions associated with transportation	Improve waste management, including recycling, upcycling and supporting the circular economy	Improve resource efficiency	Enhance environmental natural resources and biodiversity
T2516	Techniclean Supply/TA Blake and White														ü	ü		
T277	Clive Richardson Ltd			ü										ü				
T2652	Advice Space				ü			ü			ü					ü		
T2654 (1)	Hannas Nursery													ü	ü		ü	
T2646 (2)	Hannas Nursery													ü	ü		ü	
T2595	Softcat	ü		ü														
T2695	St John Ambulance							ü			ü							
T2637	Nord Events				ü									ü				
T2683	Cheeky Wipes/Cheeky Baby Products Ltd					ü												
T2656 (1)	Avenue Recycling					ü												
T2656 (2)	Avenue Recycling					ü												

		Social Value Initiatives																
T Ref	Successful Supplier	Number of employment weeks* (FTE) created for Apprenticeships	Number of employment weeks* (FTE) created for Priority Groups	Number of employment weeks* (FTE) created for Students	Employability or skills initiatives to support Priority Groups	Initiatives to enhance employability of young people	Use of a social enterprise or co-operative in the supply chain (in relation to contract)	Initiatives to support VCSE organisation	Initiatives to improve good relations between people from different religious, political, racial & ethnic backgrounds	Initiatives to reduce or prevent crime (including hate crime) and/or ASB	Initiatives to reduce or prevent health related inequalities	Initiatives to increase participation in sports related activities	Initiatives to increase participation in arts related activities	Reduce carbon emissions associated with energy supply	Reduce carbon emissions associated with transportation	Improve waste management, including recycling, upcycling and supporting the circular economy	Improve resource efficiency	Enhance environmental natural resources and biodiversity
T2649	Show Inc UK			ü	ü	ü								ü	ü	ü		
T2702	R Heatrick Ltd													ü	ü		ü	ü
T2711	Gartner UK Limited													ü		ü		
T2668	The Bright Umbrella Drama Co						ü	ü										
T2662	Matrix SCM				ü	ü									ü			
T2699	Softcat PLC													ü			ü	
T2711	Softcat PLC										ü							
ITT 39089	AECOM Ltd							ü										
L1BCC 10	Collins Rolston Architects Ltd					ü		ü										

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Belfast City Council

Sustainable Procurement Policy & Strategy Document

Version 1.0



**Belfast**  
City Council

# CONTENTS

<b>Our Ambition, Values and Expectations .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Introduction .....	3
Our Ambitions for this Policy .....	3
Our Values & Expectations.....	5
Legislative & Strategic Context .....	6
Climate Action and the Net Zero Challenge.....	6
<b>Implementing our Policy .....</b>	<b>8</b>
Tenders >£1m value .....	8
Mandatory Requirements.....	8
Contract Lifecycle.....	13
Contract Lifecycle – Stage 1 Pre -Tender Considerations .....	13
Contract Lifecycle – Stage 2 Evaluation and Award.....	15
Contract Lifecycle – Stage 3 Contract Management & Delivery.....	16
<b>Support &amp; Guidance .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Monitoring &amp; Reporting .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>20</b>
Appendix 1 – Supplier Code of Conduct .....	20
Appendix 2 – Sustainable Initiatives .....	24
<b>Glossary of Terms .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Document Control.....	28

# Our Ambition, Values and Expectations

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## Introduction

In June 2022, following an extensive period of internal and external stakeholder engagement, we published and implemented our Social Value Procurement Policy 'SVPP'; being the first local authority in Northern Ireland to have in place such a policy.

The SVPP was designed to utilise the influence and power of our procurement expenditure to help deliver the Belfast Agenda while ensuring the best possible value for money 'VFM' when purchasing goods, services and works for the people of Belfast.

The SVPP has proven to be a success with some notable outcomes to date including:

- Payment of the Real Living Wage 'RLW' by our suppliers
- Prohibited use of Zero Hours Contracts by our suppliers
- Greater consideration of use of reserved contracts for social enterprises 'SEs' and creating connections between private sector and VCSE sector to support contract delivery
- Creation of local jobs for apprenticeships, our Inclusive Growth (IG) Target Groups and students as well the delivery of employability and skills initiatives by suppliers
- The delivery of a wide range of social value initiatives by suppliers that support local communities and people covering improving good relations, reducing crime, improving health, increasing sports participation and increasing arts participation
- The delivery of a wide range of environmental improvement initiatives by suppliers that aim to reduce supplier's carbon footprint, support the circular economy and enhance biodiversity

This Sustainable Policy & Strategy Document 'Policy' aims to build on these successes, apply lessons learned and further strengthen our commitments to ethical procurement, social value and climate action whilst delivering VFM for the ratepayers of Belfast.

The Policy also incorporates throughout our strategy when applying the Policy so as to set clear expectations of our suppliers and what suppliers can expect from the Council.

## Our Ambitions for this Policy

Whilst seeking to achieve the best commercial outcome from our procurement activities, it is our aim to also ensure that the purchase of goods, services and works achieves VFM by making a positive difference to the people, communities and local climate in Belfast.

We have defined Sustainable Procurement as:

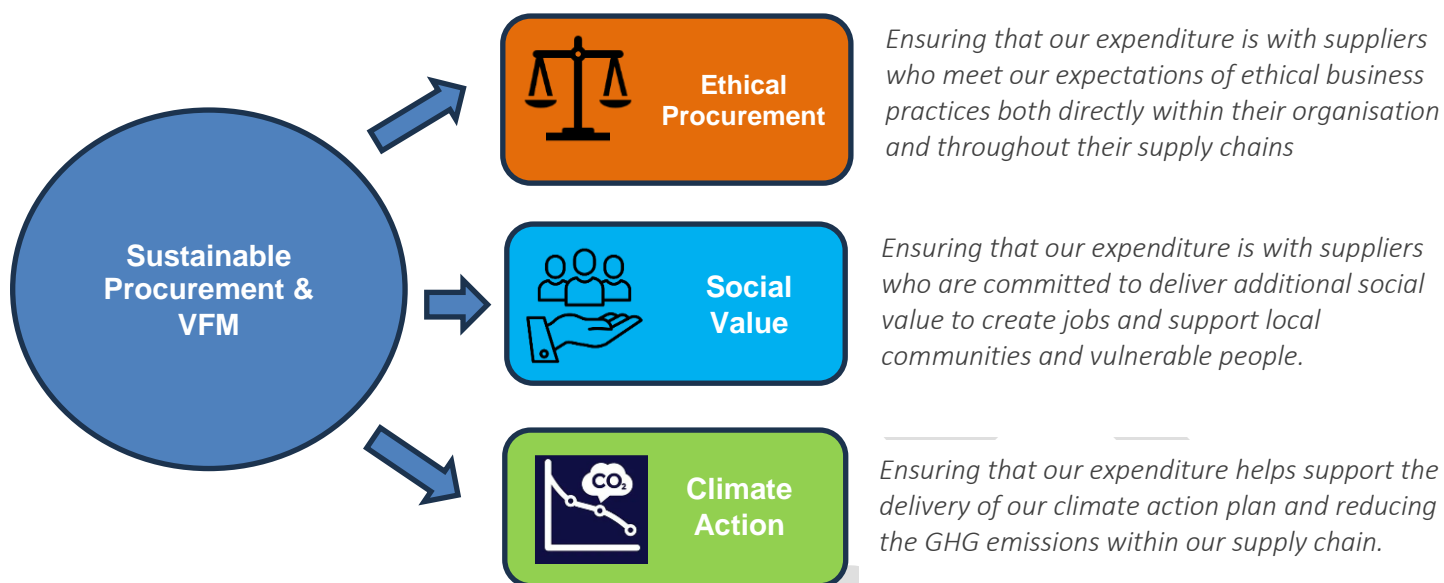
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*"A commitment to using our influence and procurement power to help deliver the Belfast Agenda; to ethically drive inclusive economic growth, support the Council's climate commitments, and support local communities and vulnerable people – while ethically delivering the best possible value for money when purchasing goods, services and works for the current and future generations of Belfast"*

---

We have developed 3 key themes for this Policy as set out in Fig 1.1 which will be used throughout the Policy.

Fig 1.1: Sustainable Procurement Themes



The Policy sets out what VFM now means for the Council through our procurement activity. It is no longer just price and quality as a key driver but the best sustainable outcome, ensuring a proportionate balanced consideration of quality, cost, ethical procurement, social value and climate action when purchasing goods, services or works.

Furthermore, evidence indicates that the more we spend with Belfast based suppliers, the more our residents will be able to benefit. The Policy aims to support local businesses, increase local competitiveness and improve the climate resilience of its supply chains, reducing their vulnerability to climate risk.




As explained further in this Policy we will adopt a proportionate approach using £1m tender value threshold to help support and develop local SMEs whilst still harnessing our buying power to deliver lasting and meaningful sustainable outcomes.

We will continue to lead the way for local councils in Northern Ireland in terms of sustainable procurement best practice and innovative approaches to Policy delivery.

We will work collaboratively across the Belfast anchor institutions to encourage adoption of our sustainable procurement approach.

Fig 1.2 sets out further our ambitions for each of our 3 key themes.

Fig 1.2: Sustainable Procurement Ambitions

Policy Theme	Policy Ambitions
 <b>Ethical Procurement</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure our procurement spend supports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ suppliers who have robust policies, procedures and controls in tackling modern slavery and upholding international human rights standards</li> <li>➤ suppliers who adopt fair labour practices and provide safe working environments</li> <li>➤ suppliers who adopt and demonstrate the highest standards in ethical business practices.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Support fair and ethical trading by our suppliers and their supply chains.</li> <li>3. Promote fair pay for all and as minimum the payment of the Real Living Wage by our suppliers.</li> <li>4. Eliminate the use of zero hours contracts by our suppliers.</li> <li>5. Ensure suppliers comply with data protection and information security management best practice.</li> </ol>
 <b>Social Value</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase the number of jobs in Belfast and create local employment opportunities for the long-term unemployed, economically inactive and other underrepresented groups in the labour market.</li> <li>2. Ensure procurement spend delivers additional social value projects for local communities and vulnerable people.</li> <li>3. Reward suppliers who embrace the opportunity to deliver additional social value.</li> <li>4. Increase the use of reserved contracts to support Social enterprises and local businesses.</li> <li>5. Promote the <a href="#">Belfast Business Promise</a> and increase membership of our Belfast based suppliers.</li> </ol>
 <b>Climate Action</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reward suppliers who adopt and demonstrate the highest standards in environmental best practice.</li> <li>2. Work with suppliers who are able to demonstrate awareness of the impact of climate change on their operations and supplies, and have built in mitigations to reduce disruptions, including climate related maintenance costs and improved climate resilience.</li> <li>3. Reduce our GHG emissions associated with the purchase of goods, services and works to support our net zero transition including using local suppliers to reduce miles travelled (where possible in line with our legislative framework).</li> <li>4. Consider and include low carbon standards and circular economy provisions in our Tenders as part of the best VFM outcome.</li> <li>5. Reduce/eliminate Single Use Plastic 'SUP' and plastic pollution by our suppliers and their associated supply chains.</li> <li>6. Switch to renewable and low-carbon energy use through the procurement of power purchase agreements (where available).</li> </ol>

## Our Values & Expectations

It is important we are clear with our suppliers about the values of the Council and the associated expectations we have of our suppliers. We have set this out in our Supplier Code of Conduct which is included as Appendix 1.

As part of each Tender a supplier will be required to confirm they have read, understood and provide a commitment that they will ensure their conduct, whilst working on Council contracts, aligns with our Supplier Code of Conduct.

Failure by a supplier to provide this confirmation will result in a supplier being excluded from the procurement process. Furthermore, should it later be found during a contract that a supplier's conduct does not align with this Code of Conduct then this may be considered a breach of contract.

## Legislative & Strategic Context

The Policy has been designed to align with the key objectives of the Procurement Act<sup>1</sup> which includes:

1. Delivering VFM – Cabinet Office guidance advises to consider further what value means to our organisation and the community we serve, and how we can get the best mix of economy, efficiency and effectiveness that achieves the intended outcome over the whole lifetime of the contract.
2. Maximising public benefit – Cabinet Office guidance asks us to think about the extent to which our contracts can deliver greater benefit i.e. considering social value or environmental benefits that could be achieved by the contract.
3. Sharing information – We will monitor and publish sustainable commitments by suppliers and delivery of same.
4. Treat suppliers the same and acting with integrity – the Policy adds to the Council's established procurement practices and governance arrangements ensuring a transparent and fair procurement process for all.
5. Have regard for SMEs (reduce/remove barriers to participation) – we have considered and adopted a proportionate approach to support SMEs throughout the Policy.

In addition, the Policy aligns with current strategic Council initiatives and policies including:

1. The Belfast Agenda and Corporate Plan and the five strategic themes particularly Our Economy, Our Planet and Compassionate City.
2. Inclusive Growth Strategy and our corporate commitment to harnessing procurement to social value and the associated principles.
3. Belfast Business Promise and our Promise Pledges
4. Climate Action Plan including actions to develop a sustainable/ low carbon procurement policy and supplier guidance documents to support a transition to an inclusive, net zero and resilient future; and assisting the Council to adapt to a changing climate and reduce risks on its services, supply chains and operations resulting from extreme weather.
5. Single Use Plastics 'SUP' Policy (under development) and the policy objectives including quantify and monitor SUP usage and disposal, adopt best practice principles for unavoidable SUPs, integrate SUPs into policies, strategies, and plans; minimise SUPs and adopt best practice through our suppliers and contractors; and raise awareness of SUPs across the community.
6. Sustainable Food Policy (under development) and the commitment to use our purchasing power to demonstrate how the food system can become more sustainable, ethical, and provide better choices for people, and for the local and wider environment and society.

Our ambitions continue to be somewhat constrained by the legislative environment in which we operate. These constraints include Article 19 of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 1992. The latter places restrictions on the Council's freedom to consider various matters when procuring works or goods by declaring certain items 'non-commercial considerations' which cannot be considered as part of a procurement process. We will continue to support the development and implementation of a Social Value Act for Northern Ireland and updating Article 19 so that the Policy can be fully implemented.

## Climate Action and the Net Zero Challenge

Belfast declared a climate emergency declaration in October 2019 and has adopted carbon reduction targets of 66% reduction by 2025, 80% reduction by 2030 and 100% reduction by 2050. Procurement is a key lever to

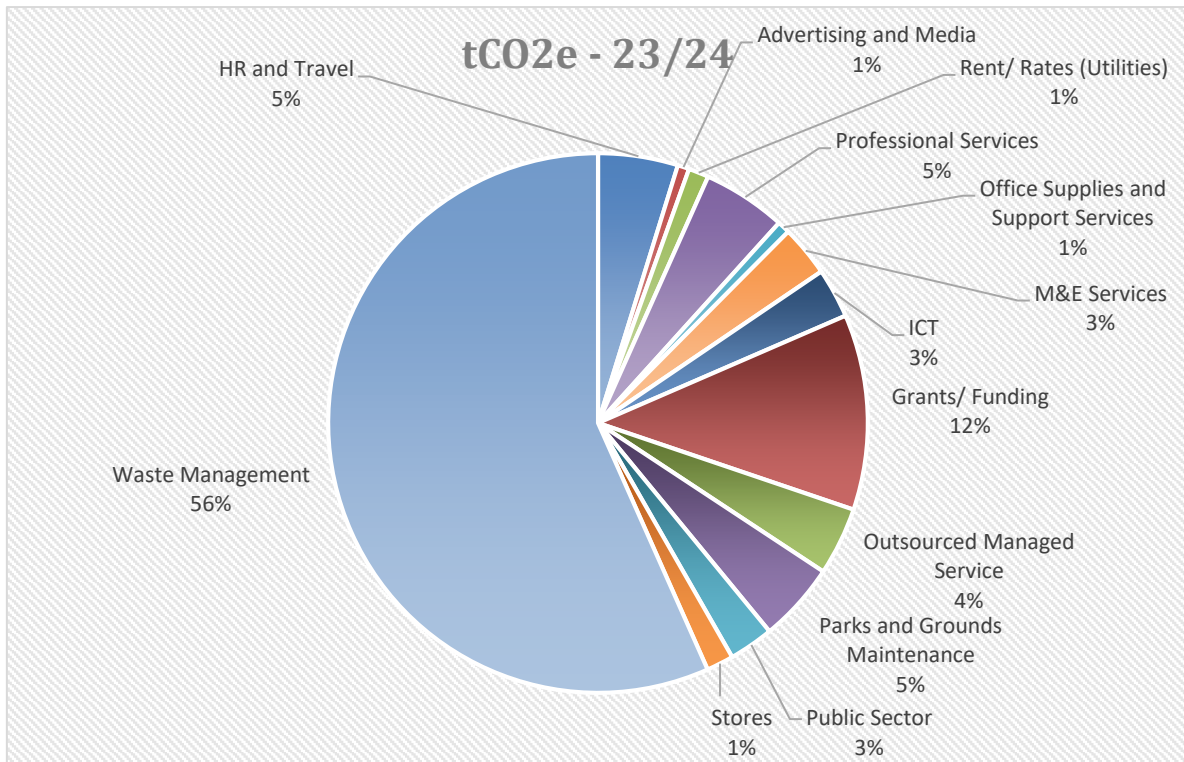
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<sup>1</sup> Includes the Procurement Act 2023 and the Public Contracts Regulations 2024

support climate change mitigation and adaptation for the Council whilst driving wider supply chain decarbonisation.

Based on recent carbon emissions 'CO2e' analysis of Council spend<sup>2</sup> with our suppliers it was found that CO2e emissions from the Council's supply chain account for approximately 75% (55 kt) of the Council's total carbon footprint. The biggest CO2e contributors by spend category is set out in Fig 1.3 below.

Fig 1.3: Key Spend Categories – CO2e analysis



The Policy will also consider other areas of spend that contribute to our carbon footprint and have a high local environmental impact for the Council including:

- Energy (Gas and Electricity) supply which are Scope 2 emissions
- Single Use Plastics use and plastic pollution by our suppliers
- Food and associated sustainable local producing and sourcing

It is therefore imperative that the Council leverages its procurement expenditure within these spend categories to drive real change within our supply chain's business practices to support the Council's net zero ambitions and the 2050 net zero target set for Belfast by the Government.

To do this we need to:

- Have greater visibility of our supply chain CO2e data on an ongoing basis
- Work with our suppliers on delivery of their climate action and carbon reduction plans with year-on-year improvements and progression.
- Consider environmental risks for each Tender/ project including climate change mitigation and adaptation, prevention of pollution, resource use and consumption, and protection and restoration of biodiversity

<sup>2</sup> Based on FY23/24 expenditure and baseline data

- Have a consistent and proportionate approach to including lower carbon standards within specifications/works information and tender evaluations when procuring goods, services and works.

## Implementing our Policy

### Tenders >£1m value

An analysis of our contract records<sup>3</sup> shows that contracts with a value of >£1m accounts for approximately 75% of the Council's total contract spend<sup>4</sup> but only accounts for 15% of the total number of contracts.




This therefore presents an opportunity through this Policy to:

- Set higher expectations for suppliers who apply for Tenders >£1m value and allow for greater focus on management and delivery of their sustainable commitments.
- Simplify the procurement process and associated burden for local SMEs applying for Tenders up to £1m whilst using the Policy to develop these suppliers so they can grow their business and bid for larger value Tenders in the future, both for the Council and other organisations.

The application of this >£1m value threshold throughout the contract lifecycle is explained further throughout this Policy.

### Mandatory Requirements

The following mandatory requirements for suppliers applies to all Tenders:-

Mandatory Requirement & Description	Supplier Requirement
 <b>Acceptance of our Code of Conduct</b> The Council has developed a Supplier Code of Conduct which reflects the values and aspirations of the Council and the associated expectations of our suppliers. This set out in Appendix 1 of this Policy.	Suppliers are required to confirm that they have read, understood and will ensure their conduct, whilst working on Council contracts, will align with our Supplier Code of Conduct.
 <b>Modern slavery</b> The Council sees our engagement/ reach with a wide range of suppliers and market sectors as an excellent opportunity to help tackle modern slavery	Suppliers are required to demonstrate they comply with the requirements of the <a href="#">Modern Slavery Act 2015</a> , where applicable
 <b>Prompt payment of suppliers</b> The Council is committed to ensuring our suppliers and their supply chains are paid promptly i.e. within 30 days of a valid invoice being submitted.	Suppliers are required to ensure and confirm they have in place sufficient policies and procedures to ensure prompt payment of their suppliers and associated supply chains.

<sup>3</sup> Based on available contract records in September 2025.

<sup>4</sup> Based on total of 458 contract records and total combined contract value of £389m. >£1m value threshold would account for 65 contract records (15%) and total combined contract value of £291m (75%).



### Real Living Wage

The Council is the first local authority in Northern Ireland to become an accredited Living Wage Employer. The accreditation acknowledges that the Council pays its employees the Foundation Living Wage as well as ensuring any regularly contracted workers are paid the living wage hourly rate

Suppliers are required to pay, as a minimum, all employees assigned to work on Council contracts the Real Living Wage as published by the [Living Wage Foundation](#).



### Zero Hours Contracts

A Zero Hours Contract means a type of contract between an employer and a worker according to which the employer is not obliged to provide any minimum working hours and the worker is not obliged to accept any work offered.

Suppliers are not permitted to use Zero Hours Contracts for any employee who is assigned to work on Council contracts



### Cyber Essential Certification

Cyber Essentials is the minimum standard of cyber security recommended by the Government for organisations of all sizes.

Suppliers must, as a minimum, be [Cyber Essentials](#) certified (or national equivalents) and maintain a valid certification when under contract with the Council.<sup>5</sup>


Developed by the experts at the National Cyber Security Centre, the certification scheme is aligned to five technical controls designed to prevent the most common internet based cyber security threats.

Where a supplier does not have Cyber Essentials at the time of Tender, then this must be attained within 12 months of contract award.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> More enhanced certification may be required (i.e. Cyber Essentials Plus or SO/IEC 27001:2022) depending on the nature of the contract and the types of data processed/handled (i.e. personal and sensitive).

<sup>6</sup> Failure to attain Cyber Essentials in this timeframe may result in termination of contract.

The following additional mandatory requirements will apply to all Tenders<sup>7</sup> > £1m:

Policy Theme	Mandatory Requirement & Description	Supplier Requirement	How we apply this to Tenders ≤ £1m value?
 <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Ethical Procurement</p>	<p><b>Ethical Procurement Policy</b></p> <p>The Council wants to contract with suppliers who have in place robust ethical procurement practices and who treat their supply chains fairly.</p>	<p>Suppliers are required to have in place policies and procedures which clearly set out their commitment to ethical procurement practices and fair treatment of supply chains.</p>	<p>In the instance that the supplier does not already have these policies and procedures in place, then this is included as a supplier development opportunity in the sustainable initiatives as set out in Appendix 2.</p>
	<p><b>Supply Chain Audits and Mapping</b></p> <p>It is important that the Council has adequate transparency of supply chains involved in supporting contract delivery to ensure our expenditure continues to support suppliers with sound ethical business practices.</p>	<p>Within 12 weeks of contract award suppliers will be required to have conducted an audit of their supply chain, who is involved in contract delivery, to ensure, as a minimum, 1<sup>st</sup> tier suppliers involved comply with the Council’s Supplier Code of Conduct. Suppliers will provide a report detailing this audit including a mapping exercise showing suppliers involved and associated role in contract delivery.</p> <p>Where a contract is considered higher risk as part of an Anti-Slavery Risk Tiering Tool ‘ARTT’ this supply chain audit and mapping exercise may be extended to lower supply chain tiers.</p>	<p>This is included as a supplier development opportunity in the sustainable initiatives as set out in Appendix 2.</p>

<sup>7</sup> Where a procurement includes Lots the over £1m threshold value applies to Lot value only. Where the procurement involves the establishment of a Framework Agreement or a Dynamic Market the £1m threshold value applies to any call-off contract.



### HR policies and procedures – Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

The Council wants to contract with suppliers who have in place robust HR policies and procedures that support fair and equal treatment of their employees.

Suppliers are required to have in place policies and procedures which clearly set out their commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace, including evidence of delivering training to staff relating to these policies and procedures.

In the instance that the supplier does not already have these policies and procedures in place, then this is included as a supplier development opportunity in the sustainable initiatives as set out in Appendix 2.

### HR policies and procedures – Employee Development & Wellbeing

The Council wants to contract with suppliers who have in place robust HR policies and procedures that support fair and equal treatment of their employees.

Suppliers are required to have in place policies, procedures and employee contractual terms which clearly set out their commitment to the development, health and wellbeing of their employees.

In the instance that the supplier does not already have these policies and procedures in place, then this is included as a supplier development opportunity in the sustainable initiatives as set out in Appendix 2.



### Carbon Reporting and Carbon Reduction Plans

It is important that the Council has transparency of our suppliers GHG emissions and visibility of suppliers' carbon reduction plans to support and evidence our journey to net zero.

Within 12 weeks of contract award suppliers will be required to upload (using the Council's carbon reporting tool) their GHG emission data and publish a Carbon Reduction Plan demonstrating year on year carbon reduction within their organisation over the Contract Period.

This is included as a supplier development opportunity in the sustainable initiatives as set out in Appendix 2.

**Environmental Management Systems ‘EMS’**

The Council wants to contract with suppliers who have in place robust environmental policies and procedures to protect our local environment and reduce our carbon footprint.

Suppliers are required to have in place a UKAS accredited EMS (i.e. ISO14001 or national equivalent).

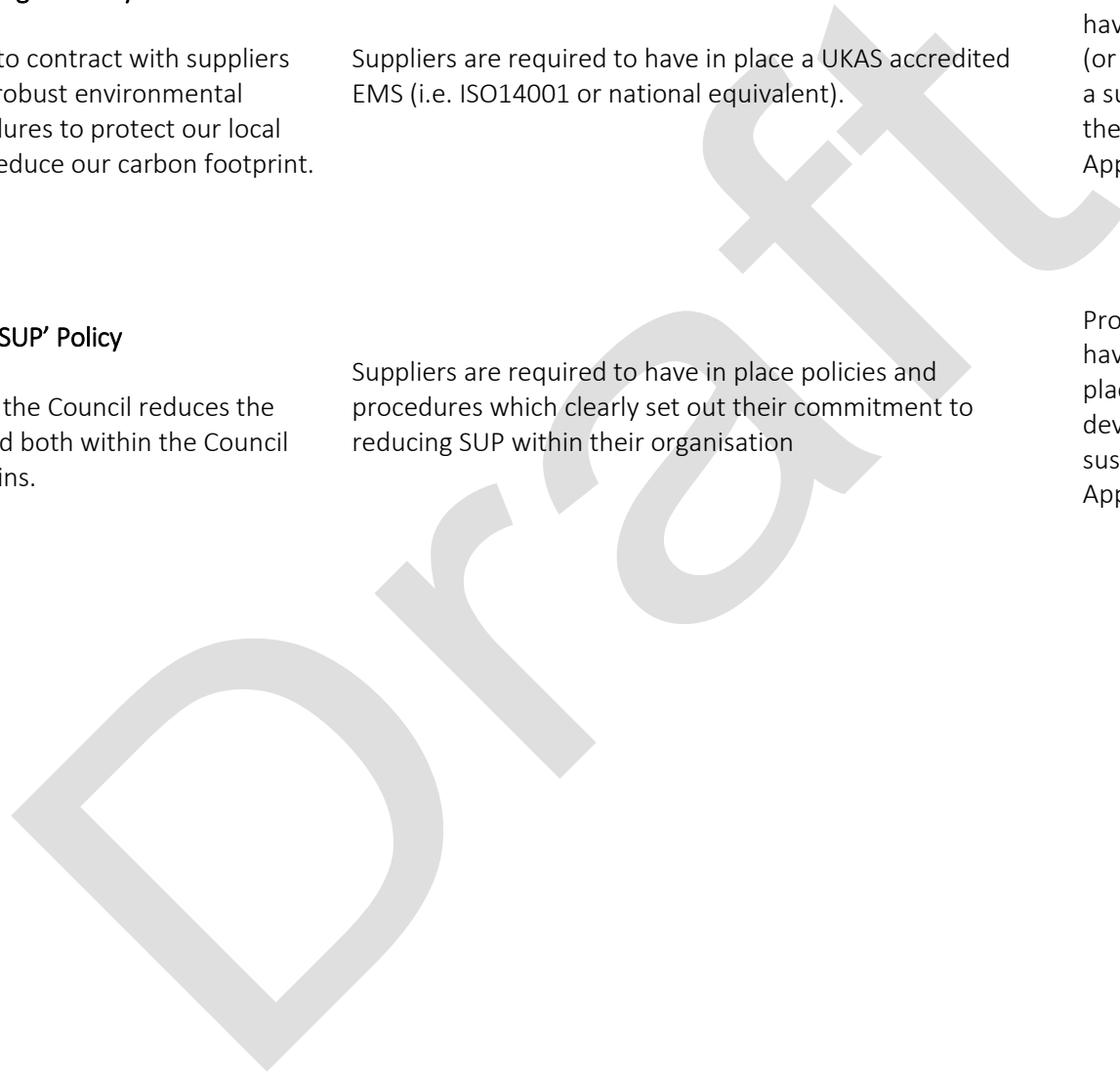
Provided the supplier does not already have a UKAS accredited EMS in place (or equivalent), then this is included as a supplier development opportunity in the sustainable initiatives as set out in Appendix 2.

**Single Use Plastics ‘SUP’ Policy**

It is important that the Council reduces the amount of SUP used both within the Council and our supply chains.

Suppliers are required to have in place policies and procedures which clearly set out their commitment to reducing SUP within their organisation

Provided the supplier does not already have these policies and procedures in place, then this is included as a supplier development opportunity in the sustainable initiatives as set out in Appendix 2.



## Contract Lifecycle

To realise the ambitions of the Policy it is important that its application is considered throughout the contract lifecycle. The 3 stages of the contract lifecycle are set out below.

Figure 1.4: Contract Lifecycle



1. Pre-Tender Stage – this stage covers identification of business need through to finalising procurement documents for publication. This stage requires the development of a procurement strategy taking into consideration effective sustainability requirements in line with this Policy including, where appropriate, project commissioning and business case development.
2. Evaluation & Award - this stage covers how we evaluate Tenders and ensure the best VFM outcome is reached in line with the requirements of this Policy.
3. Contract & Performance Management - this stage covers how we will manage supplier performance and ensure they deliver on the initiatives they committed to as part of their tender bid.

## Contract Lifecycle – Stage 1 Pre -Tender Considerations

### Commissioning and Business Cases

We will consider environmental risks and sustainable aims and outcomes for a project at the commissioning stage including, where required, business case development. Outputs from these considerations will then be incorporated at procurement stage in line with this Policy.

### Reserving Contracts

We will use reserved contracts, where appropriate, to support:

- Social Enterprises
- Belfast based businesses (Below Threshold Tenders only in line with legislative constraints)
- Northern Ireland based businesses (Below Threshold Tenders only in line with legislative constraints)

This is aligned with the Council’s ambitions to use expenditure to support local businesses with associated economic benefits and reducing our carbon footprint.

We will establish appropriate monitoring and reporting procedures to ensure these considerations to reserve are appropriately challenged.

## Procurement Strategy Development

A Procurement Strategy<sup>8</sup> will be developed for each Tender at pre-tender stage to ensure the best VFM outcome for the requirement being procured.

Short duration Tenders (i.e. less than 6 months) may require a simplified proportional approach. This will be considered as part of the Procurement Strategy with best endeavours made to fully apply the Policy.

A procurement strategy template and associated supporting toolkits, guidance and checklists will be provided for Officers to ensure consistent adoption.

## Tenders >£1m value – Sustainable Review

Tenders with a value over £1m will also be subject to a Sustainable Review which will be a more in-depth review with the three key themes in mind.

Resources with the required experience and knowledge will be assigned to conduct these reviews which will include:

- Ethical Procurement – consider ethical issues, risks and outcomes for the requirement and any required additional standards for suppliers and contractual clauses; particularly for requirements that involve suppliers and supply chains that are more susceptible to modern slavery and human rights abuse.
- Social Value - consider social value aims and outcomes for the requirement and any specific targeted outcomes to include as clauses in the specification and/or evaluation criteria.
- Climate Action - consider environmental risks, carbon reduction aims and outcomes for the requirement and any specific targeted outcomes to include as clauses in the specification and/or evaluation criteria.
- Tender Evaluation – consideration of any required innovative approaches to evaluation to support sustainable outcomes e.g. using of weighted carbon pricing, bespoke sustainable criteria evaluation questions and scoring mechanisms etc.

This review may also result in a unique list of sustainable initiatives being developed for the requirement to support any targeted outcomes, further to those set out in Appendix 2.

## Sustainable Standards Database

The above review processes will ensure that emerging best practice is considered for each applicable Tender covering the three key themes of the Policy. Any emerging best practice will then be captured and shared for consideration for inclusion in all Tenders as a standard practice and for further Policy developments.

Appropriate procedures and controls will be established to ensure this database is used by Officers and maintained.

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<sup>8</sup> Procurement strategies typically include consideration of reserving contracts; procurement route; Pre-market engagement 'PME' planning; sustainable standards and best practice; SME consideration and removal of barriers; risk assessments; evaluation strategies; and conflict of interest assessments.

## Contract Lifecycle – Stage 2 Evaluation and Award

### Sustainable criteria weighting and points targets

All Tenders will include a minimum 10% weighting for sustainable criteria as follows:

Tenders up to £1m value	Tenders >£1m
	
<b>Min. 10% weighting</b>	<b>Min. 15% weighting *</b>

\* This weighting may be reviewed at Stage 1 Sustainable Review and may result in the % weighting being increased depending on the requirement and how it might support Policy ambitions.

For each Tender a sustainable criteria points target will be generated on the basis of 1 point for every £10,000 value with a minimum points target of 10 for all Tenders.

This translates to the following example points targets:

Tender value	Points target
Up to £100,000	10
£1,000,000	100
£5,000,000	500

Points targets can then be reviewed to ensure they are proportionate depending on the requirement being procured, market capacity/capability and sustainable aims and objectives.

### Supplier Offers and evaluation

We have developed a list of sustainable initiatives (Appendix 2) that are linked to Council's strategic policies and initiatives and Policy ambitions. We have assigned a proportionate points-based system for each initiative which reflects both a fair assessment of the resource cost and investment for suppliers in delivering the initiative and the strategic importance of each initiative in supporting Policy ambitions.

As part of the Tender process, suppliers will select which of these initiatives they are willing to offer and commit to delivering under the contract achieving the points target set for the Tender, the 'Supplier Offer'.

Suppliers will also have to set out how they plan to deliver their Supplier Offer demonstrating they have a sound understanding of each initiative and our expectations and how they will put in place required resourcing and support mechanisms to ensure delivery.

Each Supplier Offer will then be assessed as part of the evaluation process against a set scoring mechanism.

### Private/ Social Enterprises Partnerships

We want to use the Policy to encourage the creation of private/social enterprise partnerships 'PSPs' to support the delivery of our sustainable initiatives. This would involve a private sector supplier working with a registered Social Enterprise to deliver a sustainable initiative as part of the Tender. To do this we have

included additional points where suppliers chose to do this as part of the Supplier Offer as shown in Appendix 2 which we believe reflects the additional benefit of PSPs in supporting our Policy ambitions.

The Council will work with suppliers to broker relationships between suppliers who commit to this PSP approach and Belfast based Social Enterprises.

### **Minimum scoring threshold**

We want to ensure that when awarding Tenders that a minimum level of sustainable outcomes is awarded. Therefore, a minimum scoring threshold of 60% against sustainable criteria will be required. This is an 'Acceptable' response in line with our standard scoring mechanism<sup>9</sup>. This translates to scoring as follows:

Social Value Weighting	Minimum Social Value Scoring Threshold
10%	6 out 10
15%	9 out 15

This enables a proportionate approach setting a minimum standard for suppliers to meet and increasing the opportunity for sustainable criteria to be a differentiating factor in a Tender evaluation outcome.

Should a supplier fail to meet these minimum scoring thresholds following evaluation then their entire tender bid would be excluded from the tender process.

### **Contract Lifecycle – Stage 3 Contract Management & Delivery**

The measurement and monitoring of sustainable commitments delivered by suppliers will be incorporated into the general performance management of the contract. Suppliers will be expected to report on their delivery of sustainable outcomes. Depending on the contract type, we will introduce measures such as:

- Sustainable key performance indicators (KPIs).
- Service performance deductions/service credits in the event sustainable commitments are not fully delivered. Any subsequent payments by suppliers could be used to fund other Council led sustainable initiatives.
- Retention money to cover sustainable commitments until fully delivered.

In all cases, we will ensure that suppliers are given a reasonable opportunity to rectify any performance issues.

To support our contract managers will we:

- ensure contract management is sufficiently resourced and supported in the Council
- ensure sufficient training and guidance is available and associated support
- ensure contract managers have the required management systems and tools to do the role
- engage with contract managers to assess Policy impact, receive feedback and continually improve.

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<sup>9</sup> The % minimum threshold may be amended in line with what is considered 'Acceptable' in line with the scoring mechanism included in the Tender.

# Support & Guidance

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## Support and guidance for Officers

We will put in place the necessary governance arrangements and supporting documentation to ensure the Policy is fully operational across the Council and expectations understood by Officers when implementing projects and conducting procurement exercises including the necessary training.

We ensure our contract managers have the required support through robust contract management systems and procedures including the provision of training.

## Support and guidance for suppliers

We will ensure our Tenders will provide sufficient clarity regarding what is expected from the Policy in terms of Suppliers Offers, evaluation, contract terms and contract management.

We will encourage suppliers to ask questions and provide feedback as part of the Tender process so the Council can adapt the Policy as appropriate.

We will promote the Policy at networking, meet the buyer and procurement conference events.

We will continue to publish [an 18-month procurement pipeline](#) on our website to help suppliers prepare for future tendering opportunities.

We will continue to encourage our Officers to seek [quotations](#) from local Belfast businesses (currently £30,000 but under review), and encourage potential suppliers to [register with our supplier database](#).

## Networking and shared learning

We will network with external stakeholders to share learning, explore best practice and support Policy development including but not limited to:

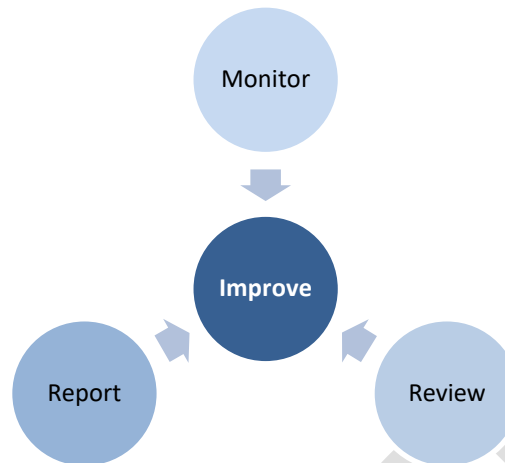
- SIB
- Social Enterprise NI
- Local Governmental Association and NI Councils
- GB Councils
- Local anchor institutions

# Monitoring & Reporting

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Appropriate and robust monitoring and reporting is crucial for our proposed approach to be successful and achieve our Policy ambitions. We will establish a governance model for the Policy to ensure its application is applied in a consistent and effective manner across Tenders as illustrated in Fig 1.5 below.

Figure 1.5: Governance model



### Monitor

We will capture key metrics such as:

- No. and value of Tenders the Policy has been applied to including reason where it is not applied
- Above and below £1m Tender value threshold application
- % weighting applied to Tenders and points targets for evaluation
- Supplier's commitments to delivering sustainable initiatives i.e. which initiatives and associated metrics
- Delivery and completion of these supplier commitments. We will continue to work with the SIB Social Value Unit and use their reporting tool.
- No. of contracts reserved to SEs, Belfast based companies and/or NI based companies.

### Review

Best practice associated the Policy is constantly evolving and it is important that we adapt the Policy to keep pace with developments.

We will establish a Sustainable Procurement Review Team that will meet regularly to consider and review:

- Any feedback/ complaints/ issues associated with the Policy and associated actions to address
- The quality of the Supplier Offers being awarded and any improvements required e.g. evaluation training for officers, improved guidance for suppliers etc
- The impact the Policy is having
- Any development/changes required to the Policy and supporting guidance documents in line with emerging best practice

We will work with our marketing and communications team to tell stories and create case studies associated with the Policy. This will help with increasing awareness of the Policy and the impact it is having.

### Report

In conjunction with SIB's Social Value Unit we will continue to work on developing current data capture and reporting tools to allow us to effectively monitor sustainable initiatives delivery and act against non-delivery by suppliers.

We will agree and provide regular reporting requirements to Council senior management and Elected Members, as required, using the key metrics captured as part of our monitoring.

We will continue to include Policy outputs in our annual procurement performance report, highlighting the benefits and impact of the Policy and outlining any opportunities for continual improvement.

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# Appendices

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## Appendix 1 – Supplier Code of Conduct

The Council is committed to upholding the highest standards of ethical conduct in all our procurement activities. We want to maximise additional social value delivery through procurement, ensuring that public contracts deliver meaningful benefits to local communities.

We are committed to achieving net-zero carbon emissions and embedding climate action into procurement decisions.

We are fully supportive of all UK and associated international human rights obligations as detailed here [Human Rights: The UK's international human rights obligations - GOV.UK](#) and the UN's [Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework | OHCHR](#)

We want to award contracts to suppliers that share and adhere to this vision.

This Supplier Code of Conduct sets out the values and expectation of suppliers who wish to contract with the Council. Suppliers will be required to acknowledge that they have read, understood and will adhere to this Code of Conduct when providing goods, services and/or works for the Council.

The Council expects its suppliers to maintain high standards of integrity and professionalism in their business dealings, adhering to the laws of the countries where they operate and taking action where necessary to minimise negative impacts of their business operations.

The values and expectations set out in this Code of Conduct apply to our supplier's direct business operations and member of its supply chain used to deliver Council contracts.

Where any local law, regulations or policy require stricter standards than this Supplier Code of Conduct, suppliers must adhere to such requirements.

### **Our Values and expectations**

#### **Modern Slavery and Human Rights Protection**

We respect and uphold international human rights standards and comply with the requirements of the Modern Slavery Act as a minimum. We reject forced labour and exploitation and ensure employees are free to choose their employment and leave that employment.

We expect and require our suppliers to:

- respect and support the protection of internationally proclaimed Human Rights and put the necessary measures and controls in place to ensure their business operations do not support forced, bonded, involuntary prison labour, human trafficking or child labour
- fully co-operate with any associated investigations/ audits in a transparent manner
- without delay, inform us of any investigation, inquiry or enforcement proceedings in relation to any allegation of slavery or human trafficking offenses brought against them or any part of their supply chain.

### **Fair labour practices and provide a safe working environment**

We promote excellent working conditions, positive health and wellbeing, and training, development and reward opportunities for all. [We promote diversity and inclusion for all](#). The Council is an accredited Living Wage Employer.

We expect and require our suppliers to:

- pay the Real Living Wage to staff employed to work on Council contracts and ensure national legal standards regarding pay and working conditions are adhered to in their business operations including Working Time Regulations 1998 (or equivalent national legislation)
- remunerate all employees equally at the same employment grade and without discrimination i.e. regardless of education, social class/caste, nationality, age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation unless statutory conditions require otherwise
- support their employees through access to training and development opportunities and well-being initiatives
- facilitate inclusive practices and promote diversity in the workplace
- prioritise workers' health and safety 'H&S' ensuring:  
a safe and hygienic working environment is provided  
all required H&S equipment required for the role is provided free of charge and is safe for use and regularly tested. Employees should receive all required training, including refresher, in the safe operation of all equipment and tools  
policies and processes are in place for recording and eliminating occurrence/reoccurrence of H&S related incidents.

### **Ethical business practices and sustainable procurement**

We enforce zero tolerance for bribery, fraud, and unethical conduct in procurement and contract delivery. We require traceability and transparency of the origin of goods and reject any goods produced or distributed using unethical practices. We embed sustainable criteria (ethical, social value and climate action) within our contracts to deliver lasting and meaningful local community benefits. We encourage participation in our procurements from SMEs, social enterprises, and local suppliers.

We expect and require our suppliers to:

- always act with respect, integrity and fairness with their sub-contractors/supply chain including:
  - o not imposing unnecessary or unfair contract terms or unfairly passing risk down to sub-contractors/ supply chains
  - o where possible, appoint sub-contractors through an open and fair process
  - o ensure prompt payments to their supply chain in line with Council terms and conditions
- monitor and manage risks in their supply chains, including subcontractors and actively seek out ways in which to minimise negative impacts
- act in compliance with all laws, regulations and taxation rules of the countries they are working in, manufacturing in or trading with, as applicable, and adhere to international standards where applicable

- not be involved with acts of corruption or bribery, or support acts of violence or terrorism or abuse of individual people or communities.
- not be involved in or offer improper payments such as kickbacks or facilitation payments to Council employees or Elected Members
- deliver on their sustainable initiative commitments to the standards expected by the Council, in a timely manner and, where possible, include community benefit delivery in the locality of where the contract is performed
- ensure business operations do not harm the local community in which these operations take place or where the delivery of the contract takes place and appropriately address any concerns or requests from those communities in a timely manner.

### **Data protection and integrity**

We handle data responsibly, securely, and in compliance with relevant legislation.

We expect and require our suppliers to:

- as a minimum, maintain a valid Cyber Essentials accreditation
- comply with all applicable data protection laws
- consider data protection risks associated with Council contracts and mitigate/reduce risk where possible.

### **Responsible use of Artificial Intelligence 'AI'**

AI has the potential to make a substantial impact for individuals, communities, and society. We want to make sure that the use of AI is positive and does not unintentionally harm those affected by it.

We expect and require our suppliers to:

- make considerations of AI ethics and safety as a high priority
- put in place sufficient controls and procedures to ensure AI is used responsibly and safely; and any such controls and procedures are regularly monitored and updated in line with emerging best practice.

### **Environmental Legislative Compliance**

We take compliance with environmental legislation and associated duty of care obligations very seriously.

We expect and require our suppliers to:

- conduct their business in accordance with local and national environmental laws, regulations, and directives of the countries they are working in, manufacturing in or trading with.
- treat and manage waste following all legal requirements and industry best practice throughout the supply chain
- improve their organisations understanding in the importance of the environment and approaches to minimise negative impacts through staff training and, where appropriate, supplier training

### **Carbon reporting, reduction and circular economy**

We are committed to carbon reduction and net zero. We are committed to the use of renewable energy, low-emission transport, and energy-efficient technologies. We encourage circular economy principles, including reuse, repair, and recycling.

We expect and require our suppliers to:

- understand their carbon footprint and associated impact and, when required, provide associated GHG Emission data in a timely manner and work collaborative with the Council to reduce their carbon footprint.
- actively explore low-carbon alternatives, adopt circular economy principles and minimise/eliminate unnecessary waste from contract delivery including SUP and plastic pollution
- where possible buy locally to support local business and reduce supply chain carbon footprints
- be mindful of the environmental risks and impact of their business operations and where possible implement improvements to address i.e.
  - make, use and promote products made from natural, biodegradable and renewable materials and avoid the use of toxic chemicals and products that are not cruelty-free
  - avoid the use of materials which are scarce or at risk of becoming so (such as rare earth elements) and find sustainable alternatives
  - endeavour to prevent pollution or pollution incidents by conservation measures in their facilities and processes, by recycling, reducing and substituting harmful materials.
  - proactively avoid negative impact on biodiversity, minimise this where unavoidable and support and promote use of products, materials and services that protect and enhance native biodiversity
  - minimise the risk of negative water impact, with particular focus on water use, wastewater and discharges into the water system

### **Monitoring and reporting**

The Council reserves the right to conduct compliance audits with suppliers who sign up to the Supplier Code of Conduct and are awarded Council contracts. Suppliers must fully co-operate with these audits in a timely manner following reasonable notice being afforded by the Council.

We expect and require our suppliers to:

- fully co-operate with any associated investigations/ audits in a transparent manner and without delay, inform us of any investigation, inquiry or enforcement proceedings in relation to anything pertinent in this Supplier Code of Conduct and work collaboratively with the Council to develop an agreed remedial action plan, notwithstanding any appropriate remedy provisions in agreed contract terms and conditions.
- Where appropriate, use the Council's [Raising a Concern](#) process to bring to the Council's attention a suspected danger, wrongdoing or illegality that is in the public interest.

## Appendix 2 – Sustainable Initiatives

Theme	Category	Sustainable Initiative	Available points	Points using PSP	UOM	For <£1m Tender only
Ethical Procurement	Ethical Procurement Policy	Design and implementation of a new ethical procurement policy and provision of associated training for employees	10	15	Per action	✓
	Supply Chain Audits and Mapping	Annual supply chain audit and mapping exercise (for 1st tier suppliers involved with contract delivery)	15	20	Per action	✓
	VCSE Sector Support	Use of a social enterprise 'SE' in the supply chain (in relation to contract delivery)	25	N/A	Per SE used	
		Business Development & Knowledge Sharing Initiatives to support a VCSE organisation	15	20	Per 8 hrs	
	Belfast Business Promise 'BBP'	Sign up to BBP as a 'Supporter' and progress to 'Member' during the Contract Period (Belfast only suppliers)	15	N/A	Per Action	
Social Value	Employment opportunities & Initiatives to support Employability	104 employment weeks (FTE) created for Apprenticeships (Min. 2-year Apprenticeship Programme)	100	N/A	Per 104 weeks	
		52 employment weeks* (FTE) created for IG Target Groups	90	N/A	Per 52 weeks	
		12 employment weeks* (FTE) created for Trainees (paid)	15	N/A	Per 12 weeks	
		40 employment weeks* (FTE) created for 3rd level Students placements (paid)	50	N/A	Per 40 weeks	
		Employability or skills initiatives to support IG Target Groups and/or enhance employability of young people	15	20	Per 8 hrs	
		Action Plan for in-work IG Target Groups employees to cover progression, skills development and educational attainment	30	35	Delivery of Action Plan	

Theme	Category	Sustainable Initiative	Available points	Points using PSP	UOM	For <£1m Tender only
	Local Community & Vulnerable People Support	Design and implementation of a new HR equality, diversity and inclusion policy and provision of associated training for employees	10	15	Per action	✓
		Design and implementation of a new HR policies, procedures and employee contractual terms for the development, health and wellbeing of employees.	10	15	Per action	✓
		Initiatives to improve good relations between people from different religious, political, racial & ethnic backgrounds	15	20	Per 8 hrs	
		Initiatives to reduce or prevent crime (including hate crime) and/or ASB; or health related inequalities	15	20	Per 8 hrs	
		Initiatives to increase participation in sports related activities; or arts related activities.	15	20	Per 8 hrs	
		Initiatives to reduce the stigma of mental illness and increase awareness of mental health and well-being issues among employees, suppliers, customers and communities	15	20	Per 8 hrs	
		Initiatives to support BCC community projects	15	20	Per 8 hrs	
		Local initiatives to reduce poverty and inequality in the area where the contract is delivered	15	20	Per 8 hours	
Climate Action	Carbon reporting and reduction plans	Annual Scope 1&2 emissions data reporting using Council's reporting tool.	15	20	Per action	✓
		Design and publish a carbon reduction plan delivering a year-on-year carbon reduction over the Contract Period	20	25	Per action	✓
	EMS	Attain a new Environmental Management System 'EMS' accreditation during the Contract Period i.e. ISO14001 or equivalent.	20	25	Per action	✓
	Circular Economy	Support an initiative to enhance natural resources and biodiversity in BCC area	20	25	Per 8 hrs	

Theme	Category	Sustainable Initiative	Available points	Points using PSP	UOM	For <£1m Tender only
		Action plan to supporting the circular economy i.e. waste recycling/upcycling plan or donating unused equipment/items to local VCSE sector	15	20	Delivery of Action Plan	
		Circular economy training for staff working on the contract	10	15	Per 8 hrs	
		Waste management training initiatives for communities/VCSEs/ educational establishments	15	20	Per 8 hrs	
		Design and implementation of a new Single Use Plastics 'SUP' policy and provision of associated training for employees	10	20	Per action	✓
		Supply chain audit and mapping exercise (for 1st tier suppliers involved with contract delivery) to identify the use of SUP and an associated action plan to reduce SUP usage in operations	30	35	Delivery of Action Plan	
	Climate Resilience	Supply chain resilience and capacity action plan	15	20	Delivery of Action Plan	

As part of the Sustainable Reviews conducted for >£1m value requirements this list of initiatives may be reviewed and updated with additional ethical procurement, social value and/or climate action initiatives potentially added depending on the requirement and emerging best practice.

# Glossary of Terms

The following terms and associated meaning are used throughout this Policy

Term	Definition/ Meaning
The Council	Belfast City Council
Below Threshold	A public contract that is below the published threshold value under the Procurement Act 2023 as published by the <a href="#">Cabinet Office</a>
Contract Period	The total term of a contract including any renewal/extension options.
Belfast Agenda	<a href="#">Belfast Agenda</a> is the city's community plan and its key strategic document. Published in 2017, it outlines a collective vision for the city in 2035 and the outcomes we want to achieve. It was developed by a partnership of organisations involved in delivering services across the city and has been shaped by the important input from our citizens. The Belfast Agenda includes a range of ambitions which have, and will continue, to shape the strategies and action plans of all the city's community planning partners.
GHG Emissions	Greenhouse gas emissions
Policy	This Sustainable Procurement Policy & Strategy Document
IG Target Groups	Our inclusive growth target groups as set out in our <a href="#">Inclusive Growth Strategy</a> including residents not in employment, residents with low skill levels, young people not in education, employment or training (NEET); and in work, low earning individuals. A person who has a disability, who is a Looked After Child/ care leaver or a person from a minority ethnic community are also target groups.
RLW	Real Living Wage as determined by the Living Wage Foundation <a href="https://www.livingwage.org.uk">https://www.livingwage.org.uk</a>
SEs	Social enterprises. Defined by the Council as a trading business – selling goods and services – but whose primary objective is to achieve social and/or environmental benefit. Social enterprises are different from those charities and voluntary organisations who do not have financial independence through trading income.
SUP	Single Use Plastics
SVPP	The Council's Social Value Procurement Policy. This Policy will supersede the SVPP.
Tenders	Any procurement exercise conducted by the Council via open competition. This currently applies to procurement exercises valued over £30k (under review).  Some exceptions may apply where the procurement is conducted using an external framework e.g. Crown Commercial Services. In these cases, best endeavours will be made to apply the Policy whilst complying with the framework guidelines.
VCSEs	Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises

## Document Control

**Title:** Sustainable Procurement Policy & Strategy Document

**Document version:** v1 [date]

**Departmental ownership:** Corporate Services

**Team ownership:** Commercial and Procurement Service (CPS)

**Document owner:** Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Corporate Services

**Officer responsible or document authority:** Noleen Bohill, Head of CPS / Lewis Murray, Strategic Category Manager

**Date of approval:** Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (SP&R) [date]; Full Council [date]

**Approved by:** Belfast City Council

**Date of last review:** N/A

**Date of last update:** N/A

**Updated by:** Lewis Murray, Strategic Category Manager

**Date of next review:** (annual review)

**Location(s) of where document is held and referenced:** CPS Sharepoint / Interlink/ Belfast City Council website

### Amendment Record

Change	Version	Date	Author	Page no.
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