

# Council

## SPECIAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the City Hall on Friday, 13th March, 2020  
at 6.00 o'clock p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor (Councillor D. Baker) (Chairperson); the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McReynolds); the High Sheriff (Councillor Verner); Aldermen Copeland, Haire, Kingston, McCoubrey, Rodgers and Sandford; and Councillors S. Baker, Beattie, Black, Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Matt Collins, Michael Collins, Corr, de Faoite, Donnelly, Dorrian, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Groogan, Heading, Hussey, M. Kelly, T. Kelly, Kyle, Lyons, Magee, Magennis, McAllister, McAteer, McDonough-Brown, McKeown, McLaughlin, McMullan, Mulholland, Murphy, Newton, O'Hara, Pankhurst, Smyth, Walsh and Whyte.

### **Summons**

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

### **Apologies**

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman Spence and Councillors Graham, Grooves, Hanvey, Howard, Hutchinson, Long, Maskey, McCusker and Nicholl.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in that he was employed by the Public Health Agency and left the meeting whilst this item was under discussion.

### **Explanation of the Agenda and the Meeting**

The Chief Executive provided the Council with an explanation of the agenda and how the meeting would be progressed.

### **Update on the Latest Medical Advice**

The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services provided the Members with an update on the latest medical advice which had been received at meeting held with representatives of the Public Health Agency. He also provided information on the Council's planning and processes which were taking place, particularly through the 15 identified critical services.

**Update on Measures being put in place  
For Employees**

The Head of Human Services updated the Council on measures being put in place for Council employees.

**Standing Orders – Revision to the Scheme  
Of Delegation in relation to responding to  
Emergencies.**

The City Solicitor submitted for the Council's consideration the following amendment to Standing Orders regarding a revision to the Scheme of Delegation in relation to responding to emergencies:

**“Standing Order 41**

In the event of any civil emergency or any situation in which urgent actions are required and it is either not reasonably practicable to convene a meeting of Committee or Council, or if any such meetings if called is inquorate, the Chief Executive or any Chief Officer nominated by her may exercise all or any of the functions of the Council excepting those which are reserved to the Council pursuant to Section 7 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014. Any decisions taken pursuant to this Standing Order will be reported to the relevant Committee or Council at the next available meeting. This Standing Order is to be read in conjunction with paragraph 2.3 of the Scheme of Delegation.”

Moved by Councillor Matt Collins,  
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson,

That the proposed Standing Order be amended with the removal of the words 'any' in the first sentence and the insertion of the words 'arising from the COVID-19 crises, after the word situation.

On a vote by show of hands, three Members voted for the amendment and forty-six against and it was declared lost.

Accordingly, the Council agreed to approve Standing Order 41 as set out.

**Measures to be considered by the  
Council in relation to its facilities**

The Chief Executive submitted for the Council's consideration a list of measures it might wish to put in place in relation to its facilities.

**Adjournment**

The Council agreed to adjourn for a period of time to allow the Members time to give consideration to the proposals.

(The Council stood adjourned from 7.35p.m. until 7.55p.m.)

Moved Councillor Beattie,  
Seconded by Councillor McDonough-Browne,

“The Council agrees to adopt a phased response in order to help the organisations manage the public health issue across Council facilities and provision of Council Services. In the first instance, the Council agree to keep Council services/facilities open with the exception of those listed below:

- City Hall will be closed for tours including the exhibition with immediate effect, however the registering of births, deaths and marriages will continue. Weddings and civil partnership ceremonies will be facilitated. All other functions/events in City Hall will be cancelled until further notice.
- From Monday 16 March Malone House and Belfast Castle will be closed to the public. Functions already booked at these venues can continue.
- Tropical Ravine and Palm House closed until further notice.
- Belfast Zoo will be closed to the public until further notice.
- Pitches and pavilions will be closed with immediate effect until further notice.

The Council also agrees to monitor Belfast City Council organised events and to keep under daily review.

The Council agrees to place particular emphasis on the fact that the majority of its facilities and services remain operational, including the following, although these will be kept under review:

- Community centres and parks will remain open.
- Recycling Centres will remain open.
- Leisure Centres will remain open.
- St Georges Market and Smithfield Market will remain open.

The Council further agrees to work with the Public Health Agency and the Northern Ireland Executive seeking support from Department for Communities to make a series of interventions to protect those most at risk including older people and these whose immunity may be impaired.

The Council agrees to request that the Department of Finance create a package of measures to mitigate the worst impact of closures and potential city-wide restrictions on small businesses and charities, as well

as actions to support community based enterprises, including childcare organisations, and other social enterprises that are a mainstay of the local economy.

The Council condemns any company who is overtly profiteering from the current crisis.”

**Amendment**

Moved by Fiona Ferguson,  
Seconded by Councillor Collins,

1. That the final sentence be amended to provide that after ‘crises’ insert ‘and calls upon the Executive to implement penalties against such perpetrators’; and, in addition,
2. Also calls on the Department of Communities to provide support to employees who are not normally protected by Statutory Sick Pay in these circumstances.

The Council proceed to vote separately on the two issues.

In relation to part 1 re: penalties, on a vote by show of hands, seven Members voted for the amendment and twenty-six against and it was declared lost.

For part 2, financial support, thirteen Members voted for and none against and it was declared carried.

**Amendment**

At the request of Councillor Kyle, the Council agreed the following be added to the motion; ‘that the Council will continue to liaise closely with the Chief Medical Officer and the Public Health Agency’.

**Amendment**

Proposed by Councillor Matt Collins,  
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson.

That the Council agrees to add the following to the motion: Calls upon the NI Executive to consider requisitioning of private healthcare facilities to make up shortages in medical equipment where necessary, such as ICU beds, ventilators and isolation rooms.

On a vote by show hands, seven Members voted for the amendment and fifteen against and it was declared lost.

**Amendment**

At the request of Councillor Brooks, the Council agreed that the last sentence be amended to include the word 'or individual' after the word, 'company'.

The Council further agreed that a joint press statement be issued on behalf of all the Parties.

Accordingly, the motion, as amended, was put to the Council in the following form and agreed:

“The Council agrees to adopt a phased response in order to help the organisations manage the public health issue across Council facilities and provision of Council Services. In the first instance, the Council agree to keep Council services/facilities open with the exception of those listed below:

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- Community centres and parks will remain open.
- Recycling Centres will remain open.
- Leisure Centres will remain open.
- St Georges Market and Smithfield Market will remain open.

The Council further agrees to work with the Public Health Agency and the Northern Ireland Executive seeking support from Department for Communities to make a series of interventions to protect those most at risk including older people and these whose immunity may be impaired. In addition, Council requests that support be provided to employees who are not normally protected by statutory sick pay in these circumstances.

The Council agrees to request that the Department of Finance create a package of measures to mitigate the worst impact of closures and potential city-wide restrictions on small businesses and charities, as well as actions to support community based enterprises, including childcare organisations, and other social enterprises that are a mainstay of the local economy.

The Council condemns any company or individual who is overtly profiteering from the current crisis.

The Council will continue to liaise closely with Chief Medical Officer and Public Health Agency. The Council agrees a joint press statement will be issued tonight on behalf of all parties.”

**Call-in**

The Council agreed that, due to the urgency of matter and where an unreasonable delay could be prejudicial to the Council's or public's interest, that the decisions taken in the meeting be not subject to call-in.

Lord Mayor  
Chairperson