

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



**Belfast
City Council**

17th March, 2021

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet remotely via Microsoft Teams on Friday, 19th March, 2021 at 9.30 am., for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

SUZANNE WYLIE

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. Routine Matters

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

2. Restricted Items

- (a) Finance Strategy (Pages 1 - 8)
- (b) Update on Organisational Recovery and Covid Management (Pages 9 - 30)
- (c) Support for Street Traders (Pages 31 - 34)
- (d) Bonfire Approach 2021 (Pages 35 - 40)
- (e) Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council – Local Development Plan – Focused Changes Consultation (Pages 41 - 58)
- (f) Carnegie Trust – Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland (Pages 59 - 68)
- (g) Motion: Black Lives Matter Demonstrations (Pages 69 - 78)
- (h) Asset Management (Pages 79 - 88)

3. Matters referred back from Council/Motions

- (a) Motion: Real Living Wage Foundation Accreditation (Pages 89 - 90)
- (b) Motion: Health and Social Care Workers Thank You Payment- Response from Minister of Health (Pages 91 - 94)
- (c) Motion: Takeover of Private Healthcare - Response from Minister of Health (Pages 95 - 100)
- (d) Motion: Child Poverty Task Force - Response from Department for Communities (Pages 101 - 108)

4. Governance

- (a) Committee Motions – Quarterly Update (Pages 109 - 126)
- (b) Revision to Scheme of Allowances (Pages 127 - 152)

5. Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

- (a) Council Improvement Objectives for 2021-22 (Pages 153 - 158)

6. Physical Programme and Asset Management

- (a) Alleygating Programme – Phase 5 (Pages 159 - 162)
- (b) Update on Physical Programme (Pages 163 - 168)
- (c) Update on Area Working Groups (Pages 169 - 180)

7. Finance, Resources and Procurement

- (a) CIPFA Prudential Code Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Indicators 2021-22 (Pages 181 - 200)
- (b) Update on Contracts (Pages 201 - 206)

8. Equality and Good Relations

- (a) Minutes of the Meeting of the Shared City Partnership (Pages 207 - 226)

9. Operational Issues

- (a) Minutes of the Meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum (Pages 227 - 230)
- (b) Minutes of the Meeting of Audit and Risk Panel (Pages 231 - 268)
- (c) Minutes of the Meeting of the Customer Focus Working Group (Pages 269 - 272)

10. Issues Raised in Advance by Members

(a) Autism Impact Champion

Councillor McMullan to propose:

“As part of our commitment in the Belfast Agenda to become an accessible city for everyone and our further commitment to a COVID-19 response and recovery that is inclusive of disabled people, older people and carers, this Council will achieve Autism NI’s Autism Impact Award and become an Autism Impact Champion to ensure that every autistic individual feels welcome and comfortable accessing the range of services and facilities we offer.”

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Subject:	Motion: Real Living Wage Foundation Accreditation
Date:	19th March, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To consider a motion in relation to Real Living Wage Foundation Accreditation, which was referred to the Committee by the Council at its meeting on 1st March.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to consider the motion and to take such action thereon as may be determined.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u> At the meeting of the Council held on 1st March, the following motion, which was proposed by Councillor McLaughlin and seconded by Councillor Murphy, was, in accordance with Standing Order 13(f), referred to the Committee for consideration:

	<p>“This Council is proudly a Real Living Wage Foundation employer for its direct employees. However, Belfast City Council does not pay the Real Living Wage Foundation rate to casual workers, industrial placements and apprentices. As a result of this policy, Belfast City Council is not an accredited Living Wage Foundation Employer. This council believes this must change.</p> <p>Belfast City Council wants to become a leader for Workers Rights in this City and encourage other organisations/business through our Social Value Procurement strategy to become Real Living Wage Foundation Employers. Many local authorities are Real Living Wage Employers in Scotland, Wales and England however no Council in the North has yet to become an accredited Real Living Wage employer. Therefore this Council commits to becoming an accredited Real Living Wage Foundation Employer by 1st April, 2022.</p> <p>Furthermore, the council recognises its continued use of outside employment agencies and notes the difficulties that this can present which were highlighted throughout the Covid 19 pandemic when we had limited control over the terms and conditions of those employees carrying out council functions employed through an agency. Therefore, this Council will establish plans to review workforce planning with a view to reducing the use of agencies and will bring a report before exploring options on how we can achieve this.”</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p>
3.2	None.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.3	None associated with this report.
4.0	Documents Attached
	None.



Subject:	Motion: Health and Social Care Workers -Thank You Payment - Response from Minister of Health
Date:	19th March, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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

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

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To consider a response on behalf of the Minister of Health to a motion calling for a thank you payment to be made to Health and Social Care Workers, which was passed by the Council at its meeting on 7th January.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is requested to consider the response and to take such action thereon as may be determined.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>At the Council meeting on 7th January, the following motion, which was proposed by Councillor Brooks and seconded by Councillor Verner, was passed:</p> <p>“In recent years through austerity where pressures on the system have grown significantly, and most recently throughout the pandemic; we recognise that the best way to value health and social care workers, including student doctors and nurses, is through a fully funded fair and decent pay award negotiated through their health trade</p>

	<p>unions, and the provision of safe staffing levels underpinned with safe staffing legislation and, to express our thanks for their commitment to the care for community during the pandemic, we will write to the Ministers of the NI Executive urging them to engage with trade unions on NHS pay and to administer a “thank you” payment of at least £500 as a practical demonstration of our gratitude. This payment must not replace a fully funded 2021 pay award.”</p>
3.2	A response has been received from the Minister of Health, a copy of which is attached.
3.3	<p>The Minister states that he has decided to proceed with a special recognition payment of £500 for health and social care workers in Northern Ireland, which, reflecting the principle of parity, would be similar to a scheme operating currently in Scotland. His officials are finalising the details of the special payment and information will be published on the Department of Health’s website as soon as that work has been completed.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p>
3.4	None associated with this report.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.5	None
4.0	Document Attached
	Response from Minister of Health

FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH



Louise McLornan
Democratic Services Officer
Belfast City Council

McLornanL@belfastcity.gov.uk

Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAST, BT4 3SQ
Tel: 028 9052 2556
Email: private.office@health-ni.gov.uk

Your Ref:

Our Ref: CORR-0281-2021

Date: *17* March 2021

Dear *Louise,*

Thank you for your recent correspondence regarding a thank you payment for Health and Social Care Staff.

I have decided to proceed with a special recognition payment of £500 for Northern Ireland's health and social care workers, similar to a scheme in Scotland – reflecting the important principle of parity.

My Officials are finalising the details of the special recognition payment, which we will publish on the Department's website as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robin Swann".

Robin Swann MLA
Minister of Health

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Subject:	Motion: Takeover of Private Healthcare - Response from Minister of Health
Date:	19th March, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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

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

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To consider a response from the Minister of Health to a motion on healthcare provision, which was passed by the Council at its meeting on 1st February.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is requested to consider the response and to take such action thereon as may be determined.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>At the Council meeting on 1st February, the following motion, which was proposed by Councillor Ferguson and seconded by Councillor Matt Collins, was passed:</p> <p>“This Council calls on the Stormont Executive to continue to work with all available health care resources, including all publicly funded health professionals and the private health sector, to ease the burden on our overwhelmed health service and health workers; to ensure the health service has the available beds, capacity and staff to care for all those sick with Covid; and in order to carry out all Red Flag cancer surgeries, and all other vital operations and life-saving procedures.”</p>

3.2	A response has been received from the Minister of Health, a copy of which is attached.
3.3	The Minister begins by stating that it is unacceptable that any patient has to wait longer than is clinically appropriate for surgery or treatment and stresses that waiting times for elective surgery remains one of his key priorities.
3.4	Since the number of patients requiring admission and treatment for Covid-19 related illness began to rise in October, it became increasingly difficult to maintain planned services. Staff across the system had to be redeployed to help manage the higher number of patients being admitted to hospitals on an emergency basis and also to allow the system to increase critical care capacity.
3.5	He explains that all Trusts maintain urgent bookable theatre lists for emergency surgery and utilise capacity within those lists for cancer surgery. This is kept under daily review.
3.6	In addition, his Department has established a Regional Prioritisation Oversight Group to ensure that clinical prioritisation of time critical and urgent cases across surgical specialities and Trust boundaries is consistent and transparent. The Group ensures also that the utilisation of all available capacity is fully maximised.
3.7	Whilst this may mean that patients are required to travel further for their surgery, the Minister would rather see the highest priority treatments delivered elsewhere in Northern Ireland, than not at all.
3.8	He goes on to point out that, given the impact of Covid-19 on health service operating capacity, he has made it clear that all possible sources of additional capacity should be utilised. That has included securing theatre capacity from local independent sector health providers. From 1st April 2020 to 7th February 2021, approximately 4,300 patients have been treated by local HSC consultants in the three local independent sector providers. Provision for continued access to the three independent hospitals has been made until 31st March 2021 and will continue beyond March, for the foreseeable future.
3.9	In addition to that, some capacity has been secured from private clinics in the Republic of Ireland and discussions are ongoing with NHS England for in-house and independent sector capacity for Northern Ireland patients.
3.10	The Minister assures the Council that Trusts are working very hard to maintain cancer care, in so far as that is possible during the current surge. That will include seeking to continue to maximise fully all available in-house HSC and independent sector capacity, both within and outside Northern Ireland.
3.11	He adds that it must also be recognised that cancer services were in a challenging position before the pandemic. The pandemic has exacerbated the challenges but it has not created them. There is no doubt that some services would benefit from reform, but above all, there needs to be a commitment to significant and sustained investment.
3.12	The Minister concludes by stating that he deeply regrets that anyone has had their surgery postponed or delayed.

	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None</p>
4.0	Document Attached
	Response from Minister of Health

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FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Máinnystrie O Poustle

www.health-ni.gov.uk

Eilish McGoldrick
Belfast City Council
Legal and Civic Services Department

mcgoldricke@belfastcity.gov.uk

Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAST, BT4 3SQ
Tel: 028 9052 2556
Email: private.office@health-ni.gov.uk

Your Ref: EMcG 01.02.2021.PH

Our Ref: CORR-0725-2021

Date: *10th* March 2021

Dear *Eilish,*

Thank you for your letter of 10 February 2021 to the First Minister and deputy First Minister, regarding the motion that the Council passed on 1 February about the use of available healthcare resources.

Firstly, let me say that it is unacceptable that any patient has to wait longer than is clinically appropriate for surgery or treatment, and I can assure you that waiting times for elective surgery remains one of my key priorities.

Since the number of patients requiring admission and treatment for Covid-19 related illness began to rise in October, it became increasingly difficult to maintain planned services. Staff across the system had to be redeployed to help manage the higher number of patients being admitted to hospitals on an emergency basis and also to allow the system to increase critical care capacity.

All Trusts maintained urgent bookable theatre lists for emergency surgery and utilised capacity within those lists for cancer surgery. This was kept under daily review.

In addition my Department has established a Regional Prioritisation Oversight Group. This ensures that clinical prioritisation of time critical and urgent cases across surgical specialities and Trust boundaries is consistent and transparent. It also ensures that the utilisation of all available capacity is fully maximised.

Whilst this may mean that patients travel further for their surgery, I would rather see the highest priority treatments delivered elsewhere in Northern Ireland, than not at all.

Given the impact of Covid-19 on health service operating capacity, I have made it clear that all possible sources of additional capacity should be utilised. That has included securing theatre capacity from local independent sector health providers. From 1 April 2020 to 7 February 2021 approximately 4,300 patients have been treated by local HSC consultants in the three local independent sector providers. Provision for continued access to the three independent hospitals had been made until 31 March 2021 and will continue beyond March, for the foreseeable future.

In addition to that, some capacity has been secured from Republic of Ireland private clinics. Discussions are ongoing with NHS England for in-house and independent sector capacity for Northern Ireland patients.

I can assure you that Trusts are working very hard to maintain cancer care in so far as that is possible during the current surge. That will include seeking to continue to maximise fully all available in-house HSC and independent sector capacity both within and outside Northern Ireland.

It must also be recognised that cancer services were in a challenging position before the pandemic. The pandemic has exacerbated the challenges but it has not created them. There is no doubt that some services would benefit from reform, but above all, there needs to be a commitment to significant and sustained investment.

I deeply regret that anyone has had their surgery postponed or delayed.

Yours sincerely



Robin Swann MLA
Minister of Health



Subject:	Motion: Child Poverty Task Force - Response from Department for Communities
Date:	19th March, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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

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

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To consider a response on behalf of the Minister for Communities to a motion calling for the establishment of a Child Poverty Task Force, which was passed by the Council at its meeting on 1st February.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is requested to consider the response and to take such action thereon as may be determined.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>At the Council meeting on 1st February, the following motion, which was proposed by Councillor McCusker and seconded by Councillor Whyte, was passed:</p> <p>“This Council notes with alarm the Department of Communities Family Resources Survey 2018/2019 which shows that 122,000 children in Northern Ireland live in relative poverty (24% of children) with 109,000 of those living in absolute poverty and expresses deep concern that these figures have increased significantly since the previous year and have not improved at all in the last five years. The rise of the Universal Credit claimant count and expected end of the furlough scheme could see a</p>

	<p>further increase in these numbers, with the two-child tax credit rule and benefit cap only adding to the pressure on families with children.</p> <p>This Council calls on the Minister for Communities to immediately convene a child poverty task force and to identify regional policy with local outcomes with a clear target: to eradicate child poverty.”</p>
3.2	A response has been received from Mr. Michael Donnelly, Director for Central Policy, on behalf of the Minister for Communities. A copy of the response is attached.
3.3	Mr. Donnelly explains that the Department for Communities is responsible for taking forward poverty policy on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive. On 24th September 2020, the then Minister for Communities, Carál Ní Chuilín MLA, announced the commencement of work on the development of a range of Social Inclusion Strategies, including an Anti-Poverty Strategy, as part of the commitments made under the New Decade, New Approach deal.
3.4	The Anti-Poverty Strategy will be developed using a co-design approach, with meaningful involvement from stakeholders at all stages of the process. In October 2020, an Expert Advisory Panel was appointed and tasked with producing recommendations on the key themes, priorities and headline actions which the strategy should address. A Co-design Group, with representatives from twenty-seven voluntary and community sector organisations, is helping to shape the development of the strategy and a Cross-departmental Working Group will be responsible for developing the associated action plan.
3.5	Mr. Donnelly goes on to state that, in September, 2020, the Northern Ireland Executive agreed to extend the 2016-2019 Child Poverty Strategy until May, 2022. The purpose of that extension is to allow time for key stakeholders to be consulted on whether the Anti-Poverty Strategy, covering all age groups, is sufficient or whether the development of a Child Poverty Strategy is also required.
3.6	He points out that the most recent Child Poverty Annual Report, for 2019/20, which was published on the Department for Communities website in September 2020, outlines the measures which Departments are taking to ensure, as far as possible, that children do not suffer socio-economic disadvantage. The areas of focus and actions fall under four high level outcomes, namely, health, education, safe/secure stable living environments and economic well-being.
3.7	In view of the work currently taking place, the Department would not, therefore, propose convening an additional body such as a Child Poverty Taskforce at this time.
3.8	Mr. Donnelly adds that, in the course of the development of the Anti-Poverty Strategy, the Department for Communities will continue to engage with and listen to the views and ideas of those impacted by poverty and their representative organisations and will continue to work collaboratively across Departments to address their needs.
3.9	The aforementioned Anti-Poverty Co-design Group will, over the coming months, be assisting the Department for Communities to facilitate a number of feedback sessions to seek the views of stakeholders, in order to inform their decisions on a range of specific areas of the recommendations.

3.10	The Department also plans to host a session to obtain the views of district councils and will be writing to SOLACE with further details shortly. There will also be a public consultation in the latter half of this year and the Department would welcome comments from the Council when this is published.
3.11	Mr. Donnelly concludes by stating that, subject to Executive approval, it is planned that the Child Poverty Annual Report for 2020/21 will be published in March, 2021 and that an Anti-Poverty Strategy will be published in December, 2021. <u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
3.12	None associated with this report. <u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.13	None
4.0	Document Attached
	Response from Department for Communities

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Michael Donnelly
Director for Central Policy
Level 8
Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Belfast
BT2 7EG
e-mail: Michael.Donnelly@communities-ni.gov.uk
Telephone: (028) 9082 3216 (DD 39216)

Eilish McGoldrick
Democratic Services Officer
Belfast City Council
Room 123B
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

Our ref: CORR-0303-2021

By email to: mcgoldricke@belfastcity.gov.uk

22nd February 2021

Dear Eilish

Child Poverty Task Force

Thank you for your email of 10th February 2021, to Minister Hargey, asking that she immediately convene a Child Poverty Task Force. The Minister has asked me to respond on her behalf.

The Department for Communities (DfC) is responsible for taking forward poverty policy on behalf of the Executive. On 24 September 2020, Carál Ní Chuilín MLA, former Minister for Communities, announced the commencement of work on the development of a suite of Social Inclusion Strategies, including an Anti-Poverty Strategy, as part of the commitments under New Decade, New Approach.

The Anti-Poverty Strategy will be developed using a co-design approach with meaningful involvement from stakeholders at all stages of the process. In October 2020, an Expert Advisory Panel was appointed and tasked with producing recommendations on the key themes, priorities and headline actions that the strategies should address; a Co-design Group with representatives from 27 voluntary and community sector organisations is helping to shape the development of the strategy; and a Cross-departmental Working Group will be responsible for developing the strategy action plan.



In September 2020 the Executive agreed to extend the 2016-2019 Child Poverty Strategy to May 2022. The purpose of this extension is to allow time for key stakeholders to be consulted on whether the Anti-Poverty Strategy covering all age groups is sufficient, or whether the development of a Child Poverty Strategy is also required.

The most recent Child Poverty Annual Report, for 2019/20, was published on the Department for Communities website in September 2020. It reports on the measures which departments are taking to ensure, as far as possible, that children do not suffer socio-economic disadvantage. The areas of focus and actions fall under four high level outcomes – health, education, safe/secure stable living environments and economic well-being.

With this work currently in hand, the Department would not propose convening an additional body such as a Child Poverty Taskforce at this time.

In the course of the development of the Anti-Poverty Strategy, the Department will of course continue to engage with, and listen to, the views and ideas of those impacted by poverty and their representative organisations, and will continue to work collaboratively across departments to address their needs.

The Anti-Poverty Co-design Group will be assisting the department to facilitate a number of feedback sessions in the coming months, where they will be actively seeking the views of stakeholders to inform their decisions on a range of specific areas of the recommendations.

The Department plans to run a session to obtain the views of district councils and we will be writing to SOLACE with further details shortly. If you have any queries, please contact us at povertypolicyteam@communities-ni.gov.uk.

There will also be a public consultation in the latter half of this year and we would welcome comments from the Council when this is published.

Subject to Executive approval, it is planned that the Child Poverty Annual Report for 2020/21 will be published in March 2021 and that an Anti-Poverty Strategy will be published in December 2021.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Yours sincerely



Michael Donnelly
Director for Central Policy
Department for Communities

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Subject:	Notices of Motion – Quarterly Update
Date:	19th March 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor
Contact Officer:	Christine Robinson, Strategic Policy & Partnership Manager Geoff Dickson, Strategic Planning & Policy Officer Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Committee on the progress of all Notices of Motion for which SP&R Committee is responsible for.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	It is recommended that SP&R Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> note the updates to all Notices of Motion that the SP&R Committee is responsible for; and agree to the closure of a number of Notices of Motion, as referenced in Appendix 1 and noted in paragraph 3.8 below.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<u>Background</u> At the SP&R Committee meeting on 25 th October 2019, the following Notice of Motion was agreed:

	<p>“That this Council notes that other Councils produce a monthly status report in relation to Notices of Motion; and agrees Belfast City Council adopts a similar practice and produces a monthly Notice of Motion Update which will be brought to each full Council Meeting, detailing the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Date received 2. Notice of motion title 3. Submitted by which Councillor 4. Council meeting date 5. Committee motion is referred to 6. Outcome of committee where Notice of Motion will be debated 7. Month it will be reported back to committee 8. Other action to be taken.”
3.2	As a first step, officers undertook a review of existing Notices of Motion to ensure any that had been completed could be reported to Committee as closed before commencing the live database. This review was undertaken in 2020 and recommendations were brought to SP&R Committee to close 69 Notices of Motion.
3.3	The remaining Notices of motion were added to a new database with all additional Notices from this point of time now added to the database for quarterly reporting to the relevant Standing Committee. Appendix 1 is the first of the quarterly updates showing 54 currently active Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance which SP&R Committee is responsible for.
3.4	At SP&R Committee on 20 th November, there was a query in relation to a missing Notice of Motion on Abortion Imagery. Upon investigation, it was realised that the query raised was in relation to an Issue Raised in Advance at Committee rather than a Notice of Motion. Members are asked to note that all outstanding Issues Raised in Advance at Committee have now been added to the database and will be regularly reported through this database.
3.5	<p>Notice of Motion Updates</p> <p>SP&R Committee is asked to note that, given the current pressures in responding to the pandemic, it has been difficult to afford the usual time towards progressing Notices of Motion. Nevertheless, there has been progress in a number of notices of motion.</p>
3.6	Likewise, given the nature of remote working at present, it has proven more difficult than usual to coordinate the updates across all departments. Members will note that estimated

	completion dates and Next Steps require further updates – these will be progressed and reported back at the next quarterly update.
3.7	<p>Closure of Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance</p> <p>At SP&R Committee on 20th November, it was agreed that Notices of Motion could be closed for one of two reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Category 1 - Notices of Motion which contained an action that has been completed and recommend they are closed. All Notices of Motion within this category contained a specific task that has since been complete. It is worth noting that, when Committee agree to action a Notice of Motion, there are sometimes additional actions agreed alongside the Notice of Motion. As these are not technically part of the Notice of Motion, they are taken forward through normal committee decision making processes. The Notice of Motion can therefore be closed, but additional actions related to it will continue to be progressed and reported to the committee. These additional actions are not contained in this report, but will be noted in the live database moving forward. • Category 2 - Notices of Motion have become Council policy and recommend they are closed. These notices of motion did not contain a specific task that could be complete. Instead, they were more strategic in nature and required changes in Council policy and/ or strategy for long term outcomes. Those listed within this category have all been agreed by Committee and are now either Council policy or are currently being implemented through a Council strategy that is managed by a Standing Committee through the corporate planning process.
3.8	<p>SP&R Committee is asked to agree that the following 13 Notices of Motion are now closed:</p> <p>Category 1 Recommended Closures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regeneration Powers (Ref number 42). This was an issue raised in advance at Committee on 24th January 2020 and had a specific task of writing to the Minister for the Department of Communities requesting that she consider again the transfer of regeneration powers to local councils. This task has been undertaken, along with further representation in regards to the devolution of powers to local government, including in the draft response to the PfG Outcomes Framework which is one the agenda for today's meeting.

- **Flying of the Flag on 19th February to mark the Birthday of the Duke of York** (Ref number 60). This was a time sensitive issue and the manner has now been resolved.
- **Celebration of Donor's Day** (Ref number 75). City Hall was illuminated pink to mark Donors' Day on 29th January 2021.
- **Light Up the City Hall Request - World AIDS Day, 1st December** (Ref number 81). City Hall was lit red to mark World AIDS Day on 1st December 2021.
- **New Lodge Bonfire** (Ref number 84). This was a time sensitive issue and the manner has now been resolved.
- **Lighting Up City Hall for World Suicide Awareness Day on 10 September** (Ref number 94). City Hall illuminated on 10 September 2020.
- **Babyloss Awareness Week Virtual Book of Remembrance 9-15 October** (Ref number 109). Virtual Book of Remembrance arranged for 9 - 15 October 2020.
- **Unit Fees for St. George's Market** (Ref number 118). Members agreed to the setting up of rental relief for Council Tenants at a special SP&R committee on 10th December 2020. The criteria and process around this has been left with officers to set and does not require to be sent back to Members. A draft approach is now being reviewed by legal, audit and others.
- **Belfast Leisure Centres - Proposed Redundancies** (Ref number 126). This was a time sensitive issue and the manner has now been resolved.
- **Illumination of Belfast Castle** (Ref number 133). Belfast Castle illuminated in blue on 29 November 2020.
- **Pay for Student Nurses** (Ref number 135). Response from Minister of Health noted by SP&R 19th February 2021.
- **Funding for Palliative and End-of-life Care** (Ref number 141). Response from Minister of Health noted by SP&R 19th February 2021.
- **Proposed Future Development - Writer's Square** (Ref number 155). Response from Minister for Communities noted by SP&R 19th February 2021.

Category 2 Recommended Closures:

- **Report by the Environmental Audit Committee into the impact of disposable coffee cups in the UK** (Ref number 5). This issue will be considered as part of the internal sustainability review being undertaken by KPMG on behalf of the Council under the Climate Adaption and Mitigation Plan.
- **City Tree Initiative** (Ref number 36). City Tree Initiative is being progressed as part of One Million Trees programme.

3.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUDS and the City (Ref number 68). Council have made significant progress with DfI in relation to the use of SUDS in Belfast, as evidenced by their extensive inclusion in the recent Living With Water in Belfast consultation document, including Distillery Street/Westlink. These will now be taken forward across Belfast in partnership between the Council, DfI and NI Water, subject to funding being available. <p>Additional information in relation to these Notices of motion and Issues Raised in Advance are available in Appendix 1.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no additional financial implications required to implement these recommendations.</p>
3.11	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications contained in this report.</p>
4.0	<p>Document Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 - Notices of Motion Live Database – SP&R Committee</p>

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Notice of Motion – Live Database

Belfast

Ref	Type	Date of Council Meeting	Motion (including hyperlinks)	Proposed by	Committee	Lead officer	Department	Status	Status Update	Next Steps	Estimated completion date
1	Notice of Motion	03/05/2016	Stained Glass Window – Health Service	Cllr Mullan	SP&R Cttee	John Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	Report on Grounds and Memorials still being progressed.		
2	notice of Motion	02/05/2017	Stained Glass Window – 321 Explosives Ordnance Disposal Company	Cllr Graham	SP&R Cttee	J Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	Report on Grounds and Memorials still being progressed.		
3	Notice of Motion	01/06/2017	Fire Brigades Union	Cllr McVeigh	SP&R Cttee	John Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	Report on Grounds and Memorials still being progressed.		
5	notice of Motion	19/01/2018	Report by the Environmental Audit Committee into the impact of disposable coffee cups in the UK	Cllr McReynolds	SP&R Cttee	John Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Recommendation Close	This issue will be considered as part of the internal sustainability review being undertaken by KPMG on behalf of the Council under the Climate Adaption and Mitigation Plan.		
6	Notice of Motion	01/02/2018	Audio Recording of Council Working Groups	Ald Rodgers	SP&R Cttee	John Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Previously Closed	Working Groups are now audio recorded.		

7	notice of Motion	09/04/2018	Childcare Strategy	Cllr O'Hara	SP&R Cttee	John Tully	City & Organisational Strategy	Ongoing	A child care strategy that is for Belfast alone would not be operational and outside the remit of the Council. DfC have recently announced the development of a suite of Social Inclusion Strategies that aim to address barriers and inequalities in society and to fulfil the commitments in New Decade, New Approach (NDNA) and the Executive's Programme for Government (PfG). Officers have made contact with the department to ensure a regional child care strategy is taken forward. As the PfG progresses, representation will be made to ensure a childcare strategy is taken forward as a priority.	Arrange meeting with DfC officials and continue to lobby for inclusion in PfG.	
10	notice of Motion	01/11/2018	No Grey Zone Campaign	Cllr Nicholl	SP&R Cttee	R Black	City & Neighbourhood Services	Ongoing	PCSP procured a 'Talking about Consent' project and advised that this project would include the PSNI's 'No Grey Zone' messaging. Work is ongoing by PCSP regarding talking about consent and the aspect regarding premises could be taken forward once our premises are being used fully post COVID-19. Lead Officer has advised once final meeting has been convened we will report back via PCSPs and the Notice of Motion can be closed and work taken forward via PCSP partners.		
13	Notice of Motion	03/12/2018	Social Investment Fund	Cllr Attwood	SP&R Cttee	Sinead Grimes	Physical Programmes	Ongoing	To be taken forward through the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund.	Establishment of Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund, applying learning from SIF Audit and ensuring	01/12/2021
16	Notice of Motion	04/03/2019	SEND Act and Out of School Hours Provision	Cllr Black	SP&R Cttee	J Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	Meeting was delayed due to the 2019 local government elections then the covid-19 pandemic. Currently being arranged via video call.		

17	Notice of Motion	04/03/2019	Dog Friendly Properties	Cllr McDonough-Brown	SP&R Cttee	J Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	<p>To make all council properties 'dog friendly' would be a significant policy change with significant health and safety, hygiene, insurance and liability, and facility upgrade implications. The Council's current policy is that we only allow guide/assisted dogs in to buildings that facilitate the public and to attend events. We have no written policy after that and as such can only say that we currently do not allow dogs that are not guide dogs into our facilities (both staff facilities and public facilities).</p> <p>There are significant Health and Safety implications to assess the risk that a dog may attack a member of staff or a member of the public. The Council would be liable for any such attack if it took place on Council premises. Due to the close proximity of staff working and sharing offices there are no appropriate facilities to house dogs or any animal. At present, the 4 civic buildings do not have the facilities for members of the public and staff to bring animals into these facilities unless it is a guide dog. Given the current challenges to providing safe access to council premises to both staff and the public in light of Covid 19, it is recommended that this issue be parked until such time as council premises return to normal operation post pandemic.</p>		
18	Notice of Motion	04/03/2019	Feasibility Support fund for each AWG	Cllr Walsh	SP&R Cttee	Sinead Grimes	Physical Programmes	Ongoing	<p>Prior to Covid 19, the Department had been working up a framework around a new Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund, and consideration of how we could incorporate feasibility as part of the project proposals development process. But given the unprecedented impact of Covid, this Fund has not progressed until we have a better handle on corporate finances, and subsequent priorities for the city.</p>	Establishment of Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund and associated feasibility support	01/12/2021

23	Notice of Motion	01/07/2019	Removal of Banners and Paramilitary Flags in Belfast	Cllr Beattie	SP&R Cttee	J Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	Consultation delayed due to Covid-19.		
24	Notice of Motion	01/07/2019	Webcasting of Committee Meetings	Cllr Nicholl	SP&R Cttee	J Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	Report prepared for PLCF then delayed due to Covid-19 pandemic. To be rescheduled when appropriate.		
25	Issue Raised in Advance	23/08/2019	Abortion Imagery	Cllr Groogan	SP&R	J Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	Work is ongoing on the development of new city amenities byelaws which would try to address a number of issues in relation to good governance in the city centre including the display of promotional literature or material without a permit from the Council. The Council will need to seek approval for the draft byelaw from the Department for Communities.		

34	Notice of Motion	04/11/2019	Unregulated Car Washes	Cllr Newton	SP&R Cttee	J Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	<p>BCC have no responsibility for regulating or licensing hand car washes and valet services. Responsibility for Health and Safety at such car washes lies with the HSENI.</p> <p>The NI Environment Agency has responsibility for enforcing the requirements of the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999. It is an offence under the Water Order to discharge or deposit, whether knowingly or otherwise, any poisonous, noxious or polluting matter so that it enters a waterway or underground stratum.</p> <p>Officers in Legal Services have written to the NIEA requesting any available data on the number of unregulated car washes in Belfast. The NIEA have advised that in line with guidance they would recommend that vehicle washes are connected to the mains sewer where possible. They anticipate such a facility would be available in Belfast. Should a consent be the only solution, a suitable treatment system would be required. The NIEA currently don't have any Vehicle wash sites in Belfast, on their books which hold a consent to discharge.</p> <p>Further enquiries will be made into this issue with NIEA, HSENI and PSNI to see if the relevant data can be sourced from elsewhere.</p>		
35	Notice of Motion	02/12/2019	Pridestrian Animation	Cllr Garrett	SP&R Cttee	John Greer	Place & Economy	Ongoing	To be taken forward through Cultural Strategy Implementation Plan.		
36	Notice of Motion	02/12/2019	City Tree Initiative	Cllr McLaughlin	SP&R Cttee	J Tully	City & Organisational Strategy	Recommendation Close	City Tree Initiative to be looked at as part of One Million Trees programme.		
42	issue Raised in Advance	24/01/2020	Regeneration Powers	Cllr Nicholl	SP&R	J Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Recommendation Close	Representation made to the Minister and recommendation to transfer regeneration powers to local government has been made in BCC draft response to PfG Outcomes Framework.		

49	Notice of Motion	03/02/2020	Market Gardens and Urban Farming	Cllr de Faoite	SP&R Committee	R Black	City & Neighbourhood Services	Ongoing	The Committee approved the renewal of three conacre licences for the growing of crops, grazing and grass cutting on agricultural lands at Beechvale Farm, Comber for a licence period from and including 1st April, 2020 to 31st March, 2021; agreed to defer actioning or implementing the decision of 21st June, 2019, that is, to market Beechvale Farm for sale, to enable a further report to be submitted on other future options for the site taking into consideration the proposals in the motion discussed earlier in the meeting on Market Gardens and Urban Farming.		
50	Notice of Motion	03/02/2020	Belfast Zoo	Cllr Maskey	SP&R Committee	R Black	City & Neighbourhood Services	Ongoing	To be considered as part of the wider strategic regeneration of Belfast Zoo, Belfast Castle, Cavehill and the North Foreshore.		
51	Notice of Motion	03/02/2020	Growth Deal	Cllr Beattie	SP&R Committee	J Tully	City & Organisational Strategy	Ongoing	To be progressed as resources become available.		
60	issue Raised in Advance	21/02/2020	Flying of the Flag on 19th February to mark the Birthday of the Duke of York	Cllr Beattie	SP&R	J Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Recommendation Close	Matter resolved.		
67	Notice of Motion	02/03/2020	Review of Hate Crime Legislation in Northern Ireland - Inclusion of Misogyny as a standalone offence	Cllr Groogan	SP&R Cttee	J Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	To be progressed as resources become available.		

68	Notice of Motion	02/03/2020	SUDS and the City	Cllr Black	SP&R Cttee	S Grimes	Physical Programmes	Recommendation Close	Council have made significant progress with DfI in relation to the use of SUDS in Belfast, as evidenced by their extensive inclusion in the recent Living With Water in Belfast consultation document, including Distillery Street/Westlink. These will now be taken forward across Belfast in partnership between the Council, DfI and NI Water, subject to funding being available.		
73	issue Raised in Advance	19/06/2020	Race Equality Champion for Belfast City Council	Cllr Nicholl	SP&R	J Tully	City & Organisational Strategy	Ongoing	To be progressed as resources become available.		
74	issue Raised in Advance	19/06/2020	Disabled People and Older People	Cllr McMullan	SP&R	R Black	City & Neighbourhood Services	Ongoing	Points raised to be considered within the context of the Council's Recovery Programme		
75	issue Raised in Advance	19/06/2020	Celebration of Donor's Day	Cllr McLaughlin	SP&R	J Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Recommendation Close	City Hall was illuminated pink to mark Donors' Day on 29th January.		
78	Notice of Motion	01/07/2020	Suicide Awareness Training	Cllr Michelle Kelly	SP&R Committee	J Tully	City & Organisational Strategy	Ongoing	To be progressed as resources become available.		
80	Notice of Motion	02/07/2020	Opening our Streets for Everyone	Cllr McKeown	SP&R Committee	A Reid	Place & Economy	Ongoing	To be progressed as resources become available.		
81	issue Raised in Advance	31/07/2020	Light Up the City Hall Request - World AIDS Day, 1st December	Cllr Nicholl	SP&R	J Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Recommendation Close	City Hall was illuminated red to mark World AIDS Day on 1st December.		
82	issue Raised in Advance	31/07/2020	Roselawn Cemetery	Cllr McLaughlin	SP&R	S Toland	City & Neighbourhood Services	Ongoing	Report to come back to Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group		

83	issue Raised in Advance	31/07/2020	Frederick Douglass Statue	Cllr Beattie	SP&R	J Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	Working Group to be established - to be progressed as resources become available.		
84	issue Raised in Advance	31/07/2020	New Lodge Bonfire	Cllr Beattie	SP&R	R Black	City & Neighbourhood Services	Recommendati on Close	Matter resolved.		
93	issue Raised in Advance	21/08/2020	Video and Web Streaming of Council Committee Meetings	Cllr McReynolds	SP&R	J Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	To be progressed as resources become available.		
94	issue Raised in Advance	21/08/2020	Lighting Up City Hall for World Suicide Awareness Day on 10 September	Cllr Long	SP&R	J Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Recommendati on Close	City Hall illuminated on 10 September.		
97	Notice of Motion	01/09/2020	National Armed Forces Day	Cllr Pankhurst	SP&R Committee	A Reid	Place & Economy	Ongoing	To be progressed as resources become available.		
98	Notice of Motion	01/09/2020	Procurement Policy - Living Wage	Cllr Murphy	SP&R Committee	J Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	The Council's Procurement Policy is being updated as part of the overall review of Social Value Procurement - including consideration of the real living wage.		
99	Notice of Motion	01/09/2020	Summer Youth Employment Programme	Cllr McLaughlin	SP&R Committee	A Reid	Place & Economy	Ongoing	To be progressed as resources become available.		
100	Notice of Motion	01/09/2020	Needle Exchange Facility	Cllr Smyth	SP&R Committee	R Black	City & Neighbourhood Services	Ongoing	To be progressed as resources become available.		

101	Notice of Motion	01/09/2020	Addressing Hate and Intolerance across all our communities	Cllr O'Hara	SP&R Committee	R Black	City & Neighbourhood Services	Ongoing	Council has recommended in draft response to PfG Outcomes Framework consultation that hate crime be considered as a priority. An internal report will be brought to Committee when resources become available.		
102	Notice of Motion	01/09/2020	Universal Basic Income for Northern Ireland	Cllr McReynolds	SP&R Cttee	A Reid	Place & Economy	Ongoing	Suggest link to Citizens Basic Income NOM (69) - Citizens Basic Income. To be progressed as resources become available.		
108	issue Raised in Advance	18/09/2020	Application to Ulster History Circle for a blue plaque - Olaudah Equiano	Cllr McMullan	SP&R	J Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Ongoing	To be progressed as resources become available.		
109	issue Raised in Advance	18/09/2020	Babyloss Awareness Week Virtual Book of Remembrance 9-15 October	Cllr Michelle Kelly	SP&R	J Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Recommendation Close	Virtual Book of Remembrance arranged for 9 - 15 October.		
118	issue Raised in Advance	23/10/2020	Unit Fees for St. George's Market	Cllr Gormley	SP&R	S Grimes	Physical Programmes	Recommendation Close	Members agreed to the setting up of rental relief for Council Tenants at a special SP&R committee on 10th December 2020. The criteria and process around this has been left with officers to set and does not require to be sent back to Members. A draft approach is now being reviewed by legal, audit and others.	Establishment of rent relief process	01/04/2021
125	Notice of Motion	02/11/2020	Secured Serviced City Centre Civic Bicycle Parking Facilities	Cllr Smyth	SP&R Committee	A Reid	Place & Economy	Ongoing	To be progressed as resources become available.		
126	Notice of Motion	02/11/2020	Belfast Leisure Centres - Proposed Redundancies	Cllr Matt Collins	SP&R Committee	R Black	City & Neighbourhood Services	Recommendation Close	Matter resolved.		

133	issue Raised in Advance	20/11/2020	Illumination of Belfast Castle	Cllr Murphy	SP&R	R Black	City & Neighbourhood Services	Recommendati on Close	Belfast Castle illuminated blue on 29 November.		
135	Notice of Motion	01/12/2020	Pay for Student Nurses	Cllr Groogan	SP&R	J Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Recommendati on Close	Response from Minister of Health noted by SP&R 19/2/21		
138	Notice of Motion	07/12/2020	World Environment Day	Cllr Garrett	SP&R Committee	J Tully	City & Organisational Strategy	Ongoing	To be progressed through the Climate Crisis Working Group		
139	Notice of Motion	07/12/2020	Establishment of an External Independent Review of Educational Provision	Cllr McReynolds	SP&R	J Tully	City & Organisational Strategy	Ongoing	To be taken forward as the refresh of the Belfast Agenda commences		
141	Notice of Motion	07/12/2020	Funding for Palliative and End- of-life Care	Cllr Whyte	SP&R	J Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Recommendati on Close	Response from Minister of Health noted by SP&R Committee on 19/2/21		
144	issue Raised in Advance	18/12/2020	Procurement - Employment Academy Framework	Cllr Beattie	SP&R	A Reid	Place & Economy	Ongoing	To be progressed as resources become available.		
155	Notice of Motion	01/02/2021	Proposed Future Development - Writer's Square	Cllr Groogan	SP&R	J Walsh	Legal & Civic Services	Recommendati on Close	Response from Minister for Communities noted by SP&R Committee on 19/2/21.		
162	Notice of Motion	01/03/2021	Real Living Wage Foundation Accreditation	Cllr McLaughlin	SP&R	J Tully	City & Organisational Strategy	Ongoing	Work ongoing as part of the implementation of the inclusive growth strategy.		

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Subject:	Revisions to Scheme of Allowances
Date:	19th March, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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

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

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To consider amendments to the Council's Scheme of Allowances to increase the rate of Basic Allowance, to increase the maximum rate of Special Responsibility Allowance, and to increase the maximum rate of Dependant's Carers' Allowance, in line with the National Living Wage for 2021-2022.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is recommended to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. consider whether it wishes to apply the increase in the Basic Allowance from £15,071 per annum to £15,486 with effect from 1st April, 2020; 2. consider whether it wishes to increase the total maximum Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) from the current £108,000 per annum to £117,774 as set out in Appendix 2 with effect from 1st April, 2020; and 3. approve the increase to the maximum rate of Dependents' Carers' Allowance as set out in the report, with effect from 1st April, 2021.

3.0	Main Report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The Department for Communities issued a circular, LG 07/2021, which set out revised maximum limits for basic and special responsibility allowances with effect from 1st April, 2020.
3.2	The Committee, at its meeting in June 2019, agreed to apply the increase in the basic allowance from £14,200 per annum to the current £15,057. Local Government Circular LG 07/2021, dated 8th March, 2021, has increased the maximum basic allowance, which Councils may pay to Members, to £15,486 with effect from 1st April, 2020.
3.3	The Committee is also requested to consider whether to apply the increase to the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) budget, with effect from 1st April, 2020. For a number of years, the Council has agreed a split in the special responsibility allowance budget so as to pay both the Chairpersons and the Deputy Chairpersons of the Standing Committees and the Party Officers (Party Leader, Deputy Party Leader and Party Secretary – depending upon Party size). The current division of SRAs is set out in Appendix 1. If the increase in the overall budget is increased, a suggested split is set out in Appendix 2.
3.4	The Department for Communities determines the maximum hourly rates of Dependant's Carers' Allowance for both standard care and specialised care. The rate for standard care is based on the hourly National Living Wage for age 25+, which will increase on 1st April, 2021 from the current rate of £8.72 per hour to £8.91 per hour. The rate for specialised care is double the rate for standard care. In addition, the Department for Communities sets the maximum monthly amounts for standard care and specialised care, capped at the equivalent of 52 hours per month.
3.5	Accordingly, in line with the increase in the National Living Wage, the Committee is requested to agree to the amendments to the Scheme of Allowances as follows:
3.6	<p><u>“(iv) Dependants’ Carers’ Allowance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Standard Care</i> £8.91 per hour limited to £463.32 per month • <i>Specialist Care</i> £17.82 per hour limited to £926.64 per month”

<p>3.7</p> <p>3.8</p>	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The increase to the maximum rates of each of the allowances has already been considered and can be met through existing budgets.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>There are not any Good Relations, Equality or Rural Needs issues associated with this report.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Current division of SRAs</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Revised division of SRAs if the increase in the maximum is applied</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Scheme of Allowances 2021-2022</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Local Government Circular LG 07/2021</p>

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Allocation of Special Responsibility Allowance – Current**Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons**

Position	Allowance	Number of Positions	Total
Chairpersons	£5,800	6	£34,800
Deputy Chairpersons	£2,900	6	£17,400
Chair BW&UH Cttee	£2,900	1	£2,900
Dep Chair BW&UH Cttee	£1,450	1	£1,450
Total			£56,550

Political Party Officers

Party Officer Basic Allocation £3,200

Deputy Leader/Secretary Basic Allocation £2,900

Remainder allocated to Political Party Leaders £140.83 per Member of the Party

Position	Number of Members	Allocation per Party Member	Allocation per Party Strength	Basic Allocation	Total
SF Party Leader	18	£140.83	£2,534.94	£3,200	£5,734.94
SF Deputy Leader				£2,900	£2,900
SF Secretary				£2,900	£2,900
DUP Party Leader	15	£140.83	£2,112.45	£3,200	£5,312.45
DUP Deputy Leader				£2,900	£2,900
DUP Secretary				£2,900	£2,900
Alliance Party Leader	10	£140.83	£1,408.30	£3,200	£4,608.30
Alliance Deputy Leader				£2,900	£2,900
SDLP Party Leader	6	£140.83	£844.98	£3,200	£4,044.98
SDLP Deputy Leader				£2,900	£2,900
Green Party Leader	4	£140.83	£563.32	£3,200	£3,763.32
PBPA Leader	3	£140.83	£422.49	£3,200	£3,622.49
UUP Leader	2	£140.83	£281.66	£3,200	£3,481.66
PUP Leader	2	£140.83	£281.66	£3,200	£3,481.66
Total	60			£43,000	£51,449.98

Total

£107,999.98

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Allocation of Special Responsibility Allowance – with increase applied**Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons**

Position	Allowance	Number of Positions	Total
Chairpersons	£6,300	6	£37,800
Deputy Chairpersons	£3,150	6	£18,900
Chair BW&UH Cttee	£3,150	1	£3,150
Dep Chair BW&UH Cttee	£1,575	1	£1,575
Total			£61,425

Political Party Officers

Party Officer Basic Allocation £3,465

Deputy Leader/Secretary Basic Allocation £3,150

Remainder allocated to Political Party Leaders £162.15 per Member of the Party

Position	Number of Members	Allocation per Party Member	Allocation per Party Strength	Basic Allocation	Total
SF Party Leader	18	£162.15	£2,918.70	£3,465	£6,383.70
SF Deputy Leader				£3,150	£3,150.00
SF Secretary				£3,150	£3,150.00
DUP Party Leader	15	£162.15	£2,432.25	£3,465	£5,897.25
DUP Deputy Leader				£3,150	£3,150.00
DUP Secretary				£3,150	£3,150.00
Alliance Party Leader	10	£162.15	£1,621.50	£3,465	£5,086.50
Alliance Deputy Leader				£3,150	£3,150.00
SDLP Party Leader	6	£162.15	£972.90	£3,465	£4,437.90
SDLP Deputy Leader				£3,150	£3,150.00
Green Party Leader	4	£162.15	£648.60	£3,465	£4,113.60
PBPA Leader	3	£162.15	£486.45	£3,465	£3,951.45
UUP Leader	2	£162.15	£324.30	£3,465	£3,789.30
PUP Leader	2	£162.15	£324.30	£3,465	£3,789.30
Total	60			£43,000	£56,349.00

Total

£117,774.00

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Scheme of Allowances

Payable to Councillors 2021/2022

This Scheme is made under Part 3 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 and will take effect from 1st April, 2021.

Councillors' allowances

Councillors' allowances are governed by statute and provision is made for the following types of payments:

(a) Allowances:

- (i) Basic Allowance
- (ii) Special Responsibility Allowance
- (iii) Civic Dignitaries Allowance
- (iv) Dependants' Carers' Allowance
- (v) District Policing and Community Safety Partnership Allowances (DPCSP)
- (vi) Renunciations
- (vii) Disqualification or Suspension of a Councillor

(b) Expenses

- (i) Travel
- (ii) Subsistence

In issuing the payment of allowances to elected members the Council follows the instructions set out by the Department of Environment in 'Guidance on Councillor Allowances' March 2012 and further circular updates.

Information regarding other provisions for Councillors is also included:

(c) Additional Information

- (i) IT/Phone Package
- (ii) Councillors' Support Services

(a) Allowances**(i) Basic Allowances**

A basic allowance is intended to recognise the time commitment of all Councillors, including such inevitable calls on their time as meetings with officers and constituents and approved duties. Basic allowance is also intended to cover incidental costs incurred by Councillors in their official capacity, such as the use of their homes and the cost of any telephone calls, including mobile phone calls.

The maximum annual allowance with effect from 7th May, 2019 is £15,071 payable monthly.

This allowance will be paid in equal monthly instalments via the Council's Payroll and is subject to tax, National Insurance and pension deductions where applicable.

If a Councillor ceases to be a Councillor before the end of his or her term of office, payment of the allowance will cease and a pro rata calculation will be made to ensure that the Councillor receives the correct amount of allowance. If necessary, an adjustment for under or over payment may be made to ensure that the final payment is correct, and the Council reserves the right to recover any overpayments of Basic Allowance.

In circumstances where a councillor is wholly suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 59(5) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, the whole of the basic allowance payable to the councillor in respect of the period for which the councillor is suspended shall be withheld.

In circumstances where a councillor is wholly suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 60(1) (Decisions on Interim Reports) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, the whole of the basic allowance payable to the councillor in respect of the period for which the councillor is suspended shall be withheld, subject to the provision that the allowance withheld shall be payable to the councillor concerned should the final adjudication of the Commissioner for Standards exonerate the councillor concerned.

In circumstances where a councillor is partially suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 59(5) or section 60(1) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, the basic allowance payable to the councillor in respect of the period for which the councillor is partially suspended shall continue.

(ii) Special Responsibility Allowances

In addition to Basic Allowance the Council also pays Special Responsibility Allowances to those Councillors it considers to have significant additional responsibilities over and above the generally accepted duties of a Councillor. These special responsibilities are related to the discharge of the Council's functions.

The maximum rate of Special Responsibility Allowance is determined by the Department for Communities. The division of the Special Responsibility Allowance is based upon the positions held by individual Councillors as agreed.

- The Council agreed a special responsibility allowance threshold of £108,000 which may be paid to holders of positions of responsibility. No more than 50% of the Councillors can receive a special responsibility payment and no individual member can receive more than one special responsibility payment.

Special Responsibility Allowance is paid in equal, monthly instalments. Special Responsibility Allowances are liable for tax, National Insurance and pension deductions where applicable

In the event of a Councillor ceasing to hold an office which entitled him or her to receive a Special Responsibility Allowance before the term of office is completed, payment of the Allowance ceases. If necessary, an adjustment for under or overpayment may have to be made to ensure that the final payment is correct, and the Council reserves the right to recover any overpayments of Special Responsibility Allowance.

Rates of Special Responsibility Allowances with effect from 1st April, 2021 are:

(Allowance rates to be determined at the March, 2021 meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee)

Position	Committee	Allowance
Chairperson's Allowance	Strategic Policy and Resources	
	City Growth and Regeneration	
	People and Communities	
	Licensing	
	Planning	
	Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall	
	Brexit Committee	

Deputy Chairperson's Allowance	Strategic Policy and Resources	
	City Growth and Regeneration	
	People and Communities	
	Licensing	
	Planning	
	Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall	
	Brexit Committee	

Position	Party	Allowance
Party Group Leader	Sinn Fein (18 Members)	
	DUP (15 Members)	
	Alliance (10 Members)	
	SDLP (6 Members)	
	GREEN (4 Members)	
	PBPA (3 Members)	
	UUP (2 Members)	
	PUP (2 Members)	
Deputy Party Group Leader	Sinn Fein	
	DUP	
	Alliance	
	SDLP	
Party Secretary	Sinn Fein	
	DUP	

In circumstances where a councillor is wholly suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 59(5) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, the whole of any special responsibility allowance payable to the councillor in respect of the period for which the councillor is suspended shall be withheld.

In circumstances where a councillor is wholly suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 60(1) (Decisions on Interim Reports) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, the whole of any special responsibility allowance payable to the councillor in respect of the period for which the councillor is suspended shall be withheld, subject to the provision that the allowance withheld

shall be payable to the councillor concerned should the final adjudication of the Commissioner for Standards exonerate the councillor concerned.

In circumstances where a councillor is partially suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 59(5) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, that part of any special responsibility allowance (to which the partial suspension relates) payable to the councillor in respect of the period for which the councillor is partially suspended shall be withheld.

In circumstances where a councillor is partially suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 60(1) (Decisions on Interim Reports) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, that part of any special responsibility allowance (to which the partial suspension relates) payable to the councillor in respect of the period for which the councillor is partially suspended shall be withheld, subject to the provision that the allowance withheld shall be payable to the councillor concerned should the final adjudication of the Commissioner for Standards exonerate the councillor concerned.

(iii) Civic Dignitaries Allowance

Section 32 of the Finance Act provides that a council may pay to the Civic Dignitaries such allowances as it considers reasonable to meet the expenses of those offices and they should be considered totally separate from SRA arrangements.

The Civic Dignitary Personal Allowances are paid in equal, monthly instalments and are liable for tax, National Insurance and pension deductions where applicable.

The entitlements, per annum, are:-

- Lord Mayor £34,800
- Deputy Lord Mayor £6,250
- High Sherriff £6,250

Where a Lord Mayor or Deputy Lord Mayor is suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 59(5) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, the part of Civic Allowance payable to the Councillor in respect of the period for which the Councillor is suspended will be withheld.

(iv) Dependants' Carers' Allowance

Any Member who is the main carer of a dependant, where care is required to enable that Member to perform an Approved Duty (see page 9), may claim Dependent Carers' Allowance (DCA). The rate for Standard Care is based on the hourly national living wage for age 25 or over, and the rate for Specialised Care is double the rate for Standard Care. The rates from 1st April, 2021 are:

- Standard Care £8.91 per hour limited to £463.32 per month
- Specialist Care £17.82 per hour limited to £926.64 per month

A dependant is defined as:

- a child under 16 years old;
- a child 16 years old or older, where there is medical / social work evidence that full-time care is required;
- an adult with recognised physical/mental disability where there is medical / social work evidence that full-time care is required; or
- an elderly relative requiring full-time care.

For the purposes of this allowance, a carer is defined as a responsible person over 16 years old who does not normally live with the councillor as part of that household; and is not a parent/guardian of the dependant. A specialist carer is a qualified person who is needed where it is essential to have professional assistance.

Receipts must be obtained from specialist carers and must accompany the claim form. Councillors may claim only once for each occurrence of an approved duty (page 9) and only one Dependants' Carers' Allowance rate is payable, even if there are two or more dependants being cared for.

Councillors must disclose any financial support provided under this allowance when applying for other care services offered by another public body.

This allowance claim may also include the duration of essential travel time, up to a maximum of one hour before the approved duty starts and ending up to one hour after it finishes.

(v) District Policing and Community Safety Partnership Allowances (DPCSP)

This allowance is paid to councillors who are members of the District Policing and Community Safety Partnership. Each councillor is entitled to claim £60 per attendance at each meeting and may claim for up to a maximum of 20 meetings a year. Each member can also claim for mileage for attending each meeting directly from DPCSP.

Chairpersons of each DPCSP are entitled to claim for an additional 10 meetings per year of the DPCSP. In addition the Chairperson of the 4 DCPSPs also sit on the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) and are entitled to claim for up to 20 meetings per year of this partnership.

(vi) Renunciations

Councillors may, if they wish, renounce their entitlement to basic, chairperson, vice chairperson or special responsibility allowances. They can do this by writing to the Chief Executive. A councillor can subsequently withdraw the renunciation. They can also amend a renunciation (for example, to limit it to one kind of allowance only). The withdrawal or amendment cannot have retrospective effect.

(vii) Disqualification or Suspension of a Councillor

The Local Government Commissioner for Standards may impose sanctions on a Councillor who is found to have breached the Northern Ireland Code of Conduct for Councillors. Such sanction may be imposed at the conclusion of the Commissioner's adjudication process of the alleged breach or at the conclusion of an interim adjudication by the Commissioner.

For the purpose of this Scheme of Allowances, the following action will be taken upon receipt by the Chief Executive of a decision by the Commissioner which results in the disqualification or the suspension of a Councillor:

Disqualification

If a Councillor is disqualified, then the payment of all allowances and the provision of all support services outlined in this Scheme will cease with immediate effect from the date of disqualification.

Suspension

If a Councillor is wholly suspended for a period, then the payment of all allowances and the provision of all support services outlined in this Scheme will cease with immediate effect from the date of suspension.

(b) Expenses

Travel and Subsistence Allowances

All claims for travel and subsistence should be submitted within three months. Any claims made outside of this time limit cannot be processed.

(i) Travel

- **Motor Mileage Claims**

The rates of Travel and Subsistence Allowances, including motor mileage and pedal cycle rates, are reviewed annually by the Department for Communities, following consultation with the Northern Ireland Joint Council for Local Government Services.

Claims can only be made where expenditure is incurred in relation to the Councillors undertaking Approved Duties.

Travel claims may be made through Democratic Services and it is a matter for each individual Councillor to ensure that the details contained in any claim are accurate and only include actual expenditure for which they are entitled to make a claim.

In some instances, mileage claims may be liable for tax and National Insurance deductions.

The following rates are currently in use, with most Councillors getting the maximum amount of 65.0p per mile:

	Motor Cars				Pedal Cycle	Motor Cycle (all engine capacities)
	450-999cc	1000-1199cc	1199 + cc	Electric Car		
0-8,500 miles	46.9p	52.2p	65.0p	45.0p	20p	24p
After 8,500 miles	13.7p	14.4p	16.4p	25.0p		
Passenger rate	5.0p					

- **Public Transport**

Expenditure on public transport in relation to attending approved duties can be claimed back only when accompanied by proof of purchase. Any journeys made using public transport should be noted separately in any travel expenses claim.

(ii) Subsistence

If Councillors attend conferences, courses or undertake visits as representatives of the Council they are entitled to receive appropriate subsistence allowances.

Before a Councillor attends an event, they must obtain Committee approval. Councillors may also attend approved events as part of their Personal Development Plan (PDP).

Any accommodation or travel arrangements for conferences are made directly by the Council.

Councillors should take a careful note and keep receipts for any expenses they incur while they are away on Council business because they may be able to claim for these as part of their subsistence allowances or as incidental expenses. This relates to such things as meals, bus and taxi fares, necessary telephone calls, etc. Purchases of any alcoholic beverages may not be claimed for.

Within the UK

The rates for subsistence allowance are determined by the Department for Communities. The following table shows the current rates of subsistence which may be claimed for:

Maximum Subsistence Rates		
	BRITISH ISLES	LONDON
Accommodation Allowance	£100.70	£122.45
Meal Allowance		
Breakfast	£11.50	
Lunch	£13.50	
Tea	£4.70	
Dinner	£20.95	
Total Meal Allowance	£50.65	

Departments will assist Councillors in the completion of claim forms and Councillors should make contact with an appropriate officer immediately upon returning from the conference to give details of additional expenses incurred and to sign the necessary claim forms.

Claims without receipts should rarely happen. However, Councillors must use the 'Lost or Unobtainable Receipt Voucher' to claim reimbursement for expenditure they have incurred when no receipt is available.

Outside the UK

For travel outside the United Kingdom, the Council will pay advanced subsistence at the rate of £75.00 per 24-hour period, or £45 per part 24-hour period.

Approved Duties

Under the existing Regulations Councillors are entitled to claim expenses in relation to an approved duty. An approved duty may be defined as:-

- (a) attendance at a meeting of the Council or of any of its Committees. Members may only claim travelling allowance for attending Committees to which they have been appointed. A Member, however, may claim mileage allowance for attending a meeting of a Committee to which he or she has not been appointed if he or she is attending at the invitation of the Committee concerned or has been sent by another Committee to state a particular case.
- Or
- (b) attendance approved by the Council for the purpose of, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of the Council:
- attendance by appointed Councillors at meetings of Advisory/Liaison Committees Steering Groups/ Working Groups;
 - attendance at approved conferences, courses, study visits or seminars as a representative of the Council;
 - attendance by appointed Councillors at meetings of PCSP's and DPCSP's;
 - attendance by appointed Councillors at meetings of community centre committees ;
 - attendance on a Council or Committee deputation relevant to the functions of the Council; and
 - attendance by appointed Councillors at meetings of outside bodies only if the functions of the Outside Body relates to the statutory functions of the Council, and where remuneration is not made by the Outside Body to which the Councillor has been appointed.
 - Attendance at training courses or briefing sessions provided by or through the Council

In addition, the Council's Chief Executive can authorise as approved duties certain miscellaneous functions.

Tax

Useful information on treatment of tax for councillors could be found at Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs website via <https://www.gov.uk/hmrc-internal-manuals/employment-income-manual/eim65900>.

Councillors' Pension Scheme

Councillors are automatically enrolled in the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers Superannuation Scheme (NILGOSC). The main purpose of the scheme is to provide a pension in retirement for Councillors. The benefits paid under the Scheme are based on length of membership of the Scheme and career average pensionable pay.

The pensionable pay of a councillor consists of the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowance payments only. The contribution rate depends on how much each Councillor is paid but will be between 5.5% and 7.5% of the pensionable allowances received.

If a Councillor no longer wishes to participate in the pension scheme, or has any queries regarding the scheme, NIGOSC should be contacted directly on 0345 3197 320

(c) Additional Information

(i) IT /Phone Package

Personal computer equipment can be provided by the Council to each Councillor on the basis that the Council owns the equipment and lends it to those Councillors who request it.

Councillors IT Package currently consists of the following:

- Tablet PC
- All-in-one printer (printer, fax and scanner)
- Smartphone, which includes a call, text and data allowance

• **Tablet PC**

Each Councillor is entitled to receive a tablet PC for their duration as a Member of Belfast City Council. The device is provided by the Council to assist Councillors in undertaking their role more effectively. The main benefits are having online access to the council minutes system and other Council provided software and to engage more effectively with constituents.

Where a Councillor has been provided with a tablet PC, hard copies of Council, Committee and Working Group report packs will not be provided.

• **Mobile Telephone costs**

Each Councillor will be offered the use of a mobile phone for the duration they remain a Councillor of Belfast City Council. The device is available for upgrade periodically.

The Council will cover the cost of line rental which includes:

- a. the cost of all phone calls to UK landlines or UK mobile phones whilst within the UK;
- b. the cost of all text messages to UK landlines or UK mobile phones whilst within the UK; and
- c. 4GB of data usage per month.

All costs incurred by calls, texts or data usage outside of that detailed above, are met by the Councillor and will be deducted the following month from the Councillor's basic allowance.

Hands free mobile phone equipment

The Council will contribute towards the cost of purchase and installation of hands free mobile phone equipment for use in the Councillors' cars on the following basis:-

- Reimbursement will be made in respect of the costs of installation of the equipment in the Councillor's own private vehicle and shall be subject to the submission of appropriate receipts
- The maximum amount of reimbursement on each occasion to be £250.00.

- **Home Telephone**

The Council may meet the costs of basic monthly/quarterly line rental of the home telephone of each Councillor. Councillors are required to pay the rental cost in the first instance and, having submitted the telephone bill, will then be reimbursed this amount, subject to any tax deductions being applied through the Council's payroll system.

The Department for Communities has determined that as the Councillor's Basic Allowance covers incidental expenses involved in being a Councillor, such as the use of a home telephone, it is therefore not possible to reimburse the cost of telephone calls made on a landline.

- **Broadband Internet Access**

In order to encourage Councillors to use the Council's IT system remotely (from home or office), Councillors may claim part of their home broadband internet rental costs (maximum £25 per month).

As with phone line rental reimbursement, Councillors are required to pay the cost of the broadband in the first instance and, having submitted the appropriate bill, will then be reimbursed up to £25.00 per month, subject to any tax deductions being applied through the Council's payroll.

Access to the Council's systems is provided by means of a virtual private network (VPN). Councillors should speak to officers in Democratic Services to arrange to have the VPN set up on their computer.

- **Electronic Minutes System**

The electronic minutes system is accessible on the Council's website as well as the corporate intranet. The purpose of the system is to have a range of information relating to councillors and the Council's decision-making process in one place.

The system allows Councillors and members of the public to:-

- View the schedule of meetings;
- Access agendas, reports and minutes of Council, Committees, and Working Group Meetings; and
- Search for historical decisions.

The system is also used to alert Councillors that Committee summonses, agenda, minutes and reports have been published and, when any amendments or changes have taken place, Councillors can then access electronically.

(ii) Councillors' Support Services

The Council provides Councillors with a wide range of support services to assist them in carrying out their work as Councillors. Support services include typing of correspondence, post, message and enquiry services, council stationery, research service, room bookings, Councillors training, travel arrangements, expenses and subsistence payments and general enquiries.

- **Members' Common Room**

The Members' Common Room is located at the reception area of the City Hall, adjacent to the Committee Rooms. Individual mail boxes and a kitchen are available for Councillors' use.

- **Party Rooms**

In addition to the Members' Common Room, the Council provides Party Rooms for each of the political party groups within the Council. These may be used for meetings, work or discussions with constituents.

All accommodation and facilities provided are for use in connection with Council or constituency business only.

In addition to a conference table, printer, scanner, television, tea/coffee making facilities and filing space, each Party Room has at least one PC in addition to docking stations for use with the Council provided tablet PCs.

- **Correspondence**

Items for typing may be left with Democratic Services, where a confidential secretarial service is available for letters, reports and all other correspondence related to Council or constituency work.

After typing, letters will be left in the Councillor's mailbox in the Members' Common Room or can be posted to the addressee.

- **Post**

A postal service is available for correspondence which relates to Council or constituency work.

Letters must be addressed to individuals living within the City boundary although letters to public bodies and government Departments with addresses outside the City will also be accepted.

Circularised mail will not be accepted.

Councillors can also be provided with prepaid envelopes for use in their routine correspondence to constituents etc. Please speak to Democratic Services officer to request an allocation of prepaid envelopes.

Postal facilities are not available for party political issues.

- **Message and Inquiry Service**

Democratic Services staff act as a point of contact for all enquiries and telephone messages concerning Councillors from the general public, constituents and Council officers.

The telephones in the party rooms are set to divert to staff on no reply and telephone messages for Councillors will be taken. Urgent messages will be relayed immediately to Councillors, if contact is possible, and other messages will be emailed or left in their mail boxes.

- **Council Stationery**

Personalised headed-paper, compliment slips and business cards with the Council logo will be provided for each Councillor during their term of office. Standard Council stationery items are also available in the Members' Common Room.

- **Civic Gifts**

A limited range of Belfast City Council branded gifts is available for use by Councillors. The gifts are intended for VIP guests to City Hall or for special individuals or groups which a Councillor wishes to recognise. Councillors may also request civic gifts when visiting special individuals or groups when on Council business in other countries. When requesting Civic Gifts, the Councillor must sign a receipt of goods and a database of issued gifts is maintained.

- **Research and Information Service**

Democratic Services staff will be available to assist Councillors in obtaining information and carrying out research on items related to Council and constituency business.

- **Receiving Constituents**

Councillors may make arrangements to receive constituents or visitors in their party room if space is available. Councillors may also request to book a committee room to meet with a group of up to 3 visitors. Visitors will not be permitted access to party rooms or the committee rooms unless accompanied by a Councillor.

- **Car parking**

Councillors have 24 hour access to the City Hall car park. A pass for display in Councillors' vehicles will be provided by Democratic Services.

Car parking for guests of Councillors is limited. However, if this is required, please contact Democratic Services staff. The visitors' name and the registration number of the vehicle will be required for the purposes of admittance by Security staff.

Chief Executive of each District Council
Finance Officer of each District Council
Other Interested Parties

Local Government and Housing
Regulation Division
Finance Branch
Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
BELFAST
BT2 7EG
Phone: 028 9082 3346
email: Anthony.carleton@communities-ni.gov.uk

Our ref: CO1-21-1742

08 March 2021

Circular LG 07/2021

Dear Sir/Madam

**CONSOLIDATED COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES CIRCULAR – UPDATED
MARCH 2021**

This Local Government Circular provides a consolidated record of all councillor allowances and from 1 April 2020 supersedes Local Government Circular 08/2020.

This consolidated circular is required to determine and reflect an increase in maximum rates for Basic and Special Responsibility Allowance from 1 April 2020 and an increase in Dependents' Carers' Allowance from 1 April 2021.

All determinations are made by the Department under section 31 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019.

If you have any queries on the content of this circular please contact Jeff Glass on 028 9082 3375 or Ian Lewis on 028 9082 3506 or by email jeff.glass@communities-ni.gov.uk or ian.lewis@communities-ni.gov.uk.

Yours faithfully

ANTHONY CARLETON
Director
Local Government and Housing Regulation

1. Basic Allowance - valid from 1 April 2020

Basic Allowance	Maximum £15,486 per annum ≠
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≠ (The basic allowance includes an element for incidental and consumable costs incurred by councillors in their official capacity. In 2015/16 this element was £1,000 and each year this amount is uplifted in line with the increase applied to the basic allowance, therefore this element within the basic allowance is £1,090 from 1 April 2020.)

2. Dependants' Carers' Allowance

- valid from 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021

The following table states the maximum rates for dependants' carers' allowance.

Dependants' Carers' Allowance	Hourly Rate	Maximum monthly amount
Standard	£8.72 [^]	£454
Specialist	£17.44	£907

[^](Based on national living wage)

- valid from 1 April 2021

The following table states the maximum rates for dependants' carers' allowance.

Dependants' Carers' Allowance	Hourly Rate	Maximum monthly amount
Standard	£8.91 [^]	£463
Specialist	£17.82	£927

[^](Based on national living wage)

3. Travel Allowances – valid from 1 April 2017

The following table states the maximum rates for travel allowances.

Type of Vehicle	Rate per Mile
A pedal cycle	20.0p
A motor cycle (all engine capacities)	24.0p
A motor car of cylinder capacity exceeding 450cc but not exceeding 999cc	46.9p *13.7p
A motor car of cylinder capacity exceeding 999cc but not exceeding 1,199cc	52.2p *14.4p
A motor car of cylinder capacity exceeding 1,199cc	65.0p *16.4p
An electric car	45.0p **25.0p
Passenger rate (per passenger)	5.0p

* For mileage above 8,500 miles

**For mileage above 10,000 miles

4. Special Responsibility Allowance – valid from 1 April 2020

The following table states the maximum rate of Special Responsibility Allowance that a council may pay. The maximum rate is based on the size of the council population. Each council's population figures are updated each year by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and it is the duty of each council to operate within the total maximum rate appropriate to its population band. For ease the maximum any councillor can receive, within each band, is also provided.

Population of council	Maximum Special Responsibility Allowance £	Maximum (1/5 th) for individual councillor £
Less than 120,000	54,525	10,905
120,000 to 199,000	76,335	15,267
200,000 +	117,774	23,555

5. Subsistence Allowances – valid from 1 April 2015

The following table states the maximum rates for subsistence; however, where councils believe it is necessary there is flexibility for councils to increase these rates by applying a suitable measure of price inflation.

PERIOD/MEAL	RATES £	
	British Isles	London
Accommodation allowance - An absence involving an overnight stay, away from the normal place of residence. This rate does not include any meal allowance.	100.70	122.45
Breakfast allowance - (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period before 11 am)	11.50	
Lunch allowance - (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period including the period between 12 noon and 2pm)	13.50	
Tea allowance - (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period including the period between 3pm and 6pm)	4.70	
Evening meal allowance - (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period ending after 7pm)	20.95	



Subject:	Council Improvement Objectives for 2021-22
Date:	19th March 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
Contact Officers:	Christine Robinson, Strategy, Policy and Partnership Manager Patricia Flynn, Strategic Policy & Planning Officer

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

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

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To present the draft corporate improvement objectives for 2021 - 2022 and to seek Committee approval to issue these for public consultation in line with our statutory performance duty obligations.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to consider the draft improvement objectives for 2021-22, and subject to any refinements, to authorise the public consultation required as part of the council's improvement duty.
2.2	The proposed improvement objectives for 2021-22 are as follows:

	<table><tr><td>Our city</td></tr><tr><td>We will support our city to recover by helping to restore the social and cultural vibrancy of our city spaces and places in a safe and sustainable way</td></tr><tr><td>Our services</td></tr><tr><td>We will take steps to ensure our services adapt and improve in the short and longer term</td></tr><tr><td>Our communities</td></tr><tr><td>We will work to support our communities, helping them to become stronger, healthier and more resilient</td></tr><tr><td>Our economy</td></tr><tr><td>We will work in collaboration with others to protect and create jobs and support people into employment</td></tr><tr><td>Our environment</td></tr><tr><td>We will take action to protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast</td></tr><tr><td>Our digital innovation</td></tr><tr><td>We will improve digital inclusion and enhance our digital infrastructure to support jobs, our economy, sustainability and wellbeing</td></tr></table>	Our city	We will support our city to recover by helping to restore the social and cultural vibrancy of our city spaces and places in a safe and sustainable way	Our services	We will take steps to ensure our services adapt and improve in the short and longer term	Our communities	We will work to support our communities, helping them to become stronger, healthier and more resilient	Our economy	We will work in collaboration with others to protect and create jobs and support people into employment	Our environment	We will take action to protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast	Our digital innovation	We will improve digital inclusion and enhance our digital infrastructure to support jobs, our economy, sustainability and wellbeing
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We will take action to protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast													
Our digital innovation													
We will improve digital inclusion and enhance our digital infrastructure to support jobs, our economy, sustainability and wellbeing													
3.0	Key Issues												
3.1	We have a statutory duty to agree improvement objectives and produce an annual improvement plan, by 30 th June each year. Last year, the Department for Communities (DfC) agreed to suspend the improvement plan process to enable councils to refocus efforts and reconfigure services to support the covid-19 pandemic response. However, DfC has now confirmed that an improvement plan will be required for 2021-22, including the requirement to consult with residents.												
3.2	The Improvement objectives and plan does not include everything that council plans to do that year, but instead focuses on a smaller set of key improvement priorities, as informed by resident priorities and evidenced by need. For the past 4 years, we have aligned our improvement objectives to the key priorities within the Belfast Agenda. However, given the current situation and the lack of uncertainty around when restrictions might end, it is either no longer possible to deliver or sustain some of this activity. It is also questionable as to whether these improvement objectives would continue to be the highest priority for our residents and the city. For this reason, and to ensure focus remains on priority areas, we are proposing to realign the improvement objectives to the Belfast recovery plan published in September 2020.												

3.3	<p>Our recovery plan has six main pillars, each helping to support our communities and economy to recover by building on our strengths and assets as a city and wider city region. Appendix 1 shows how these pillars have been adapted for our 2021-22 improvement plan and how it aligns to previous improvement objectives. Indicative areas of activity have been included for illustration. However, given the fluidity of the current situation, detailed activity and associated performance measures, the Strategy, Policy and Partnership Unit will work with services to refine the detailed actions and performance measures. Given current circumstances, we will take a pragmatic approach, which takes into account resourcing implications and covid restrictions. Activity will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. DfC are currently reassessing the statutory performance indicators in light of covid; we await the outcome of this process.</p> <p>Next Steps</p>										
3.4	<p>Councils are legally required to consult on their improvement objectives and to publish an Improvement Plan by 30th June each year. Subject to approval, we will issue the improvement objectives for public consultation via our on-line engagement platform for a period of 8 weeks. However, it should be noted that resident feedback in relation to Belfast: Our Recovery (yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/belfast-our-recovery) has already informed the selection of the objectives and indicative actions. During this time, we will work develop detailed actions, milestones and performance indicators and factor in public feedback. A final report and draft improvement plan will be brought to SP&R for ratification and publication in June.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>SP&R – agrees improvement objectives for consultation</td><td>19th Mar 2021</td></tr> <tr> <td>Improvement Objectives: 8 week consultation</td><td>22 Mar - 16 May 2021</td></tr> <tr> <td>Services refine actions and PIs</td><td>Mar - May 2021</td></tr> <tr> <td>SP&R approves Improvement Plan</td><td>18th June 2021</td></tr> <tr> <td>Publish Improvement Plan 2021 - 22</td><td>30th June 2020</td></tr> </table>	SP&R – agrees improvement objectives for consultation	19 th Mar 2021	Improvement Objectives: 8 week consultation	22 Mar - 16 May 2021	Services refine actions and PIs	Mar - May 2021	SP&R approves Improvement Plan	18 th June 2021	Publish Improvement Plan 2021 - 22	30 th June 2020
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Services refine actions and PIs	Mar - May 2021										
SP&R approves Improvement Plan	18 th June 2021										
Publish Improvement Plan 2021 - 22	30 th June 2020										
3.5	<p><u>Resources Implications</u></p> <p>There are no resource implications arising directly from this report. As some of our services continue to face significant pressures and budgets remain stretched, we have taken care to ensure that the improvement objectives align to the council's recovery plan.</p>										
3.6	<p><u>Equality Implications and Rural Needs</u></p> <p>There are no equality or rural need implications arising directly from this report.</p>										
4.0	<p>Document Attached</p>										
	<p>Appendix 1 - Review of Corporate Improvement Objectives and indicative actions: 2021 - 22</p>										

Review of Corporate Improvement Objectives 2021-22

Our city (pillars in the recovery plan)			
<i>Draft Improvement Objective</i>	<i>Description from Recovery Plan</i>	<i>Indicative actions</i>	<i>Aligns to previous Imp Objectives</i>
We will support our city to recover by helping to restore the social and cultural vibrancy of our city spaces and places in a safe and sustainable way	Safe, vibrant, connected spaces and places. We will provide leadership to future proof and seek to sustain Belfast's social and cultural infrastructure	Implement a Revitalisation Fund that will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deliver direct local business interventions • deliver public realm improvements and streetscaping • improve and enhance city dressing and signage 	We will support the regeneration of the city centre
Our services			
<i>Draft Improvement Objective</i>	<i>Description from Recovery Plan</i>	<i>Indicative actions</i>	<i>Aligns to previous Imp Objectives</i>
We will take steps to ensure our services adapt and improve in the short and longer term	We will consider and adapt our services accordingly in the short and longer term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement our customer focus programme • Continue to invest in and improve the quality of our leisure centres (including redevelopment of Templemore Baths and Avoniel) • Develop new procedures to protect port health and to adapt to new Brexit transition arrangements 	We will improve council services and increase customer satisfaction with council
Our communities			
<i>Draft Improvement Objective</i>	<i>Description from Recovery Plan</i>	<i>Indicative actions</i>	<i>Aligns to previous Imp Objectives</i>
We will work to support our communities, helping them to become stronger, healthier and more resilient	We will understand community needs and strengths and support collective local action. Aim - strengthened and resilient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement an £8m neighbourhood regeneration fund • Develop enhanced approaches to civic engagement and the involvement of the VCSE sector • Enhance our parks and open spaces and encourage participation in sport and physical activity 	We will support people to lead healthier more active lives by... improving parks & increasing participation in physical activity
Our economy			
<i>Draft Improvement Objective</i>	<i>Description from Recovery Plan</i>	<i>Indicative actions</i>	<i>Aligns to previous Imp Objectives</i>
We will work in collaboration with others to protect and create jobs and help support people into employment.	We will invest and work with city partners to protect and create jobs and support Belfast residents to access much needed employment.	Building and adapting to new challenges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver Employment Academies • Deliver local business start-up programmes • Support social enterprises and co-operatives 	<p>We will support people into employment</p> <p>We will support investment and business growth in the city</p>

Our environment			
<i>Draft Improvement Objective</i>	<i>Description from Recovery Plan</i>	<i>Indicative actions</i>	<i>Aligns to previous Imp Objectives</i>
We will take action to protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast	We will decarbonise our economy; creating jobs, protecting our communities, improving health and wellbeing and enhancing the liveability of our city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage and develop a council climate adaptation and mitigation plan • Facilitate partnership working to support delivery of the Belfast Climate Plan (Belfast Climate Commission and the Belfast Resilience and Sustainability Board) • Coordinate the Belfast One Million Trees Programme • Develop a local biodiversity action plan • Reassess our statutory waste obligations and approach in light of year-long of restrictions 	<p>We will enhance the city's capacity to respond to shocks and stresses</p> <p>We will increase levels of household recycling & reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill</p>
Our digital innovation			
<i>Draft Improvement Objective</i>	<i>Description from Recovery Plan</i>	<i>Indicative actions</i>	<i>Aligns to previous Imp Objectives</i>
We will improve digital inclusion and enhance our digital infrastructure to support our economy, jobs, sustainability and wellbeing	We will invest in our digital infrastructure to facilitate job creation and attract talent, entrepreneurs and investors to the city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in the city's wireless and data infrastructure (Local Full Fibre Networks) • Develop a Citizen Office for Data Ethics (CODE) to support citizen inclusion and implement projects aimed at improving citizen inclusion • Establish an Urban Smart District and deliver key aspects of our urban innovation programme 	Not previously included, but supports jobs and economy, sustainability and wellbeing

Statutory criteria for improvement objectives:

Potential Improvement objectives 2021 - 22	Strategic effectiveness	Service quality	Service availability	Fairness	Sustainability	Efficiency	Innovation
Our city	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Our Services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Our Communities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Our environment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Our economy	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Our digital innovation	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓



Subject:	Alleygating Programme – Phase 5
Date:	19th March 2021
Reporting Officer:	Ryan Black, Director Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Alison Allen, Neighbourhood Services Manager

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

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the next steps in the progression of Phase 5 of the Alleygating Programme.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - note the contents of the report and agree the next steps; and - agree the funding allocation model across the city
3.0	Main Report
	Background
3.1	Members will be aware that the Council has delivered to date four phases of the alleygating programme across the city which has seen the installation of 1081 gates with both Council funding and funding from external funders.

3.2	<p>The total number of gates per area is currently:</p> <p>North – 307</p> <p>South – 278</p> <p>East – 250</p> <p>West – 246</p> <p>Total – 1081</p> <p>Capital Programme Commitment and Funding Allocation Model</p> <p>3.3 Members will be aware of Councils' decision as part of the 21/21 rate setting process that £500,000 will be made available from the Capital Programme for Alleygates Phase 5 across Belfast.</p> <p>3.4 Members are asked to consider how the total budget of £500K is allocated across the city.</p> <p>3.5 It is not possible at this stage to give an approximate price for an average gate as there have been significant fluctuations in the steel market and this will need to be formally priced by the supplier in due course. This information will be provided to Members at Area Working Group stage.</p> <p>Alleygates Evaluation / Future Planning</p> <p>3.6 Members will be aware that People and Communities Committee have already agreed, that Council engage a suitably qualified contractor to under a review of the Alleygates Programme to date, specifically exploring the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the benefits of the scheme within neighbourhoods and how the overall scheme performs against Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles • to review the current selection process and identify potential future options for selection of Alleygate locations taking in to account what has worked well and what could be improved to date • to examine if there has been any reduction in crime / return for investment in areas where there has been intense Alleygate installation • to examine whether there have been any long-term impacts or reduction in crime within gated areas in general • to identify opportunities to maximise the benefits of alleygating by working closer with other partners in the context of wider neighbourhood regeneration
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to make recommendations about how to maximise the benefits and opportunities from the Alleygate Project, taking into consideration other Council work streams and external strategies • to consider the longer-term impact of the continuous alleygating investment to date in the city
3.7	It is more important to note that with the level of demand and Member priority attached to alleygating, that a medium-long term planning process and financing strategy will now begin to assess need and plan for a more significant roll out across the city following Phase 5.
3.8	Members of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee are asked to note that this evaluation, and the future planning process, will be progressed simultaneously with Phase 5 Alleygates (as per the standing Phase 4 criteria).
	Process for Agreeing Gate Locations
3.9	Members should note that the demand for gates throughout the city far outweighs the £500,000 available and, therefore, as part of the Full Business Case approval, it will be necessary to identify those areas to be considered for alleygating in order of evidenced need.
3.10	The agreed process for Phase 4 Alleygates recognised that official statistics do not always fully represent actual need, as crime and anti-social behaviour is often under reported in some of the areas of greatest need across Belfast.
3.11	Therefore, the process for agreeing the final list of streets to be gated was revised by the previous Health and Environmental Services Committee to include Area Working Group consideration of the evidence of need based on official statistics. Area Working Group Members would then use their local knowledge to enrich this evidence of need before making a formal recommendation to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
3.12	Before any engagement can take place with Area Working Groups in relation to potential gate locations, the Outline and Full Business Case must be developed to take this through to a fully committed capital project.
3.13	This combined with the time needed to complete the statistical analysis needed to inform Area Working Group discussions will mean it may be Autumn 2021 before Officers are in a position to bring forward reports to Area Working Group for discussion on potential gate locations.

3.14	Additionally, previously experience indicates that it can take a number of Area Working Group meetings to agree a final list of gate locations to be recommended to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
3.15	<p>It is therefore not possible to give a detailed timeline at this stage, but for Members information the indicative timeline is provided below. Please note the timeline commences at the point at which Strategic Policy and Resources Committee/Council have agreed the gate locations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Start - Gate Locations Agreed by SP&R and Full Council - Month 1 – Regulatory and Community Consultation Commenced - Month 3 – Regulatory Consultation Completed - Month 4 – Community Consultation Completed - Month 5 – Legal Preparation - Month 7/8 – Notice of Intention Advertised - Month 8/9 – Clarification of Objections - Month 9 – People & Communities Committee Consideration of Traffic Regulation Order - Month 10 – Full Council Approval of Traffic Regulation Order - Month 10 – Gates Ordered - Month 12/13 – Gates Manufactured and Installation Commenced - Month 14 to 16 – Phase 5 Gate Installation Programme rolled out across the city
3.16	Members should note that experience has also shown that not all agreed gate locations can be brought forward at the same time to Traffic Regulation Order stage due to objections as part of the community consultation process, not meeting the legal threshold of evidenced ASB to enact the legislation with further work needed and site suitability issues. Phase 4 Alleygates was brought forward to Traffic Regulation Order stage in four sub phases.
3.17	Members should also be aware timelines may be further delayed if the disruption caused by Brexit to supply chains for Alleygates material/parts continues and that orders must be placed with the contractor no later than 30 April 2022 due to current contract end timescales.
	<u>Financial implications</u>
3.18	Financial implications are detailed in the body of the report.
	<u>Equality, Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.19	An Equality Screening will need to be completed on Alleygates Phase 5 in due course.
4.0	Documents Attached
	None



Subject:	Update on Physical Programme
Date:	19th March 2021
Reporting Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes
Contact Officer:	Shauna Murtagh, Programme Manager

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

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The Council's Physical Programme covers 170 current capital projects under a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Council's Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for Stage movements on the Capital Programme and to provide an update on contracts awarded for capital or capital-related works.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To agree the following Capital Programme Movements:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ IT Programme: Building Control System Replacement project moves to <i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted</i>○ IT Programme: Financial Replacement System project moves to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> <p>▪ To note the update in relation to contracts awarded.</p>									
3.0	Main Report									
3.1	Members will be aware that the Council runs a substantial physical programme under a range of funding streams including the capital programme, BIF and LIF together with the projects that it is delivering on behalf of other agencies including the Executive Office, the Department for Communities and Department for Infrastructure. There are currently 170 live projects worth in excess of £120m, as well as 100+ early stage uncommitted projects and £300m+ of completed projects which still receive dedicated resourcing effort.									
3.2	<p><i>Proposed Movements - Capital Programme</i></p> <p>Members agreed that all capital projects must go through a three stage process where decisions on which capital projects progress are taken by the Committee. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project. Members are asked to agree to the following movements on the Capital Programme:</p> <table><tr><th>Project</th><th>Overview</th><th>Stage</th></tr><tr><td>IT Programme: Building Control System Replacement</td><td>Replacement ICT building control system to include building regulations, licensing, property certificates and addressing functions.</td><td>Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted</td></tr><tr><td>IT Programme: Financial Replacement System</td><td>Replacement of the current SAP corporate financial system and support services which are nearing end of life.</td><td>Move to Stage 3 – Committed</td></tr></table> <p><i>Building Control Replacement System</i></p> <p>Members are asked to agree that the IT Programme Building Control System replacement project is moved to <i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted</i> on the Capital Programme to allow the project to be further developed. Members are asked to note that further detail will be brought back to Committee in due course in line with the agreed three stage approvals process.</p> <p><i>Financial Replacement System</i></p> <p>Members are also asked to agree that the IT Programme Financial Replacement System is moved to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i>. The Council has reviewed the ongoing requirements of its current financial system with the emerging outcome to replace the current system with a modern Financial System, which will enable streamlined, efficient processes, deliver accurate financial data, and provide seamless integration into and from other solutions. This offers the potential to reduce the number of systems that the council currently supports and the number of interfaces it manages. Any project which is being moved from Stage 2 to Stage 3 under the</p>	Project	Overview	Stage	IT Programme: Building Control System Replacement	Replacement ICT building control system to include building regulations, licensing, property certificates and addressing functions.	Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted	IT Programme: Financial Replacement System	Replacement of the current SAP corporate financial system and support services which are nearing end of life.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed
Project	Overview	Stage								
IT Programme: Building Control System Replacement	Replacement ICT building control system to include building regulations, licensing, property certificates and addressing functions.	Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted								
IT Programme: Financial Replacement System	Replacement of the current SAP corporate financial system and support services which are nearing end of life.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed								

	Capital Programme is required as part of the three stage approval process to complete an Outline Business Case. Members are asked to note that this has been completed and reviewed internally. An update will be brought back to Committee at this stage along with the final budget allocation and confirmation that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.
3.3	<p><i>Contracts awarded</i></p> <p>Members are asked to note the award of tenders for capital works including services related to works at Appendix 1.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Financial – The final budget for the Financial Replacement System will be brought back to Committee for sign-off and confirmation that it is within the affordability limits of the Council upon receipt of the tender return.</p> <p>Resources – Ongoing running costs over a 10 year period to be confirmed</p>
3.6	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process.</p>
4.0	Document Attached
	Appendix - Schedule of Contracts Awarded (Works and Works Related) for Notation (Oct 20-Feb 21)

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Schedule of Contracts Awarded (Works and Works Related) for Notation (Oct 20- Feb 21)

Contract awarded	Supplier	Date of Award
Design Team for Alterations & refurbishment of 100 Great Patrick Street	Doherty Architects	09/10/2020
Appointment of a Cost Manager for a new Crematorium at Roselawn Cemetery	Bruce Shaw (Now SKOPE Projects LLP)	23/10/2020
PEACE IV Black Mountain Shared Space	McAdam Design	04/11/2020
PEACE IV Shared Women's Centre, Shankill	Todd Architects	24/11/2020
Design & Build Contractor for Berlin Swifts Changing Pavilion	Totalis Solutions	02/12/2020
Hanwood Centre Roller Door Upgrade	JB Door Systems Ltd	08/12/2020
Urban Design/Landscape Architect Led Masterplan for Cathedral Gardens	Hassell	11/12/2020
Architect Led Design Team Midlands Boxing Club	Michael Herron Architects	16/12/2020
Civil Engineer-Led Integrated Consultant Team at Marrowbone Millennium Park	Doran Consulting	17/12/2020
Cost Manager for Girdwood Leisure Complex Phase 2	Capita Symonds	11/01/2021
Professional Services Contract for Girdwood Leisure Complex Phase 2	Hamilton Architects	25/01/2021
UV_ICT for Sport in the Community refurb of Healthy Living Centre (Sally Gardens)	McCartan Muldoon	05/02/2021
Design & Build Contractor for a Changing Facility at Willowbank Playing Field	Maurice Flynn & Sons	05/02/2021
MTC Swimming pool filtration repair & maintenance	WJM Building Services	08/02/2021
Integrated Consultant Team for Paisley Park Sportsplex Refurbishment, Phase 2	The Boyd Partnership	15/02/2021
UV_Tender for Prokick Loose and Fixed Gym Equipment	Podium for Sport	09/02/2021
Integrated Consultant Team for Reservoirs Safety Works	Aecom	17/02/2021
MTC installation of new metal fencing	NK Fencing	05/03/2021
Tender for measured term contractor for New soft flooring at various Council properties and locations	JJ Henebry & Son Ltd	03/03/2021

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Subject:	Update on Area Working Groups
Date:	19th March 2021
Reporting Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes
Contact Officer:	Shauna Murtagh, Programme Manager

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

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

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To seek the Committee's approval of the minutes of the most recent round of AWG meetings and any additional recommendations arising from those meetings.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AWG Minutes - Approve the most recent round of AWG minutes (<i>North – 24 February, West – 25 February</i>), as attached. • Physical Programme – Agree the recommendations on reallocation under the LIF Programme from the West AWG as laid out below in paragraph 3.2.

3.0	Main Report
	<u>KEY ISSUES</u> Area Working Group Minutes
3.1	<p>Members agreed in June 2016 that the Area Working Group minutes would be taken submitted to the SP&R Committee for approval going forward, in line with the Council's commitment to openness and transparency and to ensure a consistent approach with other Member-led Working Groups.</p> <p>Members are asked to approve the most recent round of AWG minutes as attached.</p>
	Project Updates
3.2	<p>West AWG - Members are asked to note the following project updates as recommended by the AWG at its meeting on 25th February.</p> <p>BIF Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIF29 <i>Greater Shankill Community Council - Royal British Legion</i> – Note the movement of Greater Shankill Community Council - RBL project to Stage 2 - Uncommitted. <p>LIF Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>West AWG - St John's GAC</i> – Recommend the reallocation of the remaining £17,000 to the St John's GAC project.
	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
3.3	No implications
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.4	No implications
4.0	Documents Attached
	Minutes of the North and West Area Working Groups

North Belfast Area Working Group

Wednesday, 24th February, 2021

NORTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Maskey (Chairperson);
Councillors Bradley, Magee, McCullough,
O'Hara, Pankhurst and Whyte.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;
Ms. K. Gilliland, Neighbourhood Services Manager,
Ms. M. Higgins, Neighbourhood Services Integration
Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Councillors Cobain, Ferguson, McAllister, McCusker and Murphy.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 25th November, 2020 and 6th January, 2021 were agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Sustrans - Forth Meadow Community Greenway

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. R. Ludlow-Williams, Volunteer Coordinator, and Mr. S. Patterson, Delivery Manager, representing Sustrans Northern Ireland to the meeting.

The representatives presented an overview of the Sustrans - Forth Meadow Community Greenway– volunteer walk and cycle leaders' project. Ms. R. Ludlow-Williams advised that Sustrans was working in partnership to recruit and train 12 volunteer cycle leaders and 12 volunteer walk leaders for a 12km stretch of the Greenway.

She explained that the volunteer opportunity was aimed at individuals and community groups and that the volunteers would receive accessible free training and be supported to lead people to enjoy the greenway and promote the shared space. She explained the role of a cycle leader and walking leader and pointed out that Volunteers were required to commit to a minimum of 30 hours engagement between March and December.

Mr. Patterson informed the Group that community involvement was critical to the success of the project in the context of a shared space. He highlighted that Leaders would be trained in mediation and achieve an OCN accredited qualification, Route planning and group management, safeguarding training, and first aid training.

He explained the benefits and opportunities of the project and encouraged Members to share the volunteering programme information with interested groups and individuals.

During discussion, the representative's advised that suicide prevention training could also be looked into as part of the Leaders training, and they would be pleased to facilitate a walk or cycle around the Forth Meadow Community Greenway, once the Covid 19 restriction were lifted.

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

The Director of Physical Programmes emphasised that this was a major transformational project for this area. She advised that two letters of offer had been received from the Department for Infrastructure (750k) and Department for Communities (500k) towards the Forth Meadow Community Greenway. In addition to this, Section 1 of the Greenway had been granted planning permission at the February meeting of the Planning Committee and she stated that she was delighted to report that works on the project were due to commence next month.

Following discussion, the Working Group noted the information which had been provided and the continued engagement with Sustrans NI would include an invitation to provide an update on its volunteering programme at a future meeting.

Belfast Charitable Society

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. P. Reynolds, CEO, and Mr. D. Watters, Chair, Belfast Charitable Society to the meeting.

Mr. Watters summarised the history of the Society, together with an overview of the work which was currently being undertaken. He advised that the Society wished to raise awareness of its care facilities and funding and grants. This included: Building Better Futures Loans programme; Barbour Fund; BCS Grants programme (NI Hospice, North Belfast Families in crisis, schools' choir, heritage-led regeneration); Covid – Laptops, AgeNI, working with grantees; Heritage centre and Graveyard management; and the Mary Ann McCracken Foundation.

Ms. Reynolds informed the Group of the capital projects and the cultural and developmental projects which were underway, and explained the concept for the North Belfast Heritage Cluster – re-imagining North Belfast. She described the Great Place II project to include: Archive development, Telling our stories, Heritage Trail, North Belfast Festival, and Community Engagement.

During discussion, Ms. Reynolds advised that she would send through further information and online links in relation to the development work with local BAME groups and addressing racism.

She explained further the options for funding such projects and the work undertaken as part of the Mary Ann McCracken Foundation. She advised that it was

delivering a calendar of events to mark her 250th anniversary with a group of other organisations which would be shared with the Area Working Group.

In response to queries from the Working Group, the representative's confirmed that they would be content to host the North Area Working Group and provide a tour or talk of the history of the Society and its role in developing Belfast, together with an update on its current work in relation to addressing disadvantage and developing philanthropy. Ms Reynolds advised that the Crumlin Road Courthouse Viability Study should be completed soon and the Society would be in a position to present a further update on the Project after Easter. The Group agreed to receive a presentation on this at a future meeting and that this should be extended to members of the West AWG given the geographical location of the Courthouse.

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

Noted.

Chairperson

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West Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 25th February, 2021

WEST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Corr (Chairperson);
Alderman Kingston; and
Councillors Black, Canavan, Matthew Collins,
Donnelly, Garrett, Hutchinson, McCabe and
McLaughlin.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;
Mr. S. Lavery, Interim Neighbourhood Services Manager
West;
Ms. A. McGlone, Neighbourhood Integration
Manager; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Baker, Carson, Michael Collins, Heading and Magennis.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 5th January were agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Presentations

Sustrans - Forth Meadow Community Greenway

(Ms. D. McKinney, Programme Manager, attended in connection with this item).

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. R. Ludlow-Williams, Volunteer Coordinator, and Mr. S. Patterson, Delivery Manager, representing Sustrans Northern Ireland to the meeting.

The representatives presented an overview of the Sustrans - Forth Meadow Community Greenway– volunteer walk and cycle leaders' project. Ms. R. Ludlow-Williams advised that this volunteer opportunity was aimed at individuals and community groups along the 12km stretch of the Greenway and Sustrans were working in partnership to recruit and train 12 volunteer cycle leaders and 12 volunteer walk leaders.

She advised that the volunteers would receive accessible free training and be supported to lead people to enjoy the greenway and promote the shared space. She explained the role of a cycle leader and walking leader and pointed out that Volunteers commit to a min of 30 hours engagement between March & December.

Mr. Patterson informed the Group that community involvement was critical to the success of the project in the context of a shared space. He highlighted that Leaders would be trained in Mediation and achieve OCN accredited qualification, Route planning and group management, safeguarding training, and First aid training.

He explained the benefits and opportunities of the project and encouraged Members to share the volunteering programme information with interested groups and individuals.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their informative presentation and for the valuable work that they did for the community and they retired from the meeting.

The Director of Physical Programmes emphasised that this was a major transformational project for this area. She advised that two letters of offer had been received from the Department for Infrastructure (750k) and Department for Communities (500k) towards the Forth Meadow Community Greenway. In addition to this, Section 1 of the Greenway had been granted planning permission at the February meeting of the Planning Committee and she stated that she was delighted to report that works on the project were due to commence next month.

Following discussion, the Working Group agreed that:

- information would be submitted to a future meeting detailing the various sections of the Greenway, this would include maps and graphics which would enable the Members to better envisage the area and the proposed works;
- Officers undertook to liaise directly with the Members to keep them informed as to when the proposed works would commence at each of the sections and also in regard to the programming as part of the capital works;
- agreed that an update in respect of the Peace IV projects would be given at each meeting of the Working Group; and
- Officers undertook to continue to liaise with Sustrans with a view to supporting opportunities for a better cycling infrastructure throughout the City.

Patrick Stansfield's GAC

The Working Group was informed that Mr. A. McCaul, Secretary, and Mr. E. McGarrigle, Chairperson, both representing Patrick Stansfield's GAC, were in attendance to present.

Together they provided the Working Group with a comprehensive overview of the club, which included details in respect of the club's membership, its community partners and its many successes both on and off the pitch.

The representatives then referred to its numerous projects with the local community, advising that in conjunction with the community it organised many community activities, through groups such as the 'Resident Men Shed' and the Lenadoon Community Forum.

They then proceed to provide a detailed overview of the club's future aspirations and specifically referred to their proposed medium term regeneration plans which included a 720 metres urban trail, refurbished community facilities and the installation of a urban regeneration health space and they outlined the proposed benefits to both the Club and wider community.

The representative advised that ultimately the club wished to see the redevelopment plan progressed, a short to medium term neighbourhood plan had been developed to enable the proposed works to be delivered, either as one project or in phases, he concluded by referring to a financial overview of the anticipated costs for each element of the proposed scheme.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for attending and for the excellent work that Sarsfield GAC undertook with the local community and they retired from the room.

The Working Group were supportive of progressing the proposed Regeneration Plan but noted that currently no funding was available but they would provide support to the Club where possible.

Noted.

Request to Present - St Agnes GAC

The Chairperson urged caution in regard to permitting organisations/groups to present as he was concerned that the representatives might assume that funding was available.

The Members concurred but agreed that it was also useful to have an awareness of the valuable work that these organisations were doing within the community. Given the huge remit of the Area Working Group and the fact that it wished to concentrate on a more strategic and joined up area planning approach for the future it was agreed that a maximum of one presentation per meeting would be received and that they would be informed, in advance, that no funding was available.

The Working Group agreed that representatives from St Agnes GAC be invited to attend the next meeting of the Working Group to provide an update on its work.

Local Investment Fund Update

The Working Group considered the undernoted report:

"1 Introduction

This report provides an update on two project proposals made by Members under the LIF Programme and an update on progress in Due Diligence for Greater Shankill Community Council – RBL (BIF29) BIF project.

Members are reminded LIF is a £9m fixed programme of capital investment in non-council neighbourhood assets, over two tranches: LIF 1 (2012-2015) - £5m total funding pot, allocated across each AWG areas; and LIF 2 (2015 -2019) - £4m allocation. (LIF 1 – West - £1,127,500 + Shankill £490,000 and LIF 2 - £1,200,000). Each LIF project proposal is taken through a Due Diligence process prior to any funding award.

In September, Members will recall that it was recommended that £17,000 residual monies left from the St James Community Forum be reallocated to Davitt's GAC with the remaining monies to St John's GAC. The minimum LIF allocation amount is £15,000 and both proposals are seeking funding. Officers have been in contact with both groups and further cost information is now provided below.

Proposal	Description	Amount requested	Recommendation
Davitt's GAC (WLIF2-29)	Resurfacing of pathway used by club patrons and school children	£10,000	Members to consider the project proposal and note that other sources of funding are being explored
St John's GAC (WLIF2-30)	Upgrading of turnstile facilities at Corrigan Park. Phase one of a wider scheme at approx. £27k to improve gates and turnstiles at entrance area.	£17,000	Members to consider the project proposal and reallocate the remaining £17k on this project

In addition, Members are asked to note that both these projects have been scored by officers and have successfully met the minimum threshold.

Members are asked to consider to reallocate the remaining £17,000 under the LIF Programme to St John's GAC for the upgrading of turnstile facilities at Corrigan Park. This project is within the minimum £15k LIF requirement.

Once a recommendation has been made by the AWG, LIF projects are taken through the Council's Due Diligence process.

3. Belfast Investment Fund

Members will recall that on 29th October 2020, AWG received an update on Greater Shankill Community Council – RBL project proposal. Recently, the Due Diligence group has checked and reviewed the requirements of the project and is ready to move to the next stage under BIF. This will be reported to the next SP&R meeting.

Project	Update	Recommendation
Greater Shankill Community Council – RBL (BIF29)	Discussed at Due Diligence on the 18th February 2021. DD is content with the information provided for BIF Stage 1 (Checkpoint 1) and agree for the project to proceed.	Move to Stage 2- Uncommitted Progressing to detailed design

4. Recommendations

The Working Group is requested to:

- consider reallocation of the remaining £17,000 under the LIF Programme to St John's GAC; and
- note the movement of Greater Shankill Community Council – RBL (BIF29) project to Stage 2- Uncommitted.”

The Director of Physical Programmes provided the Members with an update in regard to the aforementioned report, following which the Working Group:

- noted the update provided regarding the Greater Shankill Community Council under the BIF; and
- agreed to the reallocation of the remaining £17,000 from the LIF Programme to St John's GAC; and
- agreed that the Decision Tracker document that provided an update on the status of LIF and BIF projects would be e-mailed to the Members in advance of the next meeting.

Upper Springfield Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership

Following an issue raised by Councillor Donnelly, it was agreed that the Director of Physical Programmes would liaise with the Member directly to discuss further ways in which the Council could potentially work with the Upper Springfield Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership in addressing areas such as health inequalities within Whiterock.

The Member stated that the organisation was not looking funding but was keen to work with the Council from a community planning perspective to ensure that the Whiterock Leisure Centre complex was utilised fully by the community and to incorporate ideas and

potential solutions in regard leisure, health and wellbeing as part of the Area Planning process and the overall strategic overview of the area

Noted.

Date of Next Meeting

The Working Group agreed that its next scheduled meeting would be held on Thursday, 27th May, 2021 at 4.30 p.m.

Chairperson



Subject:	CIPFA Prudential Code Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Indicators 2021/22
Date:	19th March 2021
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources
Contact Officer:	Trevor Wallace, Head of Finance

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

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

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	The Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 and the supporting Prudential and Treasury Codes produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), require the Council to consider the affordability and sustainability of capital expenditure decisions through the reporting of prudential and treasury management indicators.
1.2	The Prudential Code requires the Council to produce a Capital Strategy for 2021/22. This report provides information for Members on the Capital Strategy, incorporating the prudential indicators for Belfast City Council for the period 2021/22 to 2023/24, and the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • note the contents of this report and the prudential and treasury management indicators included within the appendices to the report. <p>and agree:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Authorised Borrowing Limit for the Council of £154m for 2021/22. • The Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22, which has been included as Appendix B to this report.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 requires the Council to adopt the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities. In doing so, the Council is required to agree a minimum revenue provision policy annually and to set and monitor a series of Prudential Indicators, the key objectives of which are to ensure that, within a clear framework, the capital investment plans of the council are affordable, prudent and sustainable.
3.2	At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the 9 December 2011, Members approved the Council's Treasury Management Policy which is based on the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice. The Treasury Management Policy requires that a Treasury Management Strategy be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on an annual basis and that it is supported by a mid-year and year end treasury management reports.
3.3	The Capital Strategy, incorporating the prudential indicators, is included as Appendix A, while the Treasury Management Strategy and treasury management indicators have been included as Appendix B.
3.4	The comparison of "Gross Borrowing" to "Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)" is the main indicator of prudence when considering the proposed capital investment plans of the Council. Estimated gross borrowing should not exceed the CFR for the current year plus two years. The Council's estimated gross borrowing position, illustrated in Table 6, Appendix A, is comfortably within the CFR in the medium term. The Director of Finance and Resources therefore considers the estimated levels of gross borrowing as being prudent.
3.5	Table 9 (Appendix A) shows the estimated financing costs for capital expenditure as a percentage of the estimated net revenue stream for the Council, based on the medium financial plan. These illustrate that in the medium term, capital financing costs will represent

	11.3% of the Council's net running costs. On this basis the Director of Finance and Resources is satisfied that the level of capital expenditure is affordable.
3.6	<p>The Finance Act requires the Council to set an affordable borrowing limit, relating to gross debt. The Prudential Code defines the affordable limit as the "Authorised Borrowing Limit" and gross borrowing must not exceed this limit. Table 7 (Appendix A) sets out the recommended "Authorised Borrowing Limit" for the Council as being £154m for 2021/22.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p>
3.7	<p>As detailed in the report</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p>
3.8	None
4.0	Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix A – Capital Strategy Report 2021/22</p> <p>Appendix B – Annual Treasury Management Strategy 2021/22</p>

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Capital Strategy Report 2021/22

1. Introduction

This capital strategy report gives a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of local public services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.

2. Capital Expenditure and Financing

Capital expenditure is where the Council spends money on assets, such as property or vehicles, which will be used for more than one year. In local government this includes spending on assets owned by other bodies, and loans and grants to other bodies enabling them to buy assets. The Council has some limited discretion on what counts as capital expenditure, for example assets costing below £25k are not capitalised and are charged to revenue in year.

In 2021/22, the Council is planning capital expenditure of £54.8m as summarised below:

Table 1: Prudential Indicator: Estimates of Capital Expenditure in £thousands

	2020/21 forecast	2021/22 budget	2022/23 budget	2023/24 budget
General Fund services	18,942	54,805	31,134	22,626

The capital expenditure forecast for 2020/21 has been significantly impacted by COVID-19 and continues to be monitored and reviewed, in terms of both project delivery and affordability.

Governance – The Council’s Capital Programme is agreed on a yearly basis by the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee in its role as the Council’s investment decision maker. All capital projects must go through a 3-stage approval process and decisions on which projects are added to the Capital Programme and which projects progress are also taken by SP&R Committee. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and allows Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving capital projects. The Physical Programmes Department and Financial Services calculate the financing cost of all proposals, including emerging proposals. As part of the final investment decision it must be confirmed that any project is within the affordability limits of the Council.

All capital expenditure must be financed, either from external sources (government grants and other contributions), the Council’s own resources (revenue, reserves and capital receipts) or debt (borrowing and leasing). The planned financing of the above expenditure is as follows:

Table 2: Capital financing in £thousands

	2020/21 forecast	2021/22 budget	2022/23 budget	2023/24 budget
External sources	0	0	0	0
Own resources	13,662	27,378	9,656	8,517
Debt	5,280	27,427	21,478	14,109
TOTAL	18,942	54,805	31,134	22,626

Debt is only a temporary source of finance, since loans and leases must be repaid, usually from revenue which is known as minimum revenue provision (MRP). Alternatively, proceeds from selling capital assets (known as capital receipts) may be used to replace debt finance. Planned MRP is as follows:

Table 3: Repayment of debt finance in £thousands (MRP)

	2020/21 forecast	2021/22 budget	2022/23 budget	2023/24 budget
Own resources	7,923	8,765	10,151	10,777

The Council's cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance is measured by the capital financing requirement (CFR). This increases with new debt-financed capital expenditure and reduces with MRP and capital receipts used to repay debt. The CFR is expected to increase by £18.7 m during 2021/22. Based on the above figures for expenditure and financing, the Council's estimated CFR is as follows:

Table 4: Prudential Indicator: Estimates of Capital Financing Requirement in £thousands

	31.3.2021 forecast	31.3.2022 budget	31.3.2023 budget	31.3.2024 budget
General Fund services	135,539	154,201	165,528	168,860

Asset Management – The Council is committed to ensuring that all Capital projects contribute to the strategic direction of the city and continue to be of long term use. The Council is currently in the process of looking at its Asset Management Strategy as well as procuring a new Asset Management System to support the strategic objectives of better financial management, information management, planning and performance and asset management

Asset disposals: When a capital asset is no longer needed, it may be sold so that the proceeds, known as capital receipts, can be spent on new assets or to repay debt. Repayments of capital grants, loans and investments also generate capital receipts. The Council plans to receive £1.7m of capital receipts in the coming financial year as follows:

Table 5: Capital receipts in £thousands

	2020/21 forecast	2021/22 budget	2022/23 budget	2023/24 budget
Asset sales	£1,700	£5,275	£4,300	£4,000
Loans repaid	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	£1,700	£5,275	£4,300	£4,000

3. **Treasury Management**

Treasury management is concerned with keeping sufficient but not excessive cash available to meet the Council's spending needs, while managing the risks involved. Surplus cash is invested until required, while a shortage of cash will be met by borrowing, to avoid excessive credit balances or overdrafts in the bank current account. The Council is typically cash rich in the short-term as revenue income is received before it is spent, but cash poor in the long-term as capital expenditure is incurred before being financed. The revenue cash surpluses are offset against capital cash shortfalls to reduce overall borrowing.

The Council currently has £57m borrowing and due to legacy loans taken at higher rates in the past and transfers of debt under Local Government, the average interest rate of these loans is 6.7%. By March 2022 the majority of the higher rate legacy loans will have been repaid. The council also has £28m treasury investments at an average rate of 0.04%.

Borrowing strategy: The Council's main objectives when borrowing are to achieve a low but certain cost of finance while retaining flexibility should plans change in future. These objectives are often conflicting, and the Council therefore seeks to strike a balance between cheap short-term loans (currently available at around 0.2%) and long-term fixed rate loans where the future cost is known but higher (currently 2 to 3%).

Projected levels of the Council's total outstanding debt (which comprises borrowing, leases and transfers from local government reorganisation are shown below, compared with the capital financing requirement (see above).

Table 6: Prudential Indicator: Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement in £thousands

	31.3.2021 forecast	31.3.2022 budget	31.3.2023 budget	31.3.2024 budget
Debt (incl. PFI & leases)	57,073	84,061	101,388	109,388
Capital Financing Requirement	135,539	154,201	165,528	168,860

Statutory guidance is that debt should remain below the capital financing requirement, as can be seen from table 6.

Affordable borrowing limit: The Council is legally obliged to set an affordable borrowing limit (also termed the authorised limit for external debt) each year and to keep it under review. In line with statutory guidance, a lower “operational boundary” is also set as a warning level should debt approach the limit.

Table 7: Prudential Indicators: Authorised limit and operational boundary for external debt in £thousands

	2021/22 limit	2022/23 limit	2023/24 limit
Authorised limit – borrowing	154,201	165,528	168,860
Authorised limit – PFI and leases	0	0	0
Authorised limit – total external debt	154,201	165,528	168,860
Operational boundary – borrowing	138,201	149,528	152,860
Operational boundary – PFI and leases	0	0	0
Operational boundary – total external debt	138,201	149,528	152,860

Investment strategy: Treasury investments arise from receiving cash before it is paid out again. Investments made for service reasons or for pure financial gain are not generally considered to be part of treasury management.

The Council’s policy on treasury investments is to prioritise security and liquidity over yield, that is to focus on minimising risk rather than maximising returns. Cash that is likely to be spent in the near term is invested securely, for example with the government, other local authorities or selected high-quality banks, to minimise the risk of loss. Both near-term and longer-term investments may be held in pooled funds, where an external fund manager makes decisions on which particular investments to buy and the Council may request its money back at short notice.

Table 8: Treasury management investments in £thousands

	31.3.2021 forecast	31.3.2022 budget	31.3.2023 budget	31.3.2024 budget
Near-term investments	28,000	16,000	16,000	16,000
Longer-term investments	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	28,000	16,000	16,000	16,000

Governance: Decisions on treasury management investment and borrowing are made daily and are therefore delegated to the Director of Finance and staff, who must act in line with the treasury management strategy approved by Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (SP&R). Tri-annual reports on treasury management

activity are presented to SP&R. The SP&R committee is responsible for scrutinising treasury management decisions.

4. **Liabilities**

In addition to debt of £57m detailed above, the Council is making payments to cover its pension fund liability. It has also set aside £4.9m to cover risks of insurance claims and Landfill Closure. The Council is also at risk of having to pay for its share of the ARC 21 Joint Committee contingent liability but has not put aside any money.

Governance: Decisions on incurring new discretionary liabilities are taken by departmental Chief Officers in consultation with the Director of Finance and Resources. The risk of liabilities crystallising and requiring payment is monitored by central finance and reported quarterly to the Director of Finance and Resources. New liabilities exceeding £1m are reported to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for approval/notification as appropriate.

5. **Revenue Budget Implications**

Although capital expenditure is not charged directly to the revenue budget, interest payable on loans and MRP are charged to revenue, offset by any investment income receivable. The net annual charge is known as financing costs; this is compared to the net revenue stream i.e. the amount funded from the District Rate and general government grants.

Table 9: Prudential Indicator: Proportion of financing costs to net revenue stream

	2020/21 forecast	2021/22 budget	2022/23 budget	2023/24 budget
Financing costs (£'000)	15,184	20,383	19,667	19,232
Proportion of net revenue stream	9.4%	12.3%	11.9%	11.6%

Sustainability: Due to the very long-term nature of capital expenditure and financing, the revenue budget implications of expenditure incurred in the next few years may extend for up to 50 years into the future. The Director of Finance and Resources is satisfied that the proposed capital programme is prudent, affordable and sustainable due to the processes in place to scrutinise any plans coming forward and are designed to highlight not only the ongoing financing costs but also the recurring running costs to ensure they remain within the affordability limits identified and agreed by the Council.

6. **Knowledge and Skills**

The Council employs professionally qualified and experienced staff in senior positions with responsibility for making capital expenditure, borrowing and investment decisions. For example, the Director of Finance and Resources is a qualified accountant with over 30 years' experience. The Council pays for junior staff to study

towards relevant professional qualifications including CIPFA, ACT (treasury), ACCA, etc.

Where Council staff do not have the knowledge and skills required, use is made of external advisers and consultants that are specialists in their field. The Council currently employs Arlingclose Limited as treasury management advisers. This approach is more cost effective than employing such staff directly, and ensures that the Council has access to knowledge and skills commensurate with its risk appetite.

Annual Treasury Management Strategy 2021/22

1. Introduction

Belfast City Council's Treasury Management Policy is based on the Chartered Institute of Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Treasury Management Code of Practice. The policy requires the Director of Finance and Resources to submit an annual Treasury management Strategy to the Council.

This strategy covers the following issues in respect of 2021/22:

- Outlook for interest rates
- Capital Financing Plans
- Establishing the Borrowing Requirement
- Borrowing strategy
- Debt rescheduling
- Investments
- Treasury Management Indicators

2. Outlook for Interest Rates

The impact on the UK from coronavirus, lockdown measures, the rollout of vaccines, as well as the new trading arrangements with the European Union (EU), will remain major influences on the Authority's treasury management strategy for 2021/22.

The Bank of England (BoE) maintained Bank Rate at 0.10% in December 2020. The Authority's treasury management adviser Arlingclose is forecasting that BoE Bank Rate will remain at 0.1% until at least the first quarter of 2024. The risks to this forecast are judged to be to the downside as the BoE and UK government continue to react to the coronavirus pandemic and the new EU trading arrangements. However, further interest rate cuts to zero, or possibly negative, cannot yet be ruled out but this is not part of the Arlingclose central forecast.

3. Capital Financing Plans

It is essential that the level of borrowing is considered within the context of the Council's capital expenditure and plans, as is required by the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance.

Table 1 overleaf shows how the capital expenditure and financing plans will impact on the net cash requirement of the Council. It should also be noted that movement to and from reserves will impact on the cash requirement (i.e. if there are net transfers from reserves, this will create an additional need for cash).

Table 1
Net Cash Requirement

	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Capital Expenditure	54,805	31,134	22,626
Financed from "other" sources (e.g. grants, contributions, revenue, capital receipts etc)	27,378	9,656	8,517
Remainder to be "borrowed"	27,427	21,478	14,109
Notional Repayment of Principal (MRP)	8,765	10,151	10,777
Increase / (decrease) in CFR	18,662	11,327	3,332
Transfers (to) / from reserves	3,270	3,270	3,270
Net Cash Requirement	21,932	14,597	6,602

The way in which this total funding requirement of £108m for 2021/22-2023/24 is met, is a key consideration of the treasury management strategy. This requirement will increase the net borrowing position of the Council and consideration needs to be given to whether this is met by increasing borrowing, or reducing investment balances.

4. Establishing the Borrowing Requirement

The starting point for ascertaining the appropriate level of borrowing is the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). The CFR is derived from the Balance Sheet and represents the Council's underlying need to borrow for a capital purpose, as it takes account of all capital expenditure incurred which is resourced from borrowing.

However, in addition to the debt position created by historic capital expenditure met from borrowing, the Council also has significant values of reserves, provisions and balances supported by cash, which reduce the net indebtedness of the Council. These positive cash flows allow the Council to consider utilising this cash to support capital expenditure in lieu of external borrowing.

If external borrowing is higher than the CFR, this indicates borrowing in advance of immediate need (permitted within the Prudential Code) and borrowing below CFR would indicate internal borrowing (i.e. the level of cash used in lieu of external borrowing)

The relatively high levels of reserves and balances on the Council's balance sheet have therefore enabled the Council to benefit from not having to borrow externally to the full extent of the underlying need. However, it cannot be assumed that this position can continue into perpetuity and needs to be given active consideration.

In order to create a framework around the extent to which the council's reserves and balances can continue to be used, the Director of Finance and Resources is recommending an internal limit to be placed on the level of internal borrowing, based on CIPFA Treasury management Code of Practice that can be used before having to borrow externally. This is known as the Allowable Internal Borrowing limit. This limit has regard to the components of reserves and balances and the estimated longevity

of these balances. The Director of Finance and Resources has assessed that of the £67m that existed on the balance sheet at 31st March 2020, at least £16m will remain for the foreseeable future and that this amount may therefore be used in lieu of external borrowing. From the internal borrowing, the proposed amount of external borrowing to be held, known as the Liability Benchmark can be determined.

Table 2
External Borrowing Requirement

	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Projected closing CFR	154,201	165,528	168,860
Internal Borrowing	16,000	16,000	16,000
Liability Benchmark	138,201	149,528	152,860
Projected closing borrowing	84,061	101,388	109,388
Borrowing maturing in year	(8,012)	(7,673)	(7,000)
Additional Borrowing Required	54,140	47,870	43,472
(Increase) / Decrease in Investment Balances	3,270	3,270	3,270

It should be noted that, in the event of slippage within the capital programme, the CFR may not increase as much as has been forecast and therefore if the external borrowing had been undertaken as planned, internal borrowing would be lower than the limit specified.

5. Borrowing Strategy

In terms of meeting the external borrowing requirement identified above, one of the most important considerations is the timing, in terms of the potential to save significant interest costs and it is key that this position is proactively managed using all information available to inform decisions. It is essential therefore that the considerations of timing of borrowing form a key element of the borrowing strategy.

It is of course not possible for all borrowing to be undertaken at the lowest rates of interest available, as unforeseen events can significantly alter the path of rates. It is therefore essential that the risks to adverse movements are fully understood and actively managed. One of the key borrowing objectives is to achieve certainty around interest costs, and there is therefore little appetite to undertake variable rate borrowing.

Given the uncertainty around local government funding, the Council's borrowing strategy continues to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio. With short-term interest rates currently much lower than long-term rates, it is likely to be more cost effective in the short-term to either use internal resources, or to borrow short-term loans instead. By doing so, the Council is able to reduce net borrowing costs (despite foregone investment income) and reduce overall treasury risk. The benefits of internal / short-term borrowing will be monitored regularly against the potential for incurring additional costs by deferring borrowing into future years when long-term borrowing rates are forecast to rise modestly.

It is recognised that whilst the capital expenditure and financing plans will be a driver of borrowing costs, the management of risk is the prime objective of the borrowing strategy and reduction of interest rate risk and refinancing risk within the portfolio is essential.

The Council remains prepared to undertake the potential borrowing ahead of immediate need (up to three years in advance), if it results in a reduction of interest rate risk within the portfolio. The Council recognises that this may temporarily increase investment balances, and increase net interest costs in the short term, and that these factors will form part of the decision making process when the strategy is executed. It would be necessary to demonstrate value for money when making a decision in respect of borrowing in advance of need, therefore it will only be undertaken if there is a strong view that rates may rise.

The Council has previously raised the majority of its long-term borrowing from the Government Loans Fund. The Council may look to borrow any long-term loans from other sources such as banks, pensions and local authorities and may utilise money market brokers to facilitate borrowing from other local authorities for short to medium term borrowing.

6. Debt Rescheduling

The prime objective of any restructuring is to reduce risk in the portfolio, whether that be interest rate or refinancing risk. Any savings that may be created as a result will be considered in the context of the overall risk profile.

Debt restructuring opportunities will be kept under constant review, however the penalties of premature redemption of loans at higher rates than prevailing interest rates mean that there may be significant costs associated with this, which will reduce the attractiveness of opportunities.

7. Investments

Annual Investment Strategy

The Council has regard to the Guidance for Local Government Investments for District Councils in Northern Ireland (the Guidance) as cited under Section 25(1) of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (the Act) when setting the Investment Strategy. The Department recommends that each local authority produce and publish an Annual Investment Strategy, approved by the Council and revised in year as required. This sets out the Council's policies for managing investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments. This investment strategy states which instruments the Council may use for investment purposes, making a distinction between specified and non-specified investments. This strategy also determines limits in respect of their overall levels.

The prime objective of the Council's investment strategy is to ensure prudent investment of surplus funds. The Council's investment priorities are the security of capital, liquidity of investments and, within those objectives, to secure optimum performance. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the risk that the Bank of England will set its Bank Rate at or below zero, which is likely to feed through to negative interest rates on all low risk, short-term investment options. Since investments cannot pay negative income, negative rates will be applied by reducing

the value of investments. In this event, security will be measured as receiving the contractually agreed amount at maturity, even though this may be less than the amount originally invested.

All investments will be made in accordance with the Council's investment policies and prevailing legislation and regulations.

7.1 Specified Investments

An investment is a **specified investment** if:

- The investment is denominated in Sterling and all payments or repayments are payable only in Sterling,
- The investment is not a long term investment (i.e. due to be repaid within 12 months of the date in which it was made or one which the Council may require to be repaid within that period),
- The making of the investment is not defined as capital expenditure by virtue of regulation 12 of the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2011; and
- The investment is made with a body which has been awarded a high credit rating, or is made with one of the following:
 - a) The United Kingdom Government;
 - b) A District Council;
 - c) A Local Authority in England and Wales or a similar body in Scotland;

The following categories of investments may be used under the definition of specified investments:

- Short term cash deposits
- Call accounts
- Certificates of Deposit (with maturity dates < 1 year)
- UK Government Gilts
- Treasury Bills
- Money Market Funds

The Council considers a high credit rating for money market funds to be those with a long term Fitch Rating of AAA (or the equivalent highest rating from Standard and Poors or Moodys).

The Council will have regard to all 3 rating agencies and considers a high credit rating for other investments to be as follows:

Fitch Credit Rating	Minimum level
Short Term Rating	F1
Long Term Rating	A

Fitch defines these ratings as follows:

A: High credit quality.

'A' ratings denote expectations of low default risk. The capacity for payment of financial commitments is considered strong. This capacity may, nevertheless, be more vulnerable to adverse business or economic conditions than is the case for higher ratings.

F1: Highest short-term credit quality.

Indicates the strongest intrinsic capacity for timely payment of financial commitments

7.2 **Non-specified Investments**

In respect of **non-specified investments**. The following instruments have been identified by the Council.

Category of Non-specified investment
Sterling denominated Foreign Government Securities
Sterling medium term Deposits or Certificates of Deposit
Floating rate Certificates of Deposit
Highly rated Corporate Bonds (including investments in a Corporate Bond Fund)
Sterling Reserve Funds
Index-linked structured deposits
Collateralised deposits
Foreign Currency denominated investments
Deposits with non-rated Building Societies

The Council do not intend on making any investments in the 2021/22 year which meet the definition of non-specified investments and therefore there is no limit set on this within the Investment Strategy.

The CIPFA Code of Practice recommends that the Investment Strategy sets out the maximum period over which investments will be made.

The Director of Finance and Resources recommends that a maximum duration of 2 years should be set, although it is only expected that investments over 12 months will be made in exceptional circumstances.

Regulation 12(1) (d) of the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 states that some categories of investment are defined as Capital Expenditure. This relates to the acquisition of share or loan capital in any body corporate. However, in the event that this expenditure is made as an investment for the prudent management of the Council's financial affairs, it shall not be treated as capital expenditure.

The impact of investing in instruments of this nature are such that, unlike other investment instruments, either capital or revenue resources would have to be applied to this expenditure, and once the investment was sold or matured, the income would be a capital receipt.

The Council do not intend on making any investments which meet the definition of capital expenditure and therefore there is no limit set on this within the Investment Strategy.

7.3 **Investment Risk**

The prime consideration of risk within investments is the loss of capital invested. Therefore investments will only be made with bodies with a high credit rating defined above. Credit ratings will form the primary driver for assessing credit quality, although it is recognised that this is not the only means of assessing credit quality.

Caution will be exercised in determining the creditworthiness of investment counterparties, even if they meet the minimum criteria above.

In the event that any institutions are at the minimum criteria and are on negative rating watch, monies will not be placed with that organisation until such time that the negative outlook is revised.

Geographical limits will be considered to ensure an appropriate spread of risk. Sovereign ratings will be taken account of when placing funds with institutions outside of the UK.

Credit ratings for existing investment counterparties will be monitored on a monthly basis, as well as immediately before new deposits are placed.

Market intelligence will also be considered before entering into any investments with proposed counterparties meeting the minimum criteria.

7.4 Treasury Management Advisers

The Council currently utilise the services of external advisers, Arlingclose, when determining the credit quality of its investment counterparties. The Council recognise that responsibility for the decision to invest with a counterparty rests with the Council as the principle undertaking the transaction.

Credit ratings will be obtained directly from the rating agencies' websites, and officers will regularly read the financial press for information relevant to the credit-worthiness of counterparties.

7.5 Investment Training

The Council recognises that investments, as well as wider treasury management issues require a high level of specialist knowledge. Officers undertaking the decisions are all qualified accountants with many years of experience. However, the Council recognises the need for officers to be kept up to date with developments and through the annual appraisal system will identify any training needs to further enhance the current skills base.

In the event of new Officers joining the function, they will be provided with significant on the job training as well as being provided with the opportunity to attend relevant external training courses.

The Council recognises that although there may be costs involved with sending officers to training courses, when these costs are considered in the context of the size of the portfolios being managed, and the amount of the Council's money at risk, investment in training is a worthwhile area of expenditure.

In addition to the training of officers, in order for elected members to provide effective scrutiny of the strategy and to have the knowledge to make informed decisions regarding the strategy, it is also important that training is provided to Members of the Council.

7.6 Other Investment Considerations

The level of investment balances is not specifically targeted in the strategy; it will be a consequence of the net spending plans of the Council, and the level of external borrowing to be undertaken. To date, balances have remained relatively stable over recent years. However, the introduction of the Prudential Code, and the self regulation of borrowing limits and capital financing strategies, may result in higher or lower levels of balances going forwards as the level of external borrowing is given active consideration.

It should also be noted that the investments are largely as a result of the level of reserves and provisions that the Council has at any one point in time. In addition, there is an amount of working capital (excess of creditors over debtors) as well as being a factor of the extent to which investment balances have been used in lieu of external borrowing.

Investment balances are expected to decrease as further investment balances are used in lieu of external borrowing.

The remaining cash balances that will not be used in lieu of external borrowing will primarily exist to manage cash flow volatility within the Council. It is therefore not expected that investments of a long term strategic nature will be made. Instead the duration of new investments will remain relatively short in order to meet liquidity demands.

The Council recognises that a consequence of short dated investments is that it exposes the portfolio to interest rate risk, which would otherwise be reduced if investments were made of a long term nature. The budget for investment income takes a prudent approach to expected returns from investments.

8. Treasury Management Indicators

The CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice requires various indicators to be set within the strategy. This section of the report sets these out in the format required by the Code. Whilst they are required to provide boundaries within which the treasury management operations will be managed, it is also important that there is sufficient flexibility to enable officers to react to unforeseen favourable movements in the financial markets which may present beneficial opportunities to the Council.

8.21 Interest Rate Exposures

The Council is required to set upper limits for both fixed and variable exposures for the forthcoming years. The purpose of this indicator is to contain the Council's exposure to unfavourable movements in interest rates. The indicators are expressed as Fixed Rate Borrowing less Fixed Rate Investments and Variable Rate Borrowing less Variable Rate Investments. The Council defines variable rate investments as including those instruments maturing within each year, as the replacement of those instruments will be subject to prevailing rates of interest. The following table shows the upper limit of fixed rate exposure and the upper limit of variable rate exposure for the forthcoming three years.

	Estimate 2021/22 £'000	Estimate 2022/23 £'000	Estimate 2023/24 £'000
Upper limit of fixed rate exposure	138,201	149,528	152,860
Upper limit of variable rate exposure	4,146	4,478	4,586

8.2 Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate Borrowing

The Council is required to set upper and lower limits of fixed rate borrowing maturing within certain periods, in order to contain the exposure to re-financing risk which may arise if significant proportions of borrowing were maturing within a short period of time. The Council has set the following limits for the forthcoming financial year.

	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Under 12 months	0.00%	15.00%
12 months – 24 months	0.00%	10.00%
24 months – 5 years	0.00%	15.00%
5 years – 10 years	0.00%	15.00%
10 years and above	0.00%	65.00%

8.3 Total Principal Sums invested for periods longer than 364 days

The purpose of this indicator is to contain exposure to the possibility of loss that may arise as a result of the Council having to seek early repayment of sums invested.

The Council would not, through its normal course of investment activities, expect to make investments beyond 12 months. However, there may be exceptional circumstances which may result in investments being made up to 2 years in duration, as is referred to within the Annual Investment Strategy.

	Estimate 2021/22	Estimate 2022/23	Estimate 2023/24
Total principal sums invested for longer than 364 days	£2m	£2m	£2m

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Subject:	Update on Contracts
Date:	19th March 2021
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources
Contact Officer:	Noleen Bohill, Head of Commercial and Procurement Services

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

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> seek approval from members for tenders and Single Tender Actions (STA) over £30,000, and modifications to a contract term and to ask members to note retrospective Single Tender Actions (STAs) awarded
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed Appendix 1 (Table 1) Approve the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the modification of the contract term as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 3) • Note the award of retrospective STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 4)
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Competitive Tenders</u>
3.1	Section 2.5 of the Scheme of Delegation states Chief Officers have delegated authority to authorise a contract for the procurement of goods, services or works over the statutory limit of £30,000 following a tender exercise where the council has approved the invitation to tender
3.2	Standing Order 60(a) states any contract that exceeds the statutory amount (currently £30,000) shall be made under the Corporate Seal. Under Standing Order 51(b) the Corporate Seal can only be affixed when there is a resolution of the Council.
3.3	Standing Order 54 states that every contract shall comply with the relevant requirements of national and European legislation.
	<u>Single Tender Actions (STAs)</u>
3.4	<p>The following STAs are being submitted for approval:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract for £105,000 for 2 years for 'Information @ Work' document management system awarded to Northgate PS. The STA is required as the product / service is proprietary • Contract for £856,800 for up to 3 year awarded to Northgate PS for the provision of perpetual licences for the Housing Benefit system for the NIHE (support & maintenance) contract (including £165,000 for recent legislation changes). The STA is required as the product /service is proprietary • Contract for £150,000 for up to 2 years awarded to Northern Ireland Land & Property Services (LPS NI) for the provision of mapping requirements & planning. The STA is required as the product /services is proprietary • Contract for £180,000 for up to 3 years awarded to Microsoft for Premier support to ensure that the Council has access to premium/gold support, proactive consultancy and engineering days, and a dedicated technical account manager who will manage

	<p>the entire suite of Microsoft products that the Council utilises.. The STA is required as the product /services is proprietary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract for £70,730 for up to 1 year for the maintenance & support of SAP, SRM & VIM systems awarded to HCL Technologies. The STA is required to ensure continuity of service until new financial system replacement project is complete in April 22 • Contract for £56,162 for up to 1 year for the the council's Clockwise system. The STA is required to ensure continuity of service until new the HR/ Payroll/ T&A system is implemented • Contract extension for 6 months for £150,000 for the removal, transportation and emptying of skips and hook lift containers (T1430 contract) to ensure ongoing service delivery whilst a formal procurement exercise is completed. • Contract extension for 9 months for £42,000 for the collection, storage, retrieval and destruction of office records (T629a contract) to ensure ongoing service delivery whilst a formal procurement exercise is completed • Contract extension for 2 years for £3.85m for the recycling collection service from 58,000 households on a weekly basis (T1200 contract) to ensure ongoing service delivery whilst economic appraisal of service is completed and a subsequent procurement exercise run. Note that this was presented to SP&R and approved as an option by SP&R in Feb 21. This has been included in this month's SP&R report in order to document approval in line with the Council's established STA procedure.
3.5	<p>The following contract terms were modified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 6 month extension to an existing contract for the outline business case support for the Belfast Region City Deal Digital Pillar programme. Extension required for additional resource required to address Government feedback on proposed investment.
3.6	<p>The following retrospective STAs were awarded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract for £31,799 for up to 1 year for the maintenance and support of the eSourcing NI system awarded to Bravo Solutions. The STA is required to ensure continuity of service until new financial system replacement project is complete in April 22.

	Financial and Resource Implications
3.7	The financial resources for these contracts are within approved corporate or departmental budgets
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.8	None
4.0	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 Table 1 - Competitive Tenders Table 2 - Single Tender Actions Table 3 - Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Estimated Total Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Tender for advanced expert knowledge and support in the event of IT security incident	up to 3 years	£60,000	R Cregan	Direct support of security appliances with direct connection to suppliers. In hours on call assistance and on-site support for security issues/incidents
Tender for the provision of 1100L euro bins and castors	one off purchase	£70,490	S Toland / R Black	Provision of 1100L euro bins & castors for commercial waste
Tender for the provision of laptops, docking stations and other IT peripherals	up to 1 year	£500,000	R Cregan	New devices and other peripherals to facilitate home working and replacement devices as per regular business as usual replacement cycle
Tender for the provision of dog kennelling facilities and related services	up to 4 years	£144,000	S Toland / R Black	Requirement to ensure council's obligations under the "the Dogs (N.I.) Order 1983."
Belfast Safer Homes scheme including: home safety checks; equipment delivery; repairs; security assessments; security equipment fitting	up to 5 years	£500,000	S Toland	This is a joint project delivered in partnership with PCSP, BCC Older People budget (£20K) and external PHA funding. This is a health and wellbeing project which assists the Council in meeting its targets to address issues faced by older people in our community.

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Total Value	SRO	Supplier
Contract for the Information @ Work document management system	£105,000	R Cregan	Northgate PS
Contract for the support and maintenance and perpetual licences for the Housing Benefit system for NIHE (include recent legislation changes)	£856,800	R Cregan	Northgate PS
Contract for the NI Land & Property Services agreement	£150,000	R Cregan	Land and Property Services (LPS) NI
Contract for the Microsoft Premier Support	£180,000	R Cregan	Microsoft

Appendix 1

Contract for the maintenance and support for SAP, SRM & VIM until financial systems replacement	£70,730	R Cregan	HCL Technologies
Contract for Clockwise System until replacement in HR/Payroll/T&A project implementation	£56,162	R Cregan	Softworks
Contract extension for 6 months for the removal, transportation and emptying of skips and hook lift containers (T1430 contract) to ensure ongoing service delivery whilst a formal procurement exercise is completed	£150,000	S Toland / R Black	Avenue Recycling
Contract extension for 9 months for the collection, storage, retrieval and destruction of office records (T629a contract) to ensure ongoing service delivery whilst a formal procurement exercise is completed	£42,000	J Walsh	Morgan Document Security
Contract extension for 2 years for £3.85m for the recycling collection service from 58,000 households on a weekly basis (T1200 contract) to ensure ongoing service delivery whilst economic appraisal of service is completed and a subsequent procurement exercise run.	£3.85m	S Toland / R Black	Bryson Recycling

Table 3: Modification to Contract term

Title of Contract	Supplier	Modification	SRO
Outline business case support for the Belfast Region City Deal Digital Pillar programme (T2042)	PWC	6 month extension.	R Cregan

Table 4: Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Title of Contract	Duration	Value	SRO	Supplier
Contract for the maintenance and support for eSourcing NI procurement system	up to 1 year	£31,799	R Cregan	Bravo Solutions



Subject:	Minutes of the Meeting of the Shared City Partnership
Date:	19th March 2021
Reporting Officer:	Ryan Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Nicola Lane, Good Relations Manager

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

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to report to committee on the key issues discussed at the Shared City Partnership meeting held on 8th March.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is requested to approve the minutes and the recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 8th March, including:</p> <p>PEACE IV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> that it delegate authority to the Peace IV Programme Board to consider modifications to target delivery timescales for projects, subject to approval from the SEUPB.

	<p>Good Relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That a further report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Partnership which would outline the current structures within Council which includes representatives from the following ‘Hate Crime Categories’ - disability, transgender identity and sexual orientation and how these should relate to the work of and representation on the Shared City Partnership
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The Shared City Partnership is a Working Group of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee which consists of Elected members and representatives from various sectors across the city. The minutes from the Partnership are brought before the Committee for approval on a monthly basis.
3.2	<p>The key issues on the agenda at the March meeting were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation on the Peace IV Transform for Change Project • PEACE IV <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Update on PEACE IV Secretariat ➤ Update on PEACE IV CYP Theme ➤ Update on PEACE IV SSS Theme ➤ Update on PEACE IV BPR Theme • Update on Notice of Motion – Addressing Hate and Intolerance • Update on Decade of Centenaries Programme
3.3	More details regarding the above issues and recommendations are included in the minutes of the meeting, as attached.
	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
3.4	All financial implications are covered through existing budgets
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.4	The recommendations of the Partnership promote the work of the Council in promoting good relations and will enhance equality and good relations impacts.
4.0	Documents Attached
	Minutes of the Shared City Partnership meeting of 8 th March 2021.

SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

MONDAY 8th MARCH, 2021

MEETING OF SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Kyle (Chairperson);
Alderman Rodgers; and
Councillors M. Kelly, Lyons, Magennis, O'Hara and Verner.

External Members: Mrs. O. Barron, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust;
Mr. J. Currie, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Mr. R. Cushnie, Good Relations, TEO;
Mr. J. Donnelly, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Miss. G. Duggan, Belfast City Centre Management;
Father. E. O'Neill, Faith Sector;
Mrs. J. Hawthorne, Northern Ireland Housing Executive;
Ms. J. Irwin, Community Relations Council;
Mr. I. McLaughlin, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Superintendent G. Pollock, PSNI; and
Ms. A. M. White, British Red Cross.

In attendance: Ms. N. Lane, Good Relations Manager;
Ms. D. McKinney, Programme Manager; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Mrs. B. Arthurs and Mr. M. McBride.

Minutes

Following a query in relation to an extract from the Good Relations Action Plan 2021/22 minute, the Good Relations Manager clarified that, it was not specifically that the TEO had prioritised the TEO Summer Camps Programme over others, but that this programme had proven to be more popular and had therefore experienced a bigger uptake than the other programmes.

The minutes of the meeting of 8th February, 2021 were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations were reported.

Membership of Partnership

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. R. Cushnie, Good Relations, TEO to his first meeting and on behalf of the Partnership asked that its thanks be conveyed to Mr. M. McGinley for his contribution.

Noted.

Presentation on the Peace IV Transform for Change Project

(Ms. K. McIvor, PEACE IV-Project Manager, Building Positive Relations, attended in connection with this item).

The Partnership was informed that Ms. S. Bailie and Ms. H. McLaughlin, representing the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA), delivery partner for the Transformative Leadership Programme (TLP) element, were in attendance to present.

Together they provided the Partnership with an overview of the Transform for Change Project. They advised that the project was a collaborative approach delivered by the Council and NICVA, along with various community Partners and reported that 252 participants had completed training programmes to date. The training was delivered in interface areas across Belfast, it involved working with people to provide them with the skills to work with others to bring about positive change in local communities across Belfast, with the aim of enabling them to form connections and relationships to bring about positive change.

The representatives provided an overview of the current clusters and also the specific areas in which the programme was currently being delivered. They advised that the 10 modules delivered through the programme were as follows:

- **Core:** Introduction to the TLP;
- **Core:** Power and Systems – the Big Picture;
- A Vision for Transformation;
- Overcoming Barriers – Transforming Conflict ;
- **Core:** Collaboration for Transformation;
- **Core:** Transforming Relationships;
- **Core:** Social Innovation Introduction;
- **Core:** Social Innovation – a local issue;
- Leading and Motivating your Community; and
- Taking your Leadership Forward.

They reported that the delivery of training had been re-designed to enable on-line delivery as required by the current Covid-19 restrictions and highlighted that participant levels had been impacted.

The representatives concluded by providing an overview of some testimonials from people who had successfully completed the programme and also detailed the next steps, along with the proposed target and outputs. They thanked the Council for its continued support and for the opportunity to present and urged the Members to keep sharing the benefits of the Training Programme to their contacts to ensure a continued and sustained uptake from all sectors and a greater buy-in from the political sector.

The Chairperson of the Partnership thanked the representatives for their hard work and commitment in delivering the programme, particularly during the current difficult circumstances, following which they left the meeting.

Noted.

Peace IV Updates

Update on Secretariat

The PEACE IV Programme Manager provided the Members with an update in respect of the Secretariat activity associated with the implementation of the Peace IV Local Action Plan.

The officer reported that as the Members were already aware the ongoing government restrictions continued to have a severe impact on delivery.

Approvals from SEUPB on the Project Modifications for BPR3 and BPR5 remained outstanding and officers continued to press the SEUPB for a decision and they had also raised concerns in regard to the length of the process for modification approvals.

The Members were reminded that the Partnership had previously agreed, as part of the Covid 19 Impacts and Modification report, to extend project activity as requested and necessary. The Members were advised that a formal request for an extension of the SSS theme to December 2022 had been submitted and approved by SEUPB. Administration relating to the extension period was being progressed with SEUPB and a revised Letter of Offer would be issued in due course.

Given the extended lockdown period, project modifications to realign activities and target completion dates continue to be submitted by delivery partners. To enable forward planning and prompt decisions, the Partnership was request to delegate authority to the PEACE IV Programme Board to consider requests for amended cohort completion timescales, subject to SEUPB approval.

The officer reiterated that the delivery of project activity continued to be hampered as compliance with the Health Protection restrictions was a priority.

She also updated that:

- In response to the PEACE IV Managers Forum correspondence – the SEUPB had advised that the Programme Manager would be in contact with each Local Authority to address individual concerns;
- SOLACE had met and agreed to contact the SEUPB to further discuss the PEACE IV risks to Local Authorities and try and progress the proposed next steps, an update would be provided in due course;
- Programme Workplan – A virtual event to mark International Women's Day on the theme of Choose to Challenge for Peace was being delivered on Tuesday, 9th March 2021. A virtual cultural café celebrating the Indian community in Belfast was scheduled to take place on Monday, 29th March 2021. Invitations to the virtual events would be issued to the Members in due course;
- Verification and Audit – The AGRS internal audit report had been delayed until March 2021. Members would be updated when received.

The Partnership were informed that claims for all aspects of the Programme for Period 24 totaling £710,727 had been completed and a full reimbursement had been received by the Council. The Period 25 (Nov 20-Jan 21) claim, totaling £561,478, had been submitted for reimbursement to the SEUPB by the deadline of Friday, 26th February 2021.

She detailed that the breakdown across the themes was as follows:

- CYP: £104,574.16;
- BPR: £260,178.23; and
- SSS: £196,726.36

The Partnership recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it delegate authority to the Peace IV Programme Board to consider modifications to target delivery timescales for projects, subject to approval from the SEUPB.

Update on CYP Theme

The Working Group considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

To provide the Shared City Partnership (SCP) with a progress report in respect of the Children and Young People’s (CYP) theme of the PEACE IV Local Action Plan.

2.0 Recommendations

The Partnership is requested to recommend to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee that they note the contents of the report.

3.0 Main report

Significant challenges continue for delivery partners in recruiting participants and well as issues facing young people due to COVID 19. Close monitoring of the projects is ongoing as detailed in the Risk Tracker (Appendix I).

Project Updates

3.1 CYP 1 – Tech Connects

GIGA Training (Afterschool’s & Digital Arts Academies (Tech Camps) (6-16 Yr. Olds)

The next Digital Arts Academy, aimed at 6-11 year olds, is planned to take place over 4 days 6th - 9th April and will focus on digital creative workshops such as Animation, Music Production, Comic Book Design and Video Making. Age appropriate good relations is part of the programme content. Delivery is being planned on a face-to-face basis, with measures such as social distancing, staggered start & stop times and smaller group sizes to comply with Health Protection Regulations. The programme and scheduled dates will be kept under review in line with government restrictions.

Belfast Metropolitan College (Digital Insights Programme) (17-24 yr. olds)

The programme content is delivered virtually, with mentoring also delivered via the same learning platform. SEUPB approved the inclusion of 10 young people, who live outside of the Belfast boundary but work or study in the City, on an exceptional circumstances basis.

The delivery partner has reviewed the programme structure and submitted a draft schedule for the coming months, based on a revised delivery model, of 2 half day plus a full day training, followed by ongoing support and celebration events to meet the required 26 hours contact. The approach will be kept under review by the Thematic Manager and Programme Board.

3.2 CYP 2 - Playing our Part in the City

Active Communities Network revised delivery approach via a compressed method (i.e. weeklong programme or 5 full day Saturday sessions was approved) was due to commence in February, during mid-term break. However due to ongoing restrictions this is now delayed.

As such, a further modification to extend year 3 completion from end of March 2021 to end of July 2021 is being progressed.

3.3 CYP3 – On the Right Track – Sports and Personal Change elements

Sporting activity is not permitted under the current Health Protection Regulations. As such, project delivery has been extremely challenging. The Project Officer remains in close contact with participating groups, where possible. Delivery is focusing on the capacity-building element, the OCN training, as a high priority. Identification of new participant groups and planning for new activity is ongoing. However due to the voluntary nature, many committees are paused, as a result engagement is difficult.

Personal Change

Cohort 2 participants completed the required activity including 9 OCN qualifications, sporting sessions, 15 educational visits and all of the mentoring hours, a minimum of 265 hours in total. The final residential was cancelled due to the extended lockdown, additional group work activity supplemented this. A recognition event to celebrate the participant's achievements will be planned once government restrictions allow.

Extern has recruited the final cohort of 19 young people and is progressing delivery, including one to one mentoring which will increase the confidence of participants to join and contribute in-group work sessions.

This final cohort will ensure that the full target for the project of 42 participants is achieved and delivered by end of December 2021.

3.4 CYP 4 – Cooperation Ireland (Young Advocates)

Cooperation Ireland has advised of the reluctance of young people to engage via online platforms. The youth groups involved agree that this 3rd lockdown is proving challenging to engage with young people.

SEUPB agreed to extend the pause in delivery to June 2021, with the condition activities should be recommenced at the earliest possibility, subject to government restrictions

As such, Co-Operation Ireland is planning to recruit the final cohort of 27 participants to commence delivery in June 2021 via a condensed delivery approach.

A reduction of contact hours from 75 to 60, within OIG tolerance, was approved because of these difficulties.

The delivery partner is also liaising with their partners on alternative approaches for 2021, risk assessing both travel and cross border travel.

3.5 CYP 5 – NIHE Local Area Network Partner Delivery

NIHE completed a virtual launch 11 February 2021, in collaboration with PEACE IV Building Positive Relations programme.

The launch generated significant interest in the project, with the Integrated Education Fund interested in joining the programme, along with a group representing children in foster care. Both groups will participate as peer members within the networks.

The delivery of the Digital Inclusion programme element has been awarded to Wheelworks. Due to ongoing digital fatigue, revised delivery combining both virtual sessions and via an Art cart vehicle has been considered. SEUPB has advised to proceed initially with the virtual element and delay face to face element, until restrictions allow.

The procurement for a facilitator for the Social Justice element closed 16 February 2021 with no submissions. The PEACE IV team is working with NIHE to review the exercise and requirements in order to secure a delivery agent.

NIHE is progressing procurement for the provision of Good relations engagement boxes to be delivered to participant, which will encourage and increase contact hours for current participants.

3.6 Financial and Resource Implications

To date all PEACE IV costs for the CYP Theme, up to Period 24 - Oct 20, have been fully eligible and reimbursed by SEUPB.

The Period 25 claim, totaling £104,574.16, was submitted for reimbursement to SEUPB on the 26 February 2021 deadline.

3.7 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

The draft plan has been equality screened and discussed at the Equality Consultative Forum on 13 May 2015. The Equality Consultative Forum was further consulted on 18 November 2020.

The Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

Update on Shared Spaces and Services (SSS) Theme

The Programme Manager provided an update on the progress made to date in respect of the SSS theme, within the Peace IV Local Action Plan. She advised that, as with the other projects, the ongoing government restrictions continued to impact the implementation of both the Shared Space and Services (SSS) capital and programming elements.

She referred to a number of capital projects which were being undertaken as part of the initiative, including:

- **Springfield Dam** – the project opened to the public in December 2020 and continued to be well used by all sections of the community. Snagging and operational issues were being progressed as and when they arose. The need for ongoing community youth outreach work to address anti-social behaviour was being explored.
- **PEACE IV Network Scheme – Capital Works** - The contract award for the wider network had been approved by the SEUPB. Sectional commencement dates (some planning dependent) would be confirmed to the Members and the wider public, following receipt of the contractors works programme. Engagement aligning with the capital works as each of the sections was developed would be prioritised with the community receiving regular updates. She reported that an official project launch would be arranged in due course and further details would be available once the start date had been confirmed.

The Programme Manager advised that Letters of Offer had been received from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) making a financial contribution of £750,000 and also from the Department for Communities (DfC) making an offer of a financial contribution of £500k towards the costs.

In regard to the other Programmes:

- **Dialogue and Engagement Project** - Recommendations from the MDL Dialogue and Engagement report were progressing with further engagement and facilitation prioritised with young people, residents, BME groups and people with disabilities. Procurement of the facilitator was underway. The procurement approach for the facilitation and development of a governance/management model for the Forth Meadow Community Greenway was progressing. A public tender would be issued in March with an allocated budget of £60k.
- **Shared History, Heritage and Identity Content / Narratives for Shared Space** - COVID restrictions continued to impact engagement with communities with the delivery partners still focusing on research. Discussions had taken place with BCC's Physical Programmes on aligning the research, public engagement and development of narratives with the capital work. A further discussion with the designers (McAdam Design) had been held at the beginning of March. The Delivery Partner continued to engage with key community contacts and subject to the easing of restrictions, the delivery partners were hopeful that they would commence sessions on-site, in Section 1 (Glencairn and Clarendon) in March/April 2021.
- **Shared Space Volunteer Training** - Promotion of the volunteer walk and cycle leaders' projects to attract volunteers had progressed, with six online engagement events taking place during February. Virtual training was due to commence March 2021, then moving to face-to-face sessions with small groups once government restrictions permitted. The tender call for the delivery of the remaining volunteer groups, the Shared Space Ambassadors, Heritage and Nature Guides, was currently open with a submission date of Friday, 19th March 2021.
- **Springfield Dam activities** – Projects and activities, at the Springfield Dam, were on hold due to the current Health Protection restrictions. As previously reported, project ideas continued to be developed and these included, urban orienteering, outdoor yoga, survival and campfire activities, fishing, cycling proficiency, schools projects, storytelling and men's shed. All activities would be delivered on a cross community basis and would aim to work towards promoting the Dam and modular buildings as shared spaces that would be accessible to all.
- **Modular Building** - In line with other council facilities, the building remained closed due to the Health Protection restrictions. Health and Safety, fire risk assessment, legislative checks (such as legionella, etc.) as well as COVID checks / compliance were being progressed before the building could be used. Interim management options for the facility were under consideration taking into account running costs and creative solutions such as digital access.

The Partnership were advised that, to date, all Peace IV costs for the SSS Theme, up to Period 24 - October 20, had been fully eligible and reimbursed by the SEUPB. The Period 25 claim, totaling £196,726.36, had submitted for reimbursement to the SEUPB by the deadline of 26th February 2021.

As reported, details of both the DfI and DfC contributions were being prioritised.

The Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

Update on BPR Theme

The Partnership considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

To provide the Shared City Partnership (SCP) with a progress report in respect of the Building Positive Relations (BPR) theme of the PEACE IV Local Action Plan.

2.0 Recommendations

The Shared City Partnership is requested to recommend to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee that they note the contents of the report and appendices.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

Delivery of project activity is continuing where possible, although government restrictions currently extended to April 2021 continue to pose challenges across all BPR projects. Appendix I provides detail on Risks as identified in the Risk tracker as at February '21.

3.1 BPR1 – Cross Community Area Networks

The project team continues to maintain contact and retain interest across the majority of the identified CCAN areas.

A joint virtual launch with the CYP Programme took place on the 11th February with positive feedback.

The contractor has been appointed for the Good Relations Programme and will be led by The Verbal Arts Centre in partnership with TIDES Training and Fearon Consulting. Following consultation with all CCAN cohorts, it is anticipated that the Good Relations programme will commence in late March/early April 2021.

Online workshops (Shared History and Mental Health & Wellbeing) will commence in March to engage participants prior to the commencement of the Good Relations Programme. Appointment

of the contractor for delivery is complete and with SEUPB for approval.

The ITT for the Place Visioning programme is under NIHE internal review and scheduled for the public procurement advertisement late March 2021.

3.2 BPR2 – Creative Communities Project

The Artist/Heritage residency programme continues to be interrupted due to extended COVID restrictions.

The Shankill/Clonard; Divis/Lower Shankill; St Malachy's/Albert Foundry FC and Carlisle Circus clusters continues to meet virtually.

The Woodvale/Ardoyne cluster remains paused, as participants have limited access to online technology.

The Project team anticipates that 2 of the 8 clusters will commence Spring 2021, with the School Thematic Cluster on hold until further clarity on the re-opening of schools.

3.3 BPR3 – Transform for Change Project

Transformative Leadership Programme: Spring cohorts (Jan – Mar 2021) are progressing with 100 confirmed learners registered.

Promotion is underway for the next participant intake (Apr – Jun 2021) in the following Cluster areas: Inner East/Short Strand; Village/Westlink; Colin Neighbourhood; Belvoir/Finaghy/Dunmurry and North Belfast.

Local community engagement events and cross border/UK study visits are currently on hold. BCC is planning an online city wide 'networking' event for late May/early June.

The PEACE IV team continues to assist Cluster groups in developing and implementing their local project. Examples include Community Gardens and Multi-Cultural festivals as well as the 'Kids Shed' already in place.

3.4 BPR4 – Belfast and the World (BATW)

Corrymeela continues to work with two live cohorts in Ligoniel and Ballynafeigh. Members previously agreed to extend the completion date for these cohorts, however because of ongoing restrictions; a further suitable extension period is required. Given the operational nature of this request, members should note the Programme Board will consider the request.

The final Year 3 BATW course has commenced online with 12 participants registered. Further open calls for participants, via online delivery, will be made in Spring and Autumn 2021 to meet year 4 deliverables.

Further planning for the online Civic led events is progressing. Officers are liaising with the Delivery Agent to ensure complementarity with the Council's Centenary events.

EU Study trips are currently on hold due to COVID restrictions.

3.5 BPR 5 – Supporting Connected Communities

3.5.1 BPR5 –LINCS Projects

Government restrictions continues to hamper project delivery.

The modification request approved by Members in November 2020 is currently with SEUPB and the Accountable Departments for consideration.

Despite these challenges, the Delivery Agent has commenced a 10 week Arts & Cultural programme in partnership with Artsekt across the Neighbourhood Participative Forums. A schedule of online events, including Intercultural Family events over the summer period, is currently being finalised (COVID restrictions permissible).

3.5.2 BPR5 – Traveller Support Programme

The Traveller Support Officer is now in post and project mobilisation is progressing. Following a virtual induction programme, the action planning and project implementation phases will progress.

3.5.3 BPR5 – Roma Support Programme

Forward South Partnership is concentrating efforts to establish the Roma Support Hub with the recently appointed Support Hub Coordinator, aiming to transition seamlessly from the Roma Helpline which is due to cease at the end of March 2021.

Further recruitment exercises are required to appoint the Advice worker and Capacity Officer. A modification proposal to realign budgets and condense activity of some element is under consideration.

3.6 BPR6 – St Comgall's Outreach Programme and Exhibition

The contract has been awarded to the 'SCOPE consortium' lead by Copius Consulting in partnership with Falls Community Council and Redhead.

The project aims to create a cross-community exhibition on the history of the St Comgall's site in the Lower Falls area and incorporates a series of workshops, seminars and site visits for residents in the Falls, Divis and Shankill areas. Project delivery will be in parallel with a major regeneration of the former school site into a community hub and visitor centre.

Project initiation has commenced, with early stages of mobilisation focusing on engagement and recruitment of participants.

3.7 Financial and Resource Implications

All BPR project delivery partners are regularly reviewing delivery methods and contractual deliverables that will determine the level and impact of COVID 19 crisis.

To date all costs for the BPR Theme, up to Period 24 - Oct 20, have been fully eligible and reimbursed by SEUPB.

The Period 25 (Nov 20-Jan 21) claim, totaling £260,178.23, was submitted for reimbursement to SEUPB on the 26 February 2021 deadline.

3.8 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

The draft plan has been equality screened and discussed at the Equality Consultative Forum on 13 May 2015. The Equality Consultative Forum was further consulted on 18 November 2020."

The Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

Update on Notice of Motion – Addressing Hate and Intolerance

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 Members will recall that the following Notice of Motion, which had been proposed by Councillor O'Hara and seconded by Councillor Groogan at the Council meeting on 1st September 2020, had been discussed at the Shared City Partnership at its October 2020 meeting.

1.2 Addressing hate and intolerance across all our communities

'The Belfast Agenda has an ambition to be a welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive City for all. While we have made significant progress there are opportunities for enhancing this work. This council recognises the work that has been undertaken particularly by many in the community and voluntary sector to improve relations

and realise the Belfast Agenda. However, gaps remain, including through the allocation of funding.

This Council recognises the scourge of Hate Crime and Incidents in the City. In 2019/2020 there were 694 Hate Crimes and 758 Hate Incidents reported to Police in the Belfast District Area on the basis of sexual orientation, race and religion. We appreciate that there is a significant underreporting of hate crimes and incidents. There were 98 hate crimes and incidents on the basis of transgender status and 171 crimes and incidents on the basis of disability status across all of Northern Ireland.

This Council recognises that it has a statutory duty to address Good Relations but also recognises that this is on the limited basis of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group. This only covers some of the hate crime categories yet we understand that to tackle hate and intolerance we must promote good relations between those groups who experience hate but are not covered by the Good Relations duty.

This Council therefore commits to:

- Supporting the extension of the Good Relations duty to the hate crime categories
- Write to the Executive Office requesting flexibility in its Good Relations funding and request that the Executive Office consider extension of its Good Relations duties to the hate crime categories
- Council officers scope internal mechanisms re good relations and equality and diversity funding to fund more proactive work in addressing hate crime and fulfilling the ambition of the Belfast Agenda.'

2.0 Recommendations

- That Members consider the contents of the correspondence from The Executive Office

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

- 3.1 At the October meeting of the Partnership, a report had been given to Members detailing the current legislative context which outlined below for ease of reference.

- 3.2 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 provides that:

- (1) A public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity-

- (a) between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
 - (b) between men and women generally;
 - (c) between persons with a disability and persons without; and
 - (d) between persons with dependants and persons without
 - (2) Without prejudice to its obligations under subsection (1), a public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.
- 3.3 The good relations duty for Council and all public bodies is governed under Part 2 of the above legislation and only includes the three categories of religious belief, political opinion or racial group.
- 3.4 Members were also referred to the Good Relations Strategy and the work of the Equality Unit within Council.

Correspondence from The Executive Office

- 3.5 As part of the response to the Notice of Motion, the Partnership had agreed to write to the Executive Office requesting flexibility in its Good Relations funding and request that the Executive Office consider extension of its Good Relations duties to the hate crime categories.
- 3.6 The response from Dr Mark Browne, Director of the Strategic Policy, Equality and Good Relations Directorate is included at Appendix 1.
- 3.7 In the correspondence, Dr Browne detailed the range of policies which make provision for the rights of various groups and seek to promote harmonious relations. He advised that all projects to be funded through the District Council Good Relations Programme (DCGRP) must deliver against one of the 4 T:BUC priorities.
- 3.8 There is nothing to prevent groups such as LGBGTQ+, Disability Groups, Women's Groups etc. applying to the DCGRP for funding to take forward Good Relations work as long as they meet one of the four key priorities as referred to above.
- 3.9 TEO appreciated that funding will not be available for every activity undertaken by these groups. However, they may be able to access other funding provided by other Departments under their respective strategies for activities that do not meet the specific T:BUC priorities
- 3.10 In relation to consideration of the extension of the good relations duties to include the hate crime categories, he advised that Section

75 is a matter reserved to Westminster and there is currently no active consideration or review of the provision that they are aware of.

- 3.11 The Department For Communities leads on policy regarding sexual orientation and disability, has also begun work in the development of a number of new social inclusion strategies including a Disability Strategy, a Gender Strategy and Sexual Orientation Strategy. Members of the Partnership may wish to consider conferring with the current community planning structures to ask how the above strategies will align with plans for the City and the Inclusive Growth Agenda.
- 3.12 Dr Browne also provided contacts within the Department of Justice which commissioned the Independent Review of Hate Crime Legislation last year. The review has recently reported and is under consideration by colleagues in DOJ. A copy of the findings can be accessed at <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/hate-crime-legislation-independent-review>
- 3.13 Members will be aware that at the January meeting of the Partnership, a list of high-level actions to address inclusion and racism were agreed and a more detailed action plan to frame delivery will be developed and brought forward to the Partnership in due course. This piece of work will also scope the internal mechanisms regarding proactive work on hate crime.
- 3.14 Members may also wish to note the current campaign being supported through the Policing and Community Safety Partnership – Belfast – No Place for hate which encourages people if they have been victims of, or witness to, a disability, sexual orientation, religious or cultural hate crime, to report it to the PSNI.
- 3.15 **Financial and Resource Implications**
- None
- 3.16 **Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment**
- All Council Strategies and policies are screened to look at the impact of such a policy or Strategy on groups listed under Section 75. The District Council Good Relations Programme and the PEACE IV Programme have been screened previously.”

After a request from a Member, the Partnership agreed that a further report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Partnership which would outline the current structures within the Council. It would also give consideration to the possible inclusion of representatives from the following ‘Hate Crime Categories’ - disability, transgender identity and sexual orientation and look at how such representation would relate to the work of the Shared City Partnership.

Update on Decade of Centenaries Programme

The Good Relations Manager provided the Members with an overview in regard to the remainder of the Decade of Centenaries Programme, as agreed at the February meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

She advised that work was progressing in regard to a series of talks on the topic of “Violence, Conflict, Militarisation and Displacement; Belfast in 1920”, this had been launched via a press release from the Lord Mayor on 17th February. The material had originally been due to be delivered via a large conference in April 2020, but unfortunately due to current restriction this had to be cancelled. She advised that all of this material, running to around 4 hours, was available on the Council’s website at: www.belfastcity.gov.uk/decadesofcentenaries

In addition, a panel discussion had been organised for 26th March, from 12 noon – 2.00 p.m. on the topic: “*100 Years of Northern Ireland; How Has It Gone?*” The event was being run by ND Events and Ms. Tara Mills from the BBC would be the moderator. She provided an overview of the panel members and advised that each member had been asked to focus on the topic from a particular angle.

The Members were advised that they could register for the event via the following link: <https://ndevents.co.uk/bcccentenariesprogramme/>

The officer reported that funding for five significant elements of the overall agreed programme, totalling £87,700, had been sought from the Shared History Fund which was being distributed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. If successful, the funding would be specifically used for the delivery of the following agreed projects:

- **Drama and animation programme in for the Kings Speech event on 22nd June, 2021 with further related activity in the autumn, if COVID restrictions permit;**
- **The restoration of the chairs in the Council Chamber, used by the King and Queen on the occasion of the inauguration of the NI Parliament in 1921;**
- **A digitised artefacts and stories project related to 1921;**
- **A time capsule project, with the Lord Mayor and Young people; and**
- **An end of Decade of Centenaries Conference in March 2022.**

The five projects would progress, subject to a successful outcome from the application to the Shared History Fund. Decisions were being announced within the next couple of weeks and Members would be updated in due course.

In regard to ‘Engagement with the two Governments’, the Good Relations Manager reported that the Northern Ireland Office had launched their “Our Story in the Making: NI Beyond 100” programme in December, advising that there would be a programme of events that would seek to showcase Northern Ireland on the world stage. A commitment of £3m had been made from the NIO for this purpose though further details were still to be made public. She advised that further information could be found at <https://ourstoryinthemaking.com/>

Officers had also met with officers from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to discuss the respective plans and opportunities for collaboration.

The Partnership was advised that, as reported above, £87,700 had been sought from the Shared History Fund for the five elements outlined above. The other elements of the programme were being funded through existing budgets including £40,500 from the Good Relations Action Plan budget, 75% of which was funded through The Executive Office.

The Partnership noted the update provided.

Chairperson

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Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum 11th March 2021

Attendance

Members:

Councillor Christina Black (Chair)
Councillor Billy Hutchinson
Councillor Nuala McAlister
Councillor Donal Lyons
Councillor Mal O'Hara
Alderman Brian Kingston
Alderman Sonia Copeland
Councillor Fiona Ferguson
Councillor Ciaran Beattie

Officers:

Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive
Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources
John Walsh, City Solicitor
Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services (Items 1 & 2)
Aidan Thatcher, Director of Planning and Building Control (for Items 4 & 5)
Alison Allen, Neighbourhood Services Manager (for Items 6 & 8 Bonfire Approach 2021)
Joanne Delaney, Portfolio and Programme Coordinator (secretariat)

1. Covid 19 Planning

The Chief Executive provided an update on the recent plan published by the NI Executive which details the pathway out of the current restrictions and the approach to move forward over the next few months. Given the absence of specific timelines for each step in the pathway document published, the Chief Executive advised this will impact on the organisational approach to recovery and ongoing COVID management for 2021/22. Members noted the proposed organisational recovery timeline which will be reviewed on an ongoing basis in line with the NI Executive formal regulations review dates. The Director of City Services outlined key issues around service recovery and workforce planning in the coming months. A report will be brought to March SP&R Committee.

2. Port Health Update

Members discussed the current issues and challenges faced by the Port of Belfast as a result of Brexit and noted an update report had been considered by February SP&R Committee. The Chief Executive updated Members on recent engagement with DAERA and FSA, she

advised a letter has been drafted outlining the key areas of concern which require urgent resolution and copy of the letter when issued will be circulated to Party Group Leaders.

The City Solicitor provided an update on the legal opinion sought following February SP&R Committee on the specific responsibilities conferred on councils in relation to this function. A report on next steps will be brought to March SP&R Committee for Members consideration.

3. Action Plan arising from recommendations of Peter Coll report

Members agreed at February SP&R Committee that a report would be brought back to March committee on the recommendations arising from the Peter Coll report. The Chief Executive advised that an action plan, on how the recommendations would be implemented and monitored has been drafted. Consultation has commenced with individual Parties to capture any issues or further recommendations Members may have which will be reflected in the final action plan presented to March SP&R Committee.

4. Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council – Changes to their draft LDP

The Director of Planning and Building Control advised Members that Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) have undertaken an additional consultation on their draft Plan Strategy. Members noted that an agreed corporate response was previously submitted to LCCC. He advised that this consultation was dealing with some focussed changes they are proposing to make to the strategy, prior to submission to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) for consideration. Members noted the proposed changes and the proposed response which would be presented to March SP&R Committee. In relation to some queries raised by Members the Director and City Solicitor advised that engagement with other councils on cross boundary planning issues was standard process.

5. Planning Update

The Director of Planning and Building Control provided an update on the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) Independent Examination (IE) hearing sessions in relation to the Belfast Local Development Plan draft Plan Strategy 2035. Members noted that these sessions were now complete. The Director outlined the next steps and anticipated timelines for the report back from the Planning Appeals Commission.

The Director updated the Forum on the live planning applications and informed the Forum of the applications that were being presented to the Planning Committee in March and April.

In relation to some queries raised by Members on the current status of the Strategic Site Assessment piece which was being undertaken in relation to city wide approach, the Chief Executive advised that an update will be presented to a future meeting of the Forum.

6. Alleygates Phase 5

The Neighbourhood Services Manager provided an update on the proposals for phase 5 of the alley gating scheme and outlined the option to allocate the £500K funding equally across the four quadrants of the city. Given that this phase is limited and is being funded from an underspend in the capital financing budget, the Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Finance and Resources highlighted the need to carry out a survey to identify future need. This work would enable Members to consider what options are available for the longer term financing of the scheme. It was noted this work should be progressed simultaneously with implementation of Phase 5.

Members also discussed the wider strategic context of the scheme and highlighted that other options are explored for neighbourhood regeneration. A report outlining the proposals discussed will be brought to March SP&R Committee.

7. Standards Committee/Brexit Committee

The City Solicitor outlined that the Standards Committee will constitute from June 2021. He also asked Members to consider if the Brexit Committee is reconstituted this coming June or if the work of the committee can now be considered by the existing standing committees. Members to consider with Parties and this will be discussed at a future meeting.

8. AOB

Bonfire Approach 2021

Members discussed the programmes of work associated with bonfires and noted that the extent of restrictions which may be in place in July, is as yet unknown and therefore the delivery of all elements of the programme of work for 2021 might not be possible. The Neighbourhood Services Manager outlined the key decisions required at this stage and advised a report will be brought to March SP&R Committee which will include the beacons element of the programme and options for alternative funding arrangements to support cultural expression.

Holylands Area

The Chief Executive informed the Forum that she has been having ongoing discussions with statutory agencies in relation to issues raised about anti-social behaviour in the Holylands

area. Members discussed concerns in relation to the Holylands and surrounding area on St Patrick's Day with the added challenge of current restrictions. The Chief Executive highlighted that work will continue with the relevant statutory agencies and on messaging around compliance in the week ahead. Members discussed the longer term recommendations within the Holyland and Wider University Area Strategic Study and how this can be progressed.

Illuminate Requests

The City Solicitor advised he had prior to the meeting circulated a request to Party Leaders to light up City Hall on Thursday 11th March to mark European Remembrance Day for Victims of Terrorism. It was noted that responses received had indicated there was general consensus.

He outlined a further request to light up City Hall in purple to mark the upcoming Census Day 2021 which Members agreed. In relation to a query raised on the criteria for Illuminating City Hall he advised a report on a review of the current criteria and the criteria for Books of Condolences will be added to the agenda for a future meeting.

James Connolly Belfast Heritage Trail

The City Solicitor outlined correspondence received from Redhead Exhibition requesting assistance from the Council in relation to a James Connolly Belfast Heritage Trail – the trail will entail placing a plaque at a number of sites of historical significance throughout the City and City Hall is proposed as one of the locations. Members discussed a number of issues that needed to be considered in relation to this request and it was agreed the City Solicitor will circulate a draft report to Party Leaders for comment, in advance of being submitted to March SP&R Committee.



Belfast
City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	Minutes of Meeting of Audit and Risk Panel
Date:	19th March 2021
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Deputy CX and Director of Finance & Resources
Contact Officer:	Claire O'Prey, Head of AGRS

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

☐
☐
☐
☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a summary of the key issues that were considered and discussed by the Audit and Risk Panel at its meeting on 9th March and present the minutes of that meeting for approval.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the key issues arising at the meeting, approve the updated Risk Strategy and approve the minutes of the Audit and Risk Panel of 9th March, at Appendix 1.
3.0	Main Report
	Issues and Actions Arising from the Audit and Risk Panel on 9 March 2021
3.1	The minutes of the meeting are attached at Appendix 1, with key matters summarised below. External Audit 2019/20

3.2	<p>The financial statements are a fundamental part of the councils overall corporate governance framework and provide assurance to Members and ratepayers on the stewardship of the councils finances and its financial position. The NIAO have concluded their audit of these financial statements and the Panel received the final Annual Audit Letter and Report to those Charged with Governance from the NIAO providing an unqualified opinion on the financial accounts for the year-end 2020.</p>
	<p>Internal Audit / Implementation of Audit Recommendations</p>
3.3	<p>The Panel received an update on the progress being made to deliver the revised internal audit plan for 2020/21, including summaries of recently completed audits of Pitches, Performance Management, Accounts Payable, Cash-flow Forecasting and the temporary expenditure controls over Agency and Vacancy Control.</p>
3.4	<p>In order to feed into the year-end assurance processes and to ensure that the council is maintaining a robust system of internal control, the Panel agreed for a recommendations monitor exercise to be undertaken during April / May, with AGRS working closely with management on these updates, for reporting to the June meetings of the Panel.</p>
3.5	<p>The Panel agreed the internal audit plan for 2021/22 which is designed to assist the Council in meeting relevant statutory obligations in relation to internal control, risk management and good governance.</p>
	<p>Risk Management / Business Continuity Management (BCM)</p>
3.6	<p>For QE December 2020, the Panel reviewed the Corporate Risk Dashboard and the progress being made to manage the 25 corporate risks, with some queries being raised as to the reason for delays in implementing mitigating actions within the agreed timeframe. The Panel was informed that the risk rating had increased for the corporate risk on Health & Safety and decreased for the corporate risks on Financial Position and City Risks / Resilience. The Panel agreed for the current risk on Brexit to be refocused on the risk associated with managing the Brexit Implementation Programme for the Belfast Port. The Panel will receive quarterly updates on the progress being made to manage the corporate risks.</p>
3.7	<p>The Panel agreed the updated Risk Strategy, including the updated Risk Appetite Statement (Appendix 2).</p>

3.8	<p>The Panel also agreed to waive the need for critical services to undertake an annual test of the BCM plans (as required by the BCM Policy) during 2021/22.</p> <p>Corporate Fraud Risk Assessment 2021</p>
3.9	<p>The Panel noted the work that had been undertaken to update the Corporate Fraud Risk Assessment in the context of the changed internal environment where the application of normal internal controls may be disrupted due to remote working / reassignment of staff / processes moving online and the changed external environment in terms of the increased risk of cyber-attack and potentially increased motive for fraud. The Panel also noted that while AGRS will continue to support management in reviewing the level of fraud risks associated with their key activities and ensuring that appropriate mitigations are put in place, that it is management responsibility to ensure that there are robust systems of internal control in place to help manage the risk of fraud.</p> <p><u>Corporate Health and Safety, Absence Management and Performance Improvement</u></p>
3.10	<p>The Panel received reports / updates for quarter ending December 2020 on corporate health and safety, absence management and performance improvement. The Panel welcomed these updates including the significant decrease in sickness absence at the end of quarter three which is 7.58 days compared to 9.83 days for the same period last year. The Head of Human Resources indicated that a year-end analysis would be undertaken examining the impact of Covid-19 and working from home on absence management. The Panel noted that the NIAO audit and assessment of the councils improvement activity is underway and due to be completed by the end of March 2021 and received an update on the work that the Performance Improvement Working Group was doing to discuss and agree performance improvement requirements for 2021/22. The Panel noted the continued critical role of the Corporate Health and Safety Unit in supporting the council in complying with evolving government guidance on Covid-19 matters and in ensuring the health and safety of our workers and others and that this has impacted on routine health and safety activity including inspections and training.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p>
3.11	<p>None</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p>
3.12	<p>None</p>

4.0	Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – Minutes of Meeting of 9th March</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Updated Risk Strategy</p>

Audit and Risk Panel

Tuesday, 9th March, 2021

REMOTE MEETING OF AUDIT AND RISK PANEL

Members present: Alderman Rodgers (in the Chair);
Councillors Matt Collins, Hanvey, Hutchinson,
and Ms. G. Fahy.

In attendance: Mr. R. Cregan, Strategic Director of Finance and Resources;
Ms. C. O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk
Services (AGRS);
Ms. C. Sheridan, Head of Human Resources;
Ms. S. Williams, Governance and Compliance Manager;
Mr. M. Whitmore, Audit, Governance and Risk
Services Manager;
Mr. L. Mulholland, Audit, Governance and Risk
Services Manager;
Mrs. E. Eaton, Corporate Health and Safety Manager;
Ms. H. Lyons, Corporate Finance Manager;
Ms. C. Kane, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office;
Ms. K. McCrum, Democratic Services Officer; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Carson and O'Hara.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 8th December were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Change to Schedule of Meetings

Following a request from the NIAO, the Audit Panel agreed to change the date of its meeting, previously scheduled for Tuesday, 7th September, to Tuesday, 14th September.

Absence Rates Quarter Ending December 2020

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The Panel considered a report providing information on the absence figures for quarter three the financial year 2020/2021. The Head of Human Resources reported that sickness absence, per full-time employee (FTE), for that period had been 7.58 days, which was a significant decrease of 2.25 days compared to absence for the same period last year (9.83). She explained that the corporate target was 12.26 days.

She explained that there had been an increase in the number of staff with no absence throughout the year, at 68.99% compared to the same period last year (45.73%). The Panel was advised that long term absences had also decreased compared to the same time last year.

The Head of Human Resources highlighted that analysis showed that depression/anxiety/stress and musculo-skeletal remained the top two reasons for absence, and Depression, Anxiety, Stress accounted for almost 42% of all days lost due to sickness absence, and 80.26% of these days were attributed to personal stress. She advised that musculo-skeletal related absence accounted for just over 20% of all days lost due to sickness absence with 91.58% of these days were attributable to non-work related reasons. She highlighted that a comprehensive analysis of these reasons would be conducted at the end of quarter four.

She outlined that, in quarter three, 410 employees were off due to sickness absence and discretion had been applied to 92 of these employees (22%) and their absence accounted for approximately 38% of the total absence for quarter three.

In respect of disability related absence, approximately 25.5% of absence was recorded as disability related, with 50% being managed as long term.

The Members were advised that the Council continued to be impacted by absence due to COVID 19. A total of 117 employees were recorded as absent due to COVID19, accounting for 6.96% of the total absence in quarter three.

The Head of Human Resources advised that a review of the Attendance Policy and Booklet was ongoing and that consultation with management, Occupational Health and employee Counselling had taken place and consultation with the Trade Unions had commenced.

She highlighted that a review had been undertaken to identify the number of employees who had reached a Stage 4/final absence hearing between October 2020 and December 2020 and provided a summary of the outcomes.

In response to Members questions, she explained further the compliance checks that were in place to ensure discretion was used appropriately across departments.

She also provided further information regarding staff which had been absent due to COVID19, in that trigger points were not applied, and confirmed that management had been operating in accordance with government and public health guidance since the start of the pandemic and had provided guidance to both management and staff when the advice had changed throughout the year. She highlighted that further analysis of the

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impact of Covid-19 and working from home on absence management would be conducted at the end of quarter four.

After discussion, the Panel noted the information which was provided.

Corporate Health and Safety Performance Report

The Corporate Health and Safety Manager provided an update on each Departments progress against health and safety key performance indicators for quarter three (31 December 2020) which included compliance rates for health and safety and fire safety.

She reported that the number of employee accidents for quarter three of 2020/2021 was 29, which was 1 more than in the previous quarter. She highlighted that the highest number of accidents had been caused by employees being injured while lifting or carrying.

She advised that there were 8 non-employee accidents during the quarter, 3 of which were due to slips, trips or falls.

The Panel was informed that the number of RIDDOR reportable accidents had also increased by 1 from the last quarter, to 10.

The Corporate Health and Safety Manager reported that there had been a decrease in the number of reported Work Related Violence incidents from the last quarter, from 38 to 25, and the majority of which were of verbal abuse.

The Panel was provided with details of two complaints which were made to the Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI) by staff during the last quarter in relation to Covid arrangements and grazing animals at Cave Hill Country Park.

With regards to Covid-19, the Corporate Health and Safety Manager explained that the Unit continued to support the Council's Silver Group, Operational Recovery Group and individual service managers to comply with evolving government guidance and to ensure the health and safety of the Council's workers and others. It was acknowledged, however, that the resource required from the Corporate Health and Safety Unit to support the organisation came at the expense of a reduction of routine health and safety activity including inspections and training.

Noted.

Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) - Final Report to Those Charged With Governance

The Panel was advised that the Local Government Auditor had issued her Report to those charged with Governance for 2019/20 which summarised the system/control issues arising during the Northern Ireland Audit Office's (NIAO) 2019/20 audit and included recommendations for management action.

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It was reported that the Local Government Auditor had certified the 2019-20 statements for Belfast City Council with an unqualified opinion.

The Panel was reminded that the Local Government Auditor had initially identified no significant risks as part of the audit strategy. However, having reconsidered the audit in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting financial pressures on Councils, the Auditor included a significant risk to consider the financial resilience of the Council as part of the audit of the 2019-20 accounts. The Auditor assessed the going concern basis for the preparation of the accounts, recommended additional Covid-19 related disclosures and reviewed the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. There was no impact on the Local Government Auditor's audit opinion.

The Director of the Northern Ireland Audit Office advised that the 'Priority 2' recommendation had been identified as follows: Reconciliation of trial balance to financial statements – recommendation that the primary statements and supporting notes reconcile to the underlying transactions and sufficient supporting documentation is held for all manual adjustments to the figures included in the accounts.

She highlighted the 'Priority 3' area which had been identified was in relation to Borrowings and explained the recommendation to formally document the notification of all borrowing to the Chief Executive and Finance Director.

It was highlighted that a detailed response to the management letter was outlined in the appendix, identifying timescales, and in accordance with the process adopted in previous years, management would monitor the progress made in implementing recommendations and report back to the Audit Assurance Board and Audit and Risk Panel on the progress.

The Audit Panel noted the contents of the report to those charged with Governance Audit results for 2019/20 and agreed the management responses as outlined.

Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) - Annual Audit Letter 2019/20

The Audit and Risk Panel were informed that, as an independent auditor of the Council, the Local Government Auditor sought to examine that the Council had managed its affairs having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness and that public money was properly spent or in the case of income properly accounted for.

It was reported that the Annual Audit Letter was issued under Regulation 17 of the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015. The Regulations required the Council to publish this Annual Audit Letter as soon as reasonably possible.

The Panel were apprised of the following key aspects of the Council's Annual Audit Letter for 2019/2020, and it was noted that the Audit Letter would be published on the Council's website:

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1. Financial Statements

The Chief Local Government Auditor had noted a number of adjustment to the draft accounts as a result of her audit work and these were covered in a separate report. The accounts for the 2019/20 year were given an unqualified opinion.

2. Proper Arrangements

The Chief Local Government Auditor was required to satisfy herself that proper arrangements had been made for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources. The Chief Local Government Auditor had confirmed that she was satisfied that the Council had proper arrangements in place.

3. Annual Governance Statement

The Chief Local Government Auditor had indicated that the Annual Governance Statement reflected compliance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019-20, it also complied with proper practices as specified by the Department for Communities, and it was not misleading or inconsistent with other information from the audit.

4. Absenteeism

The annual rate of absenteeism had shown a marginal decrease of 0.13 days from 2018/19. The main causes of long term absence were due to stress/depression/anxiety and musculo-skeletal related conditions.

Average number of days sickness absence per full time employee						
2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
9.9	10.31	10.3	12.44	13.72	13.71	13.58

The robust, fair and consistent management of attendance continued to be a key priority for the Council and it had indicated the steps it had been taking to reduce absence.

5. Performance Improvement

The onset of the Covid 19 pandemic had led the Department to propose a reduction in the performance improvement work undertaken by councils, and consequently the improvement audit and assessment work to be carried out in 2020. Councils were still required to produce a self assessment of their performance in 2019-20 but did not have to produce an Annual Improvement plan for 2020-21. Therefore the Local Government Auditor would only audit the 2019-20 self assessment report this year and would not undertake an assessment. This work could only be completed once the legislation had been amended, which was being taken forward by the Department for Communities.

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6. Outlook

The Chief Local Government Auditor had also highlighted some upcoming areas the council needed to be cognisant of and referred to Brexit, COVID-19 considerations, IFRS 16 Leases Adoption and the City Deal.

The Committee noted the comments provided and the review of the Annual Audit Letter.

AGRS Progress Report February 2021

The Panel considered a report which provided an overview of the specific internal audits which had been carried out and finalised during the period December, 2020 to February, 2021 by Audit, Governance and Risk Services.

It was highlighted that a number of audits had been completed during the period, 1 of which had received an assurance opinion of major improvement, relating to the Pitches Strategy 2011 - 2021; the Performance Management audit that had been separated into two areas was given the opinion of major improvement under the area of Performance Management Framework and the opinion of some improvement under the area of Improvement duty; 4 further audits, that is, Cash Flow Forecasting, Accounts Payable, Temporary expenditure controls (Agency expenditure), Temporary expenditure controls (Vacancy Control), had an audit opinion of some improvement needed.

The Panel was provided with an update on the project assurance and consulting activity that AGRS were undertaking in respect of the following four major ICT / change programmes / projects that were underway: HR/Payroll Phase 2; Planning Portal; Customer Focus Programme; and SAP replacement.

The Panel was advised that the following audits were in progress or the reports are currently being agreed with management:

- Property Maintenance (draft report);
- PEACE IV (draft report);
- Gifts and hospitality / conflicts of interest (draft report);
- Estates management (drafting report);
- Procurement and contract management (fieldwork);
- Committee decision making under delegated authority (fieldwork);
- Corporate risk - waste management (fieldwork); and
- Payroll (fieldwork).

The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS) also provided an update in relation to the queries which had been made by the Panel at its meeting in December.

She reminded the panel that, at its last meeting, it had received an update on how the implementation of agreed audit actions had been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. She highlighted the importance of implementing the agreed recommendations as soon as possible to ensure that the Council maintained robust internal controls, particularly in

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the changed environment, had been highlighted to the Management Team. She explained that, in order to feed into the year-end assurance processes, AGRS were recommending that a further recommendations monitor exercise was undertaken during April / May for reporting to the June meetings of the Panel.

In relation to investigations, the Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services advised that no new whistleblowing concerns had been raised since the last meeting. She stated that AGRS had completed initial enquiries into a concern raised anonymously regarding the use of the furlough scheme and agency workers in relation to a particular service. She confirmed that the AGRS continued to liaise with departments on the progress of cases that had been referred to them and with the PSNI. There was currently 1 case referred to the PSNI for investigation which was on hold pending the outcome of a disciplinary investigation which had been delayed by Covid-19 and was currently ongoing.

The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services pointed out that AGRS was currently undertaking a detailed review of the Raising Concerns Policy in light of NIAO good practice guidance.

During discussion, the Panel raised a number of queries in relation to the audits which had been undertaken and the ongoing investigations. In relation to the Pitches Strategy audit, the Head of AGRS explained the current funding arrangements in response to a query, indicated that she would raise with the City and Neighbourhood Services the need to ensure that the development of a Benefits Realisation Plan would be considered as part of the development and implementation its Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy.

The Panel noted the AGRS progress for the period December 2020 – February 2021 and agreed that a further recommendations monitor exercise be undertaken during April / May for reporting to the June meeting of the Panel.

AGRS Strategy and Annual Plan 2021/22

The AGRS Manager advised that the Annual Plan set out the role of AGRS as an assurance provider and advisory service which directly assisted the Council in meeting relevant statutory obligations in relation to internal control, risk management and good governance.

He reported that the detailed assignment plan – that was the list of areas that AGRS planned to review during 2021/22 - was set out at Appendix 1 and was based on an assessment of audit need and the aim to audit key areas on the cyclical basis.

He explained that, in addition to specific assignments, the plan provided provision for continued support to the organisation in fraud prevention / detection and investigation (including continued focus on the Corporate Fraud Risk Assessment and participation in the National Fraud Initiative), whistleblowing, risk management, business continuity management and corporate governance.

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He highlighted that, in keeping with the revised plan for 2020/21, AGRS had considered the Council's immediate assurance needs as the organisation continued to respond to and recover from the Covid- 19 pandemic.

The Panel approved the Internal Audit and Risk Management Plan for 2021/22.

Corporate Risk Management report for Quarter Ending December 2020

The Head of AGRS presented the Panel with the Corporate Risk Dashboard which summarised the key updates from the risk review for the quarter-end December 2020.

She updated Members on compliance with the Risk Strategy, based on the quarterly assurance statements for QE December 2020, completed by members of the senior management team and highlighted the need to extend the re-focussed quarterly assurance statements into 2021/22 due to the ongoing pandemic.

She provided the Panel with an update on business continuity management arrangements. She pointed out that, given the ongoing Covid-19 response and recovery situation and the impact on organisational priorities and capacity, the Panel was asked to consider waiving the need for critical services to undertake an annual test of the Business Continuity Management plans during 2021/22.

In response to a Members query regarding the implementation of risk actions, the Head of AGRS advised that this would be followed up as part of their next set of quarterly meetings with the risk owners.

After discussion, the Audit and Risk Panel:

- a) Noted the corporate risk management update for QE December 2020 including the changes to the current risk assessment for the corporate risks on Health and Safety, Financial Position and City Risks and; the proposal for the current risk on Brexit to be re-focussed on the risk associated with managing the Brexit Implementation Programme for the Belfast Port;
- b) Given the ongoing response and recovery efforts in respect of Covid-19 and the continued impact on organisational priorities and capacity, the Audit and Risk Panel agreed to extend the completion of the re-focussed quarterly assurance statement templates into 2021/22;
- c) Noted the assurances from management regarding compliance with the Risk Strategy, based on the assurance statements for QE December 2020; and
- d) Noted the current position to ensure that business continuity plans for the critical services were up to date to complement the work that was being done corporately to ensure that plans were in place to respond effectively to Covid-19 restrictions and impacts. In addition, given the ongoing Covid-19 response and recovery situation and the impact on organisational priorities and capacity, the Panel agreed waiving the need for critical services to undertake

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an annual test of the BCM plans (as required by the BCM Policy)
during 2021/22.

Update of Risk Appetite Statement

The Panel was reminded that the Council was required by statute to have arrangements in place for the management of risk. The Risk Strategy was approved by the Council in February 2019 and was reviewed and updated annually. As part of the annual review process an updated Risk Strategy was considered by the Panel in December 2020. When considering the Risk Strategy, the Panel requested that the overarching risk appetite statement included within the Strategy was reviewed to reflect the different risk appetite levels that were appropriate for the different categories of risk.

It was reported that the following additional paragraph to the risk appetite statement, set out in bold, was included for the Panel's consideration:

“Belfast City Council aims to be risk aware, but not overly risk averse and to ensure that the organisation takes a balanced approach to risk taking in order to deliver its corporate priorities and agreed outcomes for the City.

The Council recognises that, in pursuit of its priorities and outcomes, it may choose to accept different levels of risk in different areas. As a result, it has established and articulated risk appetites for different categories of risk – for risks falling into the Finance, Governance & Compliance and Reputation categories it has a minimalist risk appetite, for risks falling into the Programme & Project and Customers & Services categories it has a cautious risk appetite and for risks falling into the Strategic and Innovation categories it has an open risk appetite. Action should be taken to manage risks down to a level which falls within the agreed risk appetite for that category.”

The Panel was informed that the additional risk appetite statement had also been incorporated into the updated Risk Strategy (Appendix A) and the statement would be kept under review and further developed in line with the risk maturity of the Council.

The Panel approved the aforementioned updated Risk Appetite Statement included in the Risk Strategy.

Corporate Fraud Risk Assessment

The AGRS Manager reminded the Panel that the Corporate Fraud Risk Assessment was first undertaken in September 2018, with the following areas identified as high risk:

- Rates income / evasion (whilst largely outside BCC impact could be potentially significant);
- Bank Mandate / Supplier bank details;
- Grants / funding;
- IT / Cyber Security;

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- Procurement; and
- Contract management.

He explained that a summary report had been presented to the Panel in December 2020, which set out the work that AGRS had undertaken with departments to review the Corporate Fraud Risk Assessment, in response to the changes in the control environment arising from the pandemic and also the Good Practice Guidance published by the NIAO on Covid-19 Fraud Risks. As part of this 'desk top exercise' AGRS had met remotely with senior managers to review their fraud risks, discuss the impact of Covid-19 and to support management in their evaluation of the impact of any changes to the fraud risks. This initial exercise concluded that the impact of Covid-19 had increased the inherent risk of fraud in each of our high fraud risks, primarily as a result of the shift to remote working, changes to financial processes and diversion of resources.

The AGRS Manager advised that a follow-up exercise to update the corporate fraud risk assessment resulted in the following updates to the corporate fraud risk assessment to:

- a) Take account of the information that had been gathered from management during the initial exercise to assess the impact of Covid-19 on the level of fraud risk;
- b) Reduce duplication;
- c) Align the risk assessment to the Risk Management Strategy (note that when assessing likelihood of fraud risk, the following factors are considered; previous fraud experience; level of change; management concerns; changes in the external environment; audit findings); and
- d) More clearly defined fraud risks so that responsibility for the management of these fraud risks was clearer. For example, the assessment distinguished between; Corporate and Departmental activities in relation to Finance, Procurement and HR and; Grants that were administered by the Central Grants Unit and those that weren't.

He advised that Appendix 1, sets out the updated corporate fraud risk assessment, indicating where risks had increased, decreased or remained the same and the rationale for any changes. He pointed out that it was important to note that the document highlighted areas that needed to be managed rather than areas that had all experienced fraud.

He outlined the proposed next steps and the responsibilities of the AGRS Team and its approach to the detection or prevention of fraud. He explained that any significant issues arising from its audits would be communicated to management so that action could be taken. He advised that this work would be detailed in the fraud risk action plan for each of the high risk areas and referred to the example detailed fraud risk action plan for Procurement.

He highlighted the Management responsibilities and approach to ensure the appropriate controls were in place to manage the risk of fraud. He advised that they were

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responsible for reviewing and updating the fraud risk assessment (at least annually) taking into account any significant changes to controls or processes as well as any significant issues arising from audit assignments. In addition management were responsible for ensuring that the fraud risk assessment is communicated to all relevant staff, so that their team has an increased awareness of the risks and the importance of consistently applying controls and flagging any areas for concern.

The Panel noted the contents of the report and endorsed the proposed approach, as outlined.

**Audit and Risk Panel Terms of Reference / Annual Programme of Work /
Training**

The Panel considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The terms of reference for the Audit and Risk Panel and Audit Assurance Board are reviewed and updated annually. The purpose of this paper is to present the Audit and Risk Panel with these updated terms of reference for review and approval, along with the 2021 programme of business. Also to agree for the annual training session to take place on the morning of 26th April 2021.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 That the Audit and Risk Panel approves the:

- **Audit and Risk Panel’s purpose and terms of reference statement (Appendix A)**
- **Audit Assurance Boards constitution and terms of reference (Appendix B)**
- **Audit and Risk Panel’s indicative programme of business for 2021 (Appendix C).**

2.2 That the Audit and Risk Panel agrees for training to be arranged for the morning of Monday 26th April and for it to be co-delivered by a governance expert over Teams (with this to be kept under review).

3.0 Main report

3.1 In line with good practice, the terms of reference for the Audit & Risk Panel and the Audit Assurance Board are reviewed on an annual basis.

Audit & Risk Panel Terms of Reference

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- 3.2 The purpose statement and terms of reference of the Panel are important because they set out the role of the Panel in the context of the Council's governance structures. They are based on the recommended CIPFA model (2018 edition) for audit committees, tailored, where, appropriate to Belfast City Council.**
- 3.3 The terms of reference were last updated in March 2020.**
- 3.4 We have reviewed the terms of reference, with only a minor update required to note the proposed change in terminology from whistleblowing to raising concerns. The terms of reference are set out at appendix A for information.**
- 3.5 It is worth highlighting that on 23rd October 2020 the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed the draft terms of reference for the establishment of a new Standards Committee, whose main functions would be to promote, sustain and safeguard the conduct of Councillors within the Council and the probity of all the Council's proceedings. Based on the CIPFA guidance for audit committees, the role of the Audit & Risk Panel in relation to the Standards Committee, when established, would be 'to consider the effectiveness of this committee as part of the annual governance review'. This will be taken into account during the next review of the Audit & Risk Panels terms of reference.**

Audit Assurance Board Terms of Reference

- 3.6 The Audit Assurance Board is chaired by the Chief Executive. The principal activity of the Audit Assurance Board over the years has been to review and consider reports from internal audit, external audit and management that are to be submitted to the Audit & Risk Panel - but from a top management / Accounting Officer perspective rather than a Member perspective. This process enables the Chief Executive and the Board to be assured (or otherwise) of current risk, control and governance arrangements and consider any issues that require management priority / attention / direction.**
- 3.7 We have reviewed the terms of reference, with only a minor update required to note the proposed change in terminology from whistleblowing to raising concerns. The terms of reference are set out at appendix A for information.**

Audit & Risk Panel – Programme of Business 2021

- 3.8 In line with good practice the quarterly meetings of the Panel have been aligned with an indicative programme of business,**

designed to ensure that the Panel demonstrably addressed / discharges its roles and responsibilities as set out in its purposes statement / terms of reference. The indicative programme of business is attached at Appendix C.

Audit & Risk Panel – Training Update

- 3.9 In December the Panel approved the proposed approach for delivery of the training session with a focus on the potential impact of the pandemic on the Councils usual risk, control and governance arrangements and how the Panel continues to fulfil its responsibilities, bearing in mind these potential impacts.
- 3.10 We are proposing that a governance expert is engaged to co-design and deliver this training on the morning of Monday 26th April 2021. At this stage it is proposed that the training will be delivered via Teams however this will be kept under review.

4.0 Financial & Resource Implications

Costs associated with the training will be met from the AGRS annual budget.

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None known at this time.”

Appendix A

“Belfast City Council

Audit and Risk Panel

Statement of Purpose and Terms of Reference

Statement of purpose

1. *The Audit and Risk Panel is a key component of Belfast City Council’s corporate governance arrangements. It provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.*
2. *The purpose of the Audit and Risk Panel is to provide independent assurance to those charged with governance (Members and senior management) on the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control environment. It provides independent review of the*

council's governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversees the financial reporting and annual governance processes. It will provide an independent scrutiny of the council's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it exposes the council to risk and weakens the control environment. It oversees internal audit and external audit, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place.

Governance, risk and control

- 3. To review the council's corporate governance arrangements against the good governance framework, including the ethical framework and consider annual governance reports and assurances.*
- 4. To review the Annual Governance Statement prior to approval and consider whether it properly reflects the risk environment and supporting assurances, taking into account internal audit's opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and control.*
- 5. To consider the council's arrangements to secure value for money and review assurances and assessments on the effectiveness of these arrangements.*
- 6. To consider the council's framework of assurance and ensure that it adequately addresses the risks and priorities of the council.*
- 7. To monitor the effective development and operation of risk management in the council, to include overseeing the council's risk, control and governance arrangements for health and safety.*
- 8. To approve the council's risk management strategy and monitor progress in addressing risk-related issues reported to the Panel, including the corporate risk register and assurance information on the management of key corporate risks.*
- 9. To consider reports on the effectiveness of internal controls and monitor the implementation of agreed actions.*
- 10. To review the assessment of fraud risks and potential harm to the council from fraud and corruption.*
- 11. To approve the council's fraud and whistleblowing (raising concerns) policies and monitor the implementation of these policies, including the counter-fraud strategy, actions and resources.*
- 12. To oversee and monitor the Council's structures, processes, systems and related arrangements for performance management and to assure itself through receipt of regular reports on the planning, delivery, reporting and*

reviewing arrangements that appropriate plans and policies to support the performance management framework are in place and that its statutory responsibilities are being met.

- 13. To review the governance and assurance arrangements for significant partnerships or collaborations.**

Internal audit

- 14. To approve the internal audit charter.**
- 15. To review proposals made in relation to the appointment of external providers of internal audit services and to make recommendations.**
- 16. To approve the risk-based internal audit plan, including internal audit's resource requirements, the approach to using other sources of assurance and any work required to place reliance upon those other sources.**
- 17. To approve significant interim changes to the risk-based internal audit plan and resource requirements.**
- 18. To make appropriate enquiries of both management and the Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services to determine if there are any inappropriate scope or resource limitations.**
- 19. To consider reports from the Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services on internal audit's performance during the year, including the performance of external providers of internal audit services. These will include:**
- a) Updates on the work of internal audit including key findings, issues of concern and action in hand as a result of internal audit work.**
 - b) Regular reports on the results of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme.**
 - c) Reports on instances where the internal audit function does not conform to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and Local Government Application Note, considering whether the non-conformance is significant enough that it must be included in the Annual Governance Statement.**
- 20. To consider the Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services' annual report:**
- a) The statement of the level of conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and Local Government Application Note and the results of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme that supports the statement – these will indicate the reliability of the conclusions of internal audit.**

b) The opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and control together with the summary of the work supporting the opinion – these will assist the Panel in reviewing the Annual Governance Statement.

- 21. To consider summaries of specific internal audit reports as requested.***
- 22. To receive reports outlining the action taken where the Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services has concluded that management has accepted a level of risk that may be unacceptable to the authority or there are concerns about progress with the implementation of agreed actions.***
- 23. To contribute to the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme and in particular, to the external quality assessment of internal audit that takes place at least once every five years.***
- 24. To consider a report on the effectiveness of internal audit to support the Annual Governance Statement, where required to do so by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.***
- 25. To support the development of effective communication with the Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services.***

External audit

- 26. To consider the external auditor's annual letter, relevant reports, and the report to those charged with governance.***
- 27. To consider specific reports as agreed with the external auditor.***
- 28. To comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and to ensure it gives value for money.***
- 29. To commission work from internal and external audit.***
- 30. To advise and recommend on the effectiveness of relationships between external and internal audit and other inspection agencies or relevant bodies.***
- 31. To consider the external auditor's report on performance management, specifically the annual improvement assessment and to consider the adequacy of management responses / action taken to address issues arising from these reports.***

Financial reporting

- 32. To review the annual statement of accounts. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the council.***

- 33 To consider the external auditor's report to those charged with governance on issues arising from the audit of the accounts.**

Accountability arrangements, referral and reporting

- 34 To report to those charged with governance (Members and senior management) on the Panel's findings, conclusions and recommendations concerning the adequacy and effectiveness of their governance, risk management and internal control frameworks; financial reporting arrangements, and internal and external audit functions. The Panel will do this by reporting to the council's Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on a regular basis through reports and minutes of meetings. It may also report, with the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, to other standing committees on matters that are of direct relevance to the responsibilities of these committees.**
- 35. To report to full Council (through the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee) on a regular basis on the Panel's performance in relation to the terms of reference and the effectiveness of the Panel in meeting its purpose.**
- 36. The Audit and Risk Panel shall consider any issue referred to it in relation to these terms of reference by the Council or any Standing Committee. Furthermore, the Audit and Risk Panel shall also consider any matter brought to its attention by the Chief Executive. Where any individual Member wishes to raise an issue under these terms of reference, the Member shall accordingly either raise the matter through the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee or in the case of urgency with the Chief Executive."**

The Head of AGRS advised that a new training date had been identified as Wednesday, 28th April from 9.30 – 11.30am.

During discussion, the Director of the Northern Ireland Audit Office requested the following wording under paragraph 28 of the Terms of Reference: **"To commission work from internal and external audit"** be amended to remove reference to the Panel commissioning work from the NIAO.

Ms. Fahy raised a query under paragraph 22 of the Terms of Reference: **"To contribute to the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme and in particular, to the external quality assessment of internal audit that takes place at least once every five years"** and requested that it be expanded to include specific reference to the Panel's role in relation to the internal quality assessment of internal audit.

After discussion, the Audit and Risk Panel:

- Approved the Audit and Risk Panel's purpose and terms of reference statement (Appendix A), subject to the foregoing amendments;

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 9th March, 2021**

- Approved the Audit Assurance Boards constitution and terms of reference (Appendix B);
- Approved the Audit and Risk Panel's indicative programme of business for 2021 (Appendix C); and
- Agreed that training be arranged for the morning of Wednesday, 28th April to be co-delivered by a governance expert via Microsoft Teams (to be kept under review).

Local Government Auditor's Report 2020

The Panel considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1** The purpose of this paper is to advise the Panel that in December, the Northern Ireland Audit Office published the Local Government Auditor's Report (2020) summarising the results of audit work undertaken in the year to 31 March 2019 in councils across Northern Ireland.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1** The Panel is asked to note the NIAO report at Appendix A and that AGRS has circulated this report to the relevant officers in the Council for information / action.

3.0 Main report

- 3.1** On an annual basis the NIAO reports on the exercise of the Local Government Auditor's functions – effectively a summary of the issues arising from audit work across the 11 councils. The report for 2020 (relating to the financial year ended 31 March 2019) was published on 15 December 2020.
- 3.2** The report is not specific to Belfast City Council but does include information regarding the Council and comparative information with other councils, such as absence and prompt payment data. The report is structured in four parts as follows:
- 1.** Financial performance
 - 2.** Good governance
 - 3.** Performance improvement
 - 4.** Challenges and opportunities
- 3.3** Parts 1 – 3 of the report reflect the circumstances councils were operating in prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 3.4 In the Local Government Auditor's introduction she makes particular reference to the joint report on 'Managing Attendance in central and local government' published late 2020 which highlighted that levels of absence for councils are the highest in the UK and sets out a number of key principles and good practice that should be applied in managing attendance. In addition the Local Government Auditor's refers to the extraordinary audit of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council that she has been directed to carry out, concentrating on land disposals and easements and related asset management policies and procedures.
- 3.5 The report includes general observations made by the Local Government Auditor in a number of areas including:
- 3.6 Financial performance - reliance on income received from district rates and how councils need to continue to explore income maximization and cost reduction; value for money in the use of agency workers; careful monitoring and management of General Fund reserve balances; importance of robust financial management arrangements to meet significant challenges in respect of financial sustainability.
- 3.7 Good Governance – continued assessment of the effectiveness of Audit & Risk Panels, the process for handling complaints around compliance with the code of conduct for Councillors; the value of raising concerns (whistleblowing) and that concerns about the planning process continue to be the most common concerns raised with the LGA. The LGA urges councils to ensure consistency in the planning decisions and the retention of supporting documentation and refers to the commencement of a study on Planning in both central and local government and; fraud reporting / fraud risk management requirements.
- 3.8 Performance improvement - the need for significant progress by all councils to allow a broader range of functions to be benchmarked in future which is being taken forward by a sub-group of SOLACE; the first results of the Planning Monitoring Framework which showed significant variations in performance against planning targets.
- 3.9 Challenges and opportunities - the LGA notes the delays in the Departmental review of the Local Government Reform Programme and associated efficiencies / outcomes and will engage with the Department on this matter; absenteeism; the importance of good asset management to help deliver sustainable public services; the need for effective collaboration with robust governance and accountability

arrangements between councils, central government public bodies, and the UK Government regarding City Deals and; continued challenges regarding Covid-19.

3.10 The Local Government Auditor recommends that councils consider this report and review how they are managing the issues highlighted.

3.11 Audit, Governance & Risk Services (AGRS) has communicated these observations along with the detailed report to the relevant managers across the Council for information / action.

4.0 Financial & Resource Implications

4.1 None

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None known at this time.”

The Panel adopted the recommendations.

**Performance Improvement 2019-20 Year End Assessment and Arrangements
for 2020/21**

The Strategic Director of Finance and Resources updated the Panel on the Council's progress to comply with the performance improvement duty as laid in in Part 12 of the Local Government (NI) Act 2014 in the context of the Covid-19 emergency, specifically in relation the 2019-20 Audit. He also provided an overview on recent work carried out by the Performance Improvement Working Group in relation to the arrangements for 2020-21 and 2021 -22.

He highlighted that the NIAO audit and assessment of the Council's Improvement activity had now commenced, and, as Members were aware, a full audit was not required this year and it was anticipated that input from NIAO this year would be in the region of 25% to 30% of the previous years' work. He pointed out that NIAO had advised the proposed new deadline still remained as 31st March, 2021 and the Panel would be updated once the audit has been completed.

In relation to the Arrangements for Performance Improvement 2020-21 and 2021-22, the Strategic Director of Finance and Resources advised that the Performance Improvement Working Group, which was made up of representatives from each of the 11 Councils, continued to have discussions with the Department for Communities and NIAO with regards to moving forward with performance improvement for 2021/22 and the process of agreeing the format and requirements for the 2020/21 audits.

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 9th March, 2021**

He provided a summary of the following key points from recent discussions with regards to moving forward in 2021/22:

- **Improvement Objectives for 2021/22** – objectives for this year would require a boarder definition as they were likely to include both recovery and improvement objectives. Consultation would be restricted this year due to the covid-19 pandemic and therefore, the group requested that expectations for the consultation process this year were realistic;
- **Publication date for the Performance Improvement Plans for 2021/22** – since councils had to undertake a consultation process for 2021/22 and updated guidance was yet to be issued, it had been requested that flexibility would be granted in terms of the 30th June publication deadline; and
- **Statutory Performance Indicators** - concerns were raised by the group that there was a risk that the standards for the statutory performance indicators might not be met this year as a result of the pandemic and other factors. Therefore flexibility had been requested in terms of achieving the standards set to be built into the audit process so that local government were not negatively impacted.

The Strategic Director of Finance and Resources also reported that the Strategic Hub had now commenced work to develop the Improvement Plan for 2021/22. It was anticipated that a report on the proposed approach and timeline for publication would be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in March for consideration.

The Panel noted the update on the 2019-20 Audit in the context of the Covid-19 emergency and the update on work carried out by the Performance Improvement Working Group on the arrangements for 2020-21 and 2021 -22.

Chairperson

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Risk Strategy

UPDATED
November 2020



Belfast
City Council

Introduction

The effective management of risk is central to Belfast City Council's success in achieving our objectives and in delivering services to the communities to which we are accountable. We have a dynamic approach to risk management as it is a key enabler that supports BCC in delivering its ambitions for the city through the Belfast Agenda.



The Council is required by statute to have arrangements in place for the management of risk. Legal requirements aside, effective risk management is required to ensure the continued financial and organisational well-being of the Council. It is also vital for the delivery of our priorities and objectives in what continues to be a continually transforming environment. The Council recognises that risk management is an integral part of both sound management practice and good corporate governance. It improves decision making, enhances outcomes and strengthens management accountability.

The underlying principles of the Council's Risk Strategy are consistent with BS ISO 31000 (Risk Management – Guidelines). More detailed guidance on the Council's risk management is set out in the Risk Management Guidance and Process Manual which is available through Interlink.

Purpose

This Strategy details the overall approach to risk management in Belfast City Council.

As Deputy Chief Executive / Strategic Director of Finance and Resources, I am the owner of the Strategy, which has been adopted by the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and the Audit and Risk Panel.

Review & Approval

The Risk Management Strategy, in particular the Risk Appetite, will be reviewed and updated annually by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.



Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive / Strategic Director of Finance and Resources

Assurance Framework

Risk Management is an integral part of the Council's assurance framework. The assurance framework shows how different sources of assurance combine to give management and Members assurance that the Council is doing the right things, in the right way.

The effectiveness of this assurance framework is underpinned by a model, commonly referred to as the **Three Lines of Defence**. This model shows that the management of risks and achievement of objectives is helped by:



1

Control - the processes and systems that people use every day to deliver services / projects



Oversight - management reports and information that confirm that these processes and systems are in place

2

3

Independent assurance – audits and reviews that provide independent assurance that these processes and systems are well designed and operating in practice.



Scope



As a modern local authority, the Council is committed to delivering quality services to the citizens and communities of Belfast. Our attitude to risk is that it should be identified and managed rather than avoided. Successful risk management is dependent on the willingness to take measured and considered risks in order to exploit opportunities and maximise our resources. Effective risk management, that is culturally embedded, is a cornerstone to decision making.

Everyone in the Council plays a role in managing risk by identifying opportunities and minimising uncertainty in a way that enables the Council to achieve its goals. It should be noted that calculated risk taking is not the same as the absence of risk management. This Strategy is therefore Council-wide and applies to all employees and covers all activities undertaken by the Council.

The risk management process should be an integral part of management and decision-making and integrated into the structure, operations and processes of the organisation. It can be applied at strategic, operational or programme / project levels.



How we do this



Strategic

- Corporate risks, relating to delivery of the Corporate Plan, are identified by CMT and recorded on MKinsight. For example, corporate risks around digital information security or continuous improvement

Operational

- Departmental risks, relating to delivery of key functions, are identified by Directors and operational management and recorded on MKinsight. For example, risks around day to day operations such as waste collection or cemeteries / crematorium.

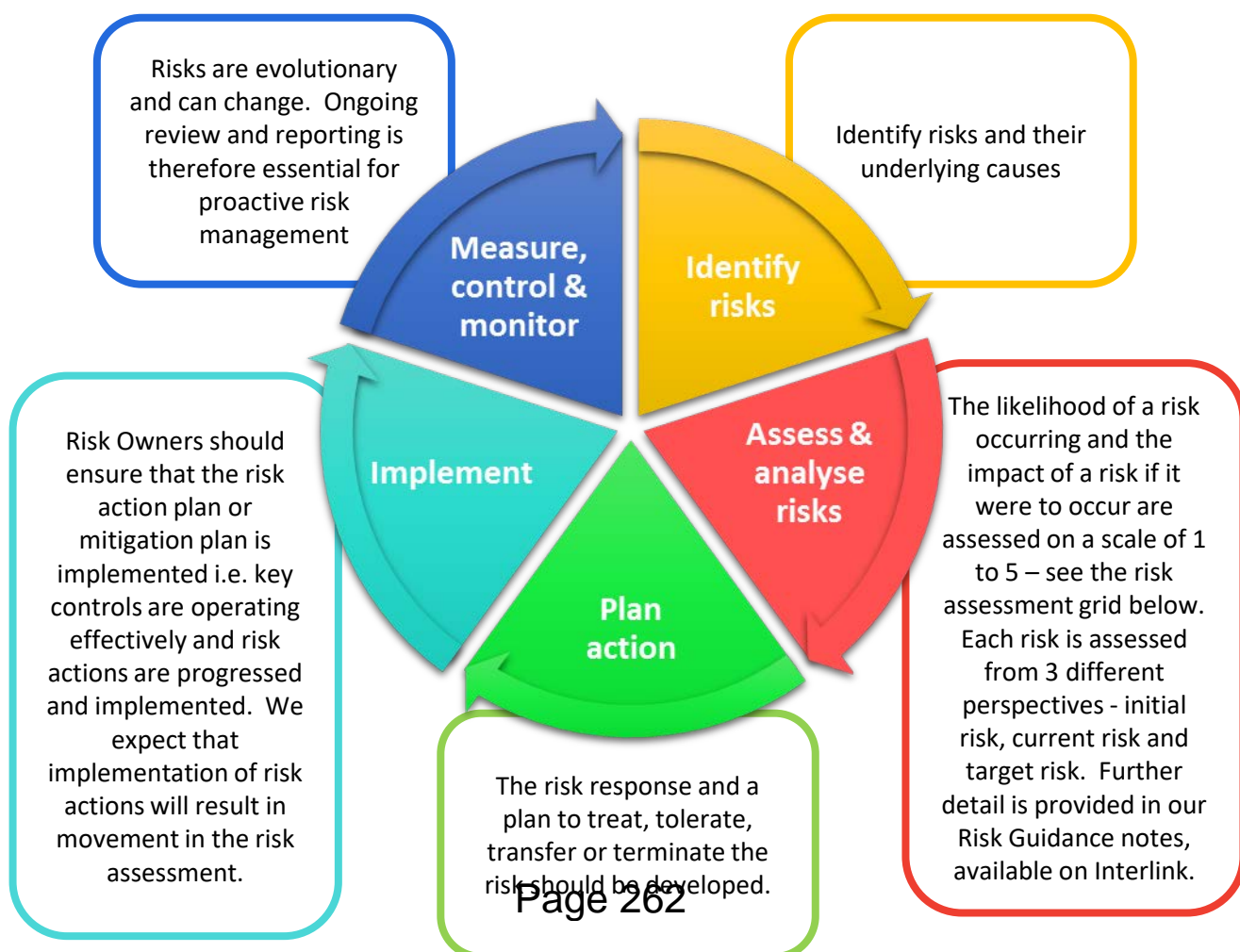
Programme / Project

- Programme / project risks relating to delivery of key strategic programmes of work / projects are identified by the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) and Programme / Project Board and are recorded on risk registers. For example, the Physical Programme and the priorities of the Belfast Agenda.

Our Process

Risk Management is the planned and systematic approach to the identification, evaluation, prioritisation and control of risks and opportunities facing the Council.

The risk management process should be an integral part of management and decision making and integrated into the structure, operations and processes of the Council. It can be applied at a strategic, operational, programme or project level.



Integration with other processes

Directors will integrate the management of risk into their business processes including finances, planning, performance management, key decision-making processes and major change initiatives.

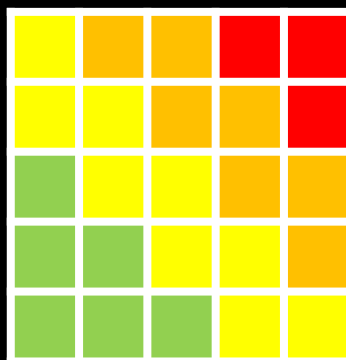


Risk Register

Corporate, departmental and Service / Unit level risks are captured on the Council's corporate risk management system, MKinsight.

Other risks, such as those relating to programmes / projects or partnerships / joint ventures, should be captured either in MKinsight or through another process that ensures that sufficient risk detail is recorded:

- Risk description
- Risk causes
- Risk type
- Risk treatment
- Sources of assurance
- Risk owner / updater
- Risk assessment
- Key controls
- Key risk actions



Risks are assessed on a scale of 1-5 in terms of both likelihood and impact which results in the risk ratings outlined below:

Low

Moderate

High

Severe

Review & Report



It is essential that risk management is used as a tool to assist good management and to provide assurances to relevant officers that adequate measures have been taken to manage risk.

As a minimum, all risks should be reviewed quarterly and this review should be formally recorded.

However, programme and projects are often higher risk, due to both the nature of the activities being undertaken and the velocity of risks, and a more frequent review may therefore be more appropriate.

Quarterly Assurance Statements are completed by Chief Officers to confirm that Corporate, Departmental and Service risks have been reviewed and updated in line with the Risk Strategy.

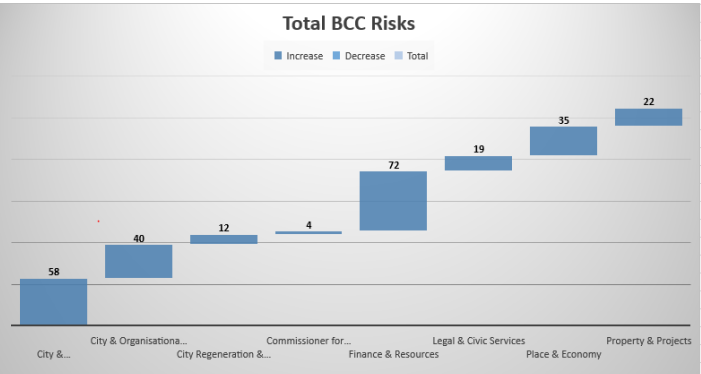
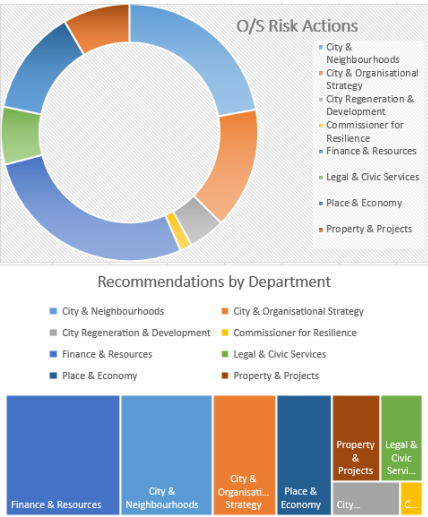
Quarterly risk reports on the management of corporate risks are submitted to the Assurance Board and Audit and Risk Panel.

In addition, Annual Assurance Statements are completed by all senior managers within the Council.

Departmental Management Teams and other relevant oversight boards / groups should ensure that risk management is a standing or regular agenda item. Appropriate arrangements should be put in place for reporting on risks. This may include:

- dashboard reporting
- reporting of risk assessments against risk appetite etc.

In addition to the regular review of risks, all oversight groups should ensure that horizon scanning is regularly undertaken to identify key trends and drivers that present both opportunities for, and risks to, the achievement of objectives. This supports risk identification and informs decision making and strategic planning.



Risk Categories & Appetite

Risk Categories

Every organisation will face different types of risk. The main categories of risk facing the Council are set out below.

It should be noted that these categories are not mutually exclusive.

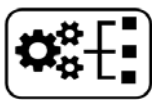
The categories will be used to ensure all major risks and all types of response are properly considered. Understanding the type of risk being faced can also help determine what action is best to take.



Finance



Governance & Compliance



Programme & Project



Customers & Services



Strategic



Innovation



Reputation

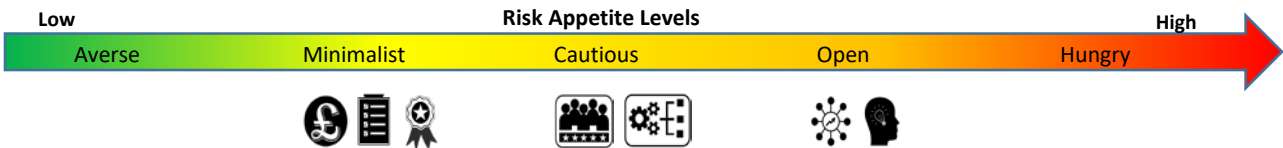
Risk Appetite Statement

Belfast City Council aims to be risk aware, but not overly risk averse and to ensure that the organisation takes a balanced approach to risk taking in order to deliver its corporate priorities and agreed outcomes for the City.

The Council recognises that, in pursuit of its priorities and outcomes, it may choose to accept different levels of risk in different areas. As a result, it has established and articulated risk appetites for different categories of risk – for risks falling into the Finance, Governance & Compliance and Reputation categories it has a minimalist risk appetite, for risks falling into the Programme & Project and Customers & Services categories it has a cautious risk appetite and for risks falling into the Strategic and Innovation categories it has an open risk appetite. Action should be taken to manage risks down to a level which falls within the agreed risk appetite for that category.

Risk appetite is best summarised as “the amount of risk an organisation is willing to accept”. If the agreed risk appetite is high, then there is an increased need for good risk management processes to be in place in order to manage the risks.

This statement sets out how we balance risk and opportunity in pursuit of achieving our objectives. Managers should be mindful of the Council’s risk appetite, particularly when undertaking new activities. It should be noted that calculated risk taking is not the same as the absence of risk management.



Averse - Avoidance of risk is paramount. Risks for which the Council has an adverse risk appetite will only be accepted if they have a Low risk rating, before taking account of any mitigations.

Minimalist – Risks for which the Council has a minimalist risk appetite should be managed so that mitigations will deliver a risk rating of Low-Moderate within an agreed timeframe.

Cautious – Risks for which the Council has a cautious risk appetite should be managed so that mitigations will deliver a risk rating of Moderate within an agreed timeframe.

Open – In order to achieve significant reward, risks for which the Council has an open risk appetite should be managed so that mitigations will deliver a risk rating of Moderate - High within an agreed timeframe

Hungry – In order to achieve potentially very high reward, risks for which the Council has a hungry risk appetite, should be managed so that mitigations will deliver a risk rating of Severe within an agreed timeframe.

Roles & Responsibilities

All Members, employees and stakeholders have a role to play in ensuring that risk is effectively managed across the Council. The key roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder are outlined below.

Strategic Policy & Resources Committee

- Approve Risk Management Strategy & Policy
- Receive assurance from the Audit & Risk Panel on the application of the Risk Management Strategy & Policy

Audit Assurance Board

- Support the Audit & Risk Panel in the discharge of their duties

Corporate Management Team

- Overall accountability for risk management across the Council
- Identification of key corporate risks
- Review, challenge and oversight of the management of corporate risks on a quarterly basis, including seeking reasons for significant delays in the implementation of risk actions
- Set the tone for risk management, promote the benefits of effective risk management and lead by example in embedding the risk management framework
- Establish a control environment and culture where risk can be effectively assessed and managed

Audit & Risk Panel

- Provide assurance to the Council on the effectiveness of risk management and internal control
- Seek assurance from Officers on the management of risks within the Council

Strategic Directors / Directors

- Ensure there are effective risk management arrangements in their Departments in line with this policy
- Identification of risks affecting delivery of key objectives
- Identify and manage risks relating to key programmes and projects
- Responsible for the management of corporate risks (as designated by the Chief Executive)
- Seek and receive assurances on the management of risks in their key areas of responsibility, including where they are SRO
- Ensure the Department's risks are reviewed at least quarterly
- Determine who will be the Departmental Risk Co-ordinator for their Department
- Promote the benefits of risk management

Departmental Risk Co-ordinator

- Support the Director in the implementation of the risk management framework for their Department
- Liaise with Audit, Governance and Risk

Roles & Responsibilities

Senior Managers

- Manage risks effectively in their service area, in accordance with the risk management framework
- Take ownership for risks within their Service / area and ensure that Risk Action Plans are reviewed and updated regularly
- Identification of risks facing their Service /area and, where applicable, escalate for consideration to the Departmental Management Team
- Seek information on the management of their Service / area risks
- Ensure that the risk management framework is embedded in their Service / areas and that staff are competent in risk management

Employees

- Maintain awareness of risks and manage them as part of their jobs

Audit, Governance & Risk Services

Audit, Governance & Risk Services have a dual role with regard to risk management. These roles are separately managed.

Assurance role:

- Provide guidance, tools and training to support the organisation to manage risk effectively
- Provide assurance that risk is being effectively managed

Risk Advisory role:

Provide resource, in liaison with the Departmental Risk Co-Ordinator, in the form of a risk consultant who will:

- Support and challenge management in the identification, assessment and management of risks
- Collate risk information / intelligence, for integration into performance reports, to support senior management and inform decision making



Risk Assessment Guidance

IMPACT	5	Moderate	High	High	Severe	Severe
	4	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Severe
	3	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	High
	2	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High
	1	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate
		1	2	3	4	5
		LIKELIHOOD				



1. Very Low
Has not occurred before or has happened rarely. (<5%)

2. Low
Although unlikely, there is a chance that the risk may materialise. (5-20%)

3. Possible
The outcome is in the balance, and is almost as likely to occur as not. (20-50%)

4. Likely
More likely to occur than not occur. (50-75%)

5. Almost Certain
Significantly more likely to occur than not occur. (>75%)

IMPACT		Objectives	Financial	Health & Safety	Reputation
	5. Severe	The risk will cause the objective to not be achieved	Severe financial implications. (e.g. outside the agreed year-end budget variance tolerance by more than 5%)	Major injuries leading to death and irreversible health effects; high profile investigation and enforcement; significant impact on staff and service delivery; sustained national public / media interest; significant financial losses.	Very significant adverse coverage, sustained over a considerable period.
	4. Major	The risk will cause several elements of the objective to be delayed or not achieved.	Major financial implications. (e.g. outside the agreed year-end budget variance tolerance by up to 5%)	Major injury leading to longer term incapacity / disability; multiple complaints / external agency investigation; major impact on staffing and service delivery; national public / media interest; major financial loss	Significant adverse coverage, likely to recur on several occasions
	3. Moderate	The risk will cause some elements of the objective to be delayed or not be achieved.	Moderate financial implications. (e.g. within agreed in-year budget variance tolerance levels of 2% underspend and 1% overspend)	Moderate injury requiring medical intervention and time off; formal complaint and investigation likely; moderate impact on staff / service delivery; local public / media interest; moderate financial loss.	Adverse coverage, probably on a one off basis.
	2. Minor	Some impact on objectives resulting in slight but redeemable deviation.	Minor financial implications (e.g. within agreed year-end budget variance tolerance levels for depts. of 2% underspend and 0.5% overspend)	Minor injury / illness requiring medical intervention and little time off; low level impact on staffing / service delivery; risk of short term loss of public confidence; small financial loss	Some interest possible but likely to be localised and short term.
	1. Insignificant	The risk will not substantively impede the achievement of the objective.	Minimal financial implications.	Minimal injury requiring no/minimal intervention; informal investigation; very low level impact on staffing / service delivery impact; minimal financial loss; potential for rumours / public concern	Little interest

Customer Focus Working Group

Wednesday, 24th February, 2021

CUSTOMER FOCUS WORKING GROUP MINUTES HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Alderman Rodgers (Chairperson); and
Councillors Bunting and Flynn.

In attendance: Mrs. R. Crozier, Customer Focus Programme Director;
Mr. P. Gribben, Head of Digital Services
Mrs. S. Williams, Governance and Compliance Manager;
Ms. K. Kennedy, Continuous Improvement Project
Manager;
Mr. P. O'Brien, Digital Portfolio Manager (Solutions)
Mr. P. Patterson, Digital Development Architect
Mr. G. McErlane, Digital Development Architect
Mr. C. Quinn, Customer Services Manager;
Ms. K. Dorrian, Customer Service Co-ordinator
Mr. A. McMullan, Democratic Services Assistant; and
Ms E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Hanvey.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 30th September, 2020 were agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Update on Customer Focus Programme

The Customer Focus Programme Director provided the Working Group with an update of the Customer Focus Programme to date, which included an update on the services which would be delivered from April 2021.

She advised that Phase One of the Customer Hub implementation would include specific services for Elected Members and that this phase would focus on issue management and resolution, which included a dedicated telephone number and email address for Members, a trained customer hub team to understand and manage Members queries through to resolution. She highlighted that Members would also be provided with information on service delivery so they could be informed of issues earlier, enabling them to be responsive to constituents' queries. She pointed out that Members would have the ability to track issues they had raised and would have visibility of issues emerging in their

areas. She explained that a CRM system had been developed to track and trace queries, together with a dashboard to show all issues that Members had reported through the hub and their tracking.

The Project Manager and Customer Services Manager explained how the first phase would be delivered and highlighted that the Customer Hub would 'go live' on 29th March.

It was reported that there had been a focus on how the Council could improve issues with missed bins including information flows between Elected Members, customers, staff and managers. The Project Manager explained how a prototype of an App to report missed bins had been developed and a pilot project had been undertaken to prove that the technology works had been completed.

The Customer Services Manager presented an animation to illustrate how a Members query could be resolved from the initial contact to the Hub through to completion.

The Head of Digital Services advised that the Telephony upgrade and integration with the CRM system had been completed, and the roll out of the Softphone software was in progress which would bring all the functionality of a desk phone onto a laptop or mobile phone.

Noted.

Demo of Elected Member App – access to and view of Customer Hub

The Digital Development Architects provided a demonstration of how the Members App worked from first contact, through to resolution of a query. They explained the workflow and dashboard functionalities of the App.

During discussion, the Customer Focus Programme Director confirmed that refinement of the query categories on the Members App was required and the Team would be in contact with the Customer Focus Working Group to ascertain the most frequent queries they received. She also highlighted that the functionality of the App would be built upon as the Programme developed.

Noted.

Training and Support for using App

The Working Group noted that it would be required to test the App one week before it went live to provide feedback on its usability and that a video would be available to give instructions on how to use the App.

Outline of Next Steps

The Project Manager outlined the future work plan, which included refinement of the Members App, a communication plan and roll out of the App to all Members, further development of the CRM Dashboard and Members Portal, together with the development of insights and intelligence into services across the Council.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

Chairperson

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