

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 20th August, 2021

MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Walsh (Deputy Chairperson);
The High Sheriff (Councillor Long);
Aldermen Dorrian, Haire, Kingston and Sandford; and
Councillors Beattie, Black, Bunting, Carson, Garrett,
Lyons, McAllister, McDonough-Brown, McLaughlin,
McReynolds, Murphy and Pankhurst.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;
Mr. J. Walsh, City Solicitor;
Mr. R. Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational
Strategy;
Mr. R. Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of the Chairperson (Councillor Groogan) and Councillor Heading.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 18th June were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st July, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following seven items is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the Press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following

items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Financial Reporting

The Director of Finance and Resources reminded the Members that the Committee, at its meeting on 19th March, had agreed that the five step Finance Strategy which had, in June, 2020, been approved to manage the impact of Covid-19 upon the Council's finances, be extended into the first quarter of 2021/22 and that it be reviewed on a quarterly basis thereafter.

He drew the Members' attention to the financial position and forecast for Quarter 1 of 2021/22, which had been based on that Strategy. The financial position for the Council had shown an underspend of £4.6m, which represented 12% of the quarterly net expenditure budget. The key contributory factors related to additional expenditure controls, which had helped to offset income, the under occupancy of office buildings and underspends in employee budgets. The Quarter 1 forecast had shown an underspend of £2.18m, which represented 1.5% of the net expenditure budget.

The Director went on to provide an update on the forecast reserves position and District Rate forecast at Quarter 1 and on the overall Investment Programme.

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- i. note the report; and
- ii. agree to extend the five step Finance Strategy to the remaining quarters of 2021/22.

Medium-Term Financial Plan and Efficiency Programme

The Members of the Committee considered a report which provided an update on the assessment of the key financial factors which would influence the development of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan for 2022/23 - 2024/25 and the rate setting process for 2022/23, together with an overview of the priorities and work in progress to establish the 2022/23 - 2024/25 Efficiency Programme.

After discussion, the Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- i. note the challenges to be taken into consideration as part of the annual and medium-term rate setting process; and
- ii. agree that the same District Rate increase will be levied on domestic and non-domestic properties.

City Hall Recovery Plan - Update on Progress

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note a report providing an update on the progress being made across each of the operational areas in implementing the City Hall Recovery Plan.

Intelligent Client Function – Contract Management for New Regional Planning IT System

The Chief Executive informed the Members that the Northern Ireland Planning Portal provided users with an online facility to view and comment upon planning applications. It was also used by councils to process planning applications and enforcement cases and to administer the regional property certificate system. The portal had originally been developed for use by the former Department of the Environment's Planning Service but had been adapted for use by the eleven councils when planning powers had been transferred to local government in 2015.

She reported that the current contract for the provision of the planning portal was coming to an end and reminded the Members that, on 24th April 2020, they had delegated authority to her to approve a joint award of a contract, for ten years initially, for a new regional planning IT system. The system would be shared by the Department for Infrastructure and ten of the eleven councils and the Planning Portal Governance Board had stressed the need for it to commence no later than June, 2022, given that the current contract would expire the following December.

She reported further that the Department for Infrastructure, which was leading the project, had recommended that the role of Intelligent Client Function contract management for the new IT system be undertaken by one of the ten participating councils, given that they would be the primary users. Of those, only the Council had expressed a potential interest in assuming the role which, she pointed out, would provide it with an opportunity to build a close and constructive relationship with the supplier of the new IT system and influence the future development path to best meet the Planning Service's needs.

She outlined the key activities associated with the role and confirmed that officers had been collating information across a range of issues to inform the decision. A detailed analysis of risk and opportunities had been produced in relation to functions and resources, including a Service Level Agreement, legal considerations, finance, governance, organisational considerations, recruitment, implementation of the IT system, security and information governance. Having examined the issues in the round, it was recommended that the Council take on the Intelligent Client Function contract management for the new regional planning IT system, subject to the following:

- i. that the Council approves the final Service Level Agreement, which, amongst other areas, should address the points raised by the Legal Services Section in paragraph 3.14 of the Committee report;

- ii. that the Council be part of the first wave of implementation of the new IT system;
- iii. that appropriate contingency be agreed with the other ten Planning Authorities, in the event that the Council does not recruit to the new Intelligent Client Function team in time;
- iv. that the posts in the new Intelligent Client Function be filled on a permanent basis and appointed through an external recruitment exercise;
- v. that engagement/consultation take place with Trade Unions, as required; and
- vi. that the proposed arrangement be approved by SOLACE and the Planning Portal Governance Board.

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the recommendation.

Update on Cyber Security

(Mr. P. Gribben, Head of Digital Services, attended in connection with this item.)

The Head of Digital Services informed the Members that the threat of cyber-attacks was the most severe risk which the Council faced and that this had increased significantly due to the disruption caused by Covid-19 and the growing use of Cloud services, which had made critical applications more accessible to attackers. Over the past year, cyber-attacks had had a major impact on several local authorities across the United Kingdom and on a number of local agencies/organisations.

He reported that, in response to those challenges, Digital Services had engaged cyber security specialists to carry out an updated security assessment of the Council's cyber controls and a new Security Strategy had been developed. A security programme had been established, focusing on critical areas of cyber defence and he provided details of key actions which were being recommended around incident response, security culture, identity and access management, password protection, threat and vulnerability management, cyber resilience and cloud security. He added that Digital Services would be working with the Head of Finance and Resources to determine the best approach for funding initial response activities.

After discussion, the Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the following recommendations:

- i. to agree to the delivery of the key actions associated with the security programme, as set out within the report; and

- ii. to note that further consideration would be required around the key areas relating to incident response, as set out within the report.

Threat and Vulnerability Management

- i. that Elected Members and officers who had been provided with Council devices must access the Councils electronic information and systems using these devices;
- ii. that Council information must not be sent to personal devices;
- iii. that laptop provision would be prioritised for officers using personal devices and those with Customer facing roles;
- iv. that BCC email would be blocked on personal devices that do not have Mobile Device Management software installed (Following MDM implementation); and
- v. that personal email accounts would be blocked on the Council's network.

Cloud Security

- i. to develop a list of approved cloud services/applications that have been centrally procured through Digital Services. These will then be whitelisted for use;
- ii. to block Council staff from using unapproved cloud-based systems to store business data; and
- iii. to require a business case for Cloud services.

Community Diversionary Festivals Programme

The Members of the Committee were reminded that, at the meeting on 18th June, they had agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to retain the annual allocation of £500k for the Summer Community Diversionary Festival Programme, with a view to delivering the Programme later in the year.

They were reminded further that the Council, at its meeting on 1st July, had agreed that:

“due to the exceptional circumstances of this year and the fact that it is now July, that the open call for the Summer Community Diversionary Festival Programme is suspended for this year only. The funding, which is already included in the annual budget, is allocated to the same groups which were awarded funding following the open call in 2019, with the same amount again being ear-marked for each. These groups will be required to submit application forms which will be subject to due diligence, the application process will be opened to these groups immediately, that there be no fixed closing date so that applications can

be assessed as they come in and funding awarded. Mindful that of the fact that some, though not all, events are planned for August, authority be delegated to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to hold a special Committee meeting on 2nd August to approve grants for those applications approved by then. All planned events obviously must be compliant with Covid restrictions at the time, with the use of Council Parks for approved events in August granted, if required, and that call-in on this matter be suspended.”

The Director of Neighbourhood Services informed the Members that, whilst the diversionary and festival fund was a rolling programme for 2021/22, officers had stipulated deadline dates for the submission of applications, to ensure that there was sufficient time for preliminary assessment in advance of them being presented to the Members of the Committee. He confirmed that the only application which had been received by the latest deadline date of 6th August related to the Eastside Partnership, which had requested funding of £82,470.

He provided a brief synopsis of the project, together with details of the assessment score, and confirmed that, if approved, officers would provide the applicant with a funding agreement and terms of grant, similar to those which had been issued in 2019. As part of the initial assessment, officers had identified that further clarification was required around the management costs associated with managing the overall programme of work. He added that, whilst officers would support successful applicants with the condition of grant, there could, based on the final documentation submitted, be changes to the proposed programme of works and/or a reduction in funding for individual applicants in ensuring compliance with the relevant Council policies and procedures.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Alderman Kingston,
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

That the Members of the Committee agree to recommend that, in accordance with the Council’s decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to agree to allocate up to a maximum of £82,470 to the Eastside Partnership to deliver its community diversionary festivals programme.

On a vote, thirteen Members voted for the proposal and five against and it was declared carried.

The Members of the Committee agreed also to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority:

- i. to agree, in accordance with Standing Order 48 (a) (2) (c), that the aforementioned decision would not be subject to call-in, on the basis that an unreasonable delay could be prejudicial to the Council’s or the public’s interest;

- ii. to note that, in compliance with existing Council policies and the use of the Council's parks and open spaces, the decision to allocate funding to the Eastside Partnership would remain subject to:
 - a. the negotiation of satisfactory terms and conditions of use, including any relevant fees, via an appropriate legal agreement prepared by the City Solicitor, including managing final booking confirmation dates and flexibility around 'set up' and take down' periods, and booking amendments, subject to:
 - the applicant resolving any operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
 - compliance with the Covid-19 restrictions in place at the time of the event(s); and
 - the applicant complying with all relevant statutory licencing requirements.
- iii. to agree that the Party Group Leaders be provided with information on how the Eastside Partnership project contributed to a positive image of Belfast and met the definition of a diversionary festival, as set out in parts 6 and 7 of the assessment criteria; and
- iv. to agree that issues which had been raised in relation to the Wolfe Tones concert on the night of 15th August be referred to the Party Group Leaders for further consideration.

Assets Management

The Members of the Committee agreed, on the basis that decisions relating to the disposal/acquisition of assets could not be taken under delegated authority, to adopt the following recommendations, in principle, and noted that the decisions would be subject to ratification by the Council, provided that the enabling legislation permitting the holding of remote Committee meetings had been put in place at that time:

- i. Dargan Road – Disposal of Development Site;
- ii. Blanchflower Playing Fields – Lease to Harland and Wolff Welders Football Club;
- iii. Parkgate Avenue Off Street Car Park – New Access Licence Agreement;
- iv. Plot 13 Balmoral Estate – Lease extension and revised rent review period;
- v. 75 Mount Eagles Avenue – Disposal of Land; and
- vi. Laganvale Manor – Disposal of Land

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Motion - Paid Leave for Miscarriage

The Members of the Committee were reminded that, at the Council meeting on 1st July, the following motion had been proposed by Councillor M. Kelly and seconded by Councillor Mulholland:

“This Council recognises the emotional trauma and loss suffered by parents as a result of stillbirths and miscarriages.

The Council also notes that a growing number of employers across the UK and Ireland are offering paid leave to employees who have experienced or been affected by early pregnancy loss and miscarriage.

As such, the Council will bring forward compassionate, fair and progressive proposals for bereavement leave to provide leave for miscarriage and for stillbirth, so that employees who have been impacted do not have to use sick or annual holiday leave.”

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion had been referred without discussion to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the motion and agree that a report be submitted to a future meeting providing details on how it would be facilitated, resourced and managed.

Motion - Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

The Members of the Committee were reminded that, at the Council meeting on 1st July, the following motion had been proposed by Councillor Bunting and seconded by Councillor Spratt:

“This Council acknowledges the unique achievement of Her Majesty The Queen as our longest serving monarch in history, hails her life of service to our nation, to the Commonwealth and to many aspects of international life, and agrees to organise in 2022 a programme of events to celebrate her Platinum Jubilee, including a funding programme for events organised by local communities across the City, as permitted by the Covid restrictions at that time.”

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion had been referred without discussion to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the motion and agree that it be referred to the Party Group Leaders for consideration, with a report on how it would be facilitated, resourced and managed to be submitted to a future meeting.

Motion - Centenary of the Ulster Memorial Tower

The Members of the Committee were reminded that, at the Council meeting on 1st July, the following motion had been proposed by Alderman Kingston and seconded by Councillor Pankhurst:

“This Council notes that this November marks the centenary of the opening of the Ulster Memorial Tower, on 19th November 1921, near Thiepval in France, as a lasting tribute to the men of Ulster who served and who gave their lives during the First World War.

Its position, opposite Thiepval Wood, is a particular reminder of the officers and men of the 36th (Ulster) Division who fell during the Battle of the Somme, and is a specific tribute to the Division’s heroic charge on the opening day of that great offensive.

This Council notes the various historic connections between the Ulster Memorial Tower and Belfast City Council and agrees to include recognition of this connection in our Centenary programme this year.”

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion had been referred without discussion to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the motion and agree that it be referred to the Party Group Leaders for consideration, with a report on how it would be facilitated, resourced and managed to be submitted to a future meeting.

Motion - Chat Bench and Tackling Loneliness

The Members of the Committee were reminded that, at the Council meeting on 1st July, the following motion had been proposed by Councillor Howard and seconded by Councillor de Faote:

“This Council notes the challenges posed by loneliness and how this has been compounded during the pandemic. Loneliness is now endemic across Northern Ireland, with 88% of people saying that loneliness has become a bigger problem since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. 1 in 3 people in Northern Ireland are ‘more often lonely’ and chronic loneliness affects 1 in 20 people.

The Council further notes that the recent British Red Cross NI report entitle “The longest Year: Life under Local Restrictions”, has called upon the Executive to take urgent action to tackle loneliness and states that Northern Ireland remains the only part of the United Kingdom without a Governmental loneliness strategy. 70 organisations, including NICVA, have also called for an urgent strategy to be brought forward.

The Council can do something tangible to tackle isolation and loneliness by agreeing to consider the repurposing of two council owned benches as 'Happy to Chat Benches'. One of these is situated in the grounds of the City Hall and the other in the Titanic quarter. Many Councils across the United Kingdom, including some in Northern Ireland, have introduced chat benches to help break down the barriers of social isolation and to get people talking.

The Council also calls upon the Minister for Health to initiate the development of a Northern Ireland Loneliness Strategy in partnership with other relevant Executive colleagues.”

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred without discussion to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the motion and agree that a report be submitted to a future meeting providing details on how it would be facilitated, resourced and managed.

Motion - Charges for the Use of ATMs –
Response from Payments System Regulator

The Members of the Committee were reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 4th May, had passed the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Heading and seconded by Councillor Lyons:

“This Council notes the increase in commercial (non-bank) ATMs in convenience stores and in our high streets. The Council further notes that the financial charge made against the consumer for withdrawing their own cash from their own bank account can range from 75 pence to £1.25 per withdrawal.

“This Council notes the increase in commercial (non-bank) ATMs in convenience stores and in our high streets. The Council further notes that the financial charge made against the consumer for withdrawing their own cash from their own bank account can range from 75 pence to £1.25 per withdrawal.

The Council understands the need for people to be able to access cash while acknowledging the pandemic impact on the use of cash in circulating in the local economy.

The Council also notes that those on fixed incomes face a financial charge to withdraw small amounts of cash, usually for necessities, and this is an unnecessary financial burden on older people and families.

The Council, therefore, will write to the Financial Conduct Authority urging it to cap the number of ATMs that charge for withdrawing cash.

The Council will also ask the Financial Conduct Authority to check on behalf of consumers, how such ATMs are sited and the criteria applied and if there is any correlation between the siting of cash ATMs which charge in areas of social deprivation, on the grounds they may be used more often in a seven-day period by people on fixed incomes and are, therefore, more profitable.”

The City Solicitor reported that, as called for in the motion, a letter had been sent to the Financial Conduct Authority, which had then been forwarded to the Payment Systems Regulator, as the organisation responsible for LINK, the United Kingdom’s largest cash machine network.

The response from the Payment Systems Regulator had recognised the important role which cash played for many people and highlighted the need for everyone to have a wide choice when making payments, in ways which worked for them. The Regulator had recently reaffirmed this commitment in a joint statement with the Financial Conduct Authority.

In relation to ATMs, the Regulator was focusing on ensuring that LINK delivered on its 2018 commitment to maintain the existing geographic spread of free-to-use ATMs for cash access. To ensure this, it had issued Specific Direction 8 to LINK, which required LINK to do all that it could to fulfil its commitment to maintaining the broad geographic spread of free-to-use ATMs. The Regulator was currently reviewing the need to keep this Direction in place and planned to publish a decision on this shortly.

The response had gone on to point out that LINK’s commitment included the replacement of those free-to-use ATMs which closed, provided that there was no alternative free ATM or Post Office within one kilometre. It had added that, should anyone feel that free access to cash was insufficient in Belfast, even in areas which already had an ATM, LINK could be contacted through its community request scheme. That would allow them to identify a location where a free-to-use ATM may be required. Approximately 50 cashpoints had already been installed as result of community requests.

The response had concluded by stressing that the Payment Systems Regulator did not have the regulatory authority or power to cap the number of ATMs which charged for withdrawing cash. The provision of pay-to-use ATMs was a commercial matter for individual ATM providers and this was not controlled by LINK or the Payment Systems Regulator.

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the response.

**Motion - Local Government Pension Scheme –
Responsible Investment Strategy –
Response from NILGOSC**

The Members of the Committee were reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st June, had passed the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Murphy and seconded by Councillor Walsh:

"This Council notes that recent weeks have seen the most serious escalation of violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory since 2014, with a tragic impact on innocent civilians and loss of life, including the deaths of over 60 children, and condemns the indiscriminate targeting of civilian populations and infrastructure and the disproportionate impact which this has had, particularly in the Gaza strip.

The Council recognises that the displacement of Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem and across the West Bank and the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements undermines the prospect of peace, not just in recent weeks but over decades, and represents a flagrant violation of international law.

Therefore, the Council will write to the Local Government Pension Scheme to seek, as part of its responsible investment strategy, that it will begin the process of divesting from any Israeli State owned company or private company involved in the occupation and the violation of Palestinian human rights. This will include any companies listed by the United Nations as operating in these illegal Israeli settlements within the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Council will also ask that NILGOSC carry out its own due diligence into any other companies which are not included on this list but are known to be involved in or with these illegal settlements.

Finally, the Council will ask that the divestment process is time bound to a period of 12 months from when NILGOSC makes those companies involved first aware of the complaint and intention to divest."

The City Solicitor confirmed that a response to the motion has been received from Mr. D. Murphy, the Chief Executive of NILGOSC.

Mr. Murphy had begun by stating that it was NILGOSC's policy not to divest (or invest) for political reasons and that all investment decisions were made on investment grounds. However, fund managers were required to take environmental, social and corporate governance matters into account.

He had pointed out that the NILGOSC pension fund was the largest in Northern Ireland and was valued at £9.79bn at 31st March 2021, with investments being made in a range of asset classes across the world. NILGOSC's overriding obligation was to act in the best interests of the Fund's beneficiaries. In this fiduciary role, NILGOSC believed that environmental, social and corporate governance issues could affect the financial performance of investments. Accordingly, these factors should be taken into account when managing the Fund's assets, subject to the overriding fiduciary duty to maximise the financial return on investments.

He had gone on to explain that NILGOSC had adopted the United Nations Principles of Responsible Investment as a means of publicly demonstrating this approach and that it expected the companies in which it invested to comply with best practice, in terms of corporate governance.

He had added that NILGOSC collaborated with other like-minded investors and groups to engage with companies, industries and countries in which it invested, with the aim of improving levels of corporate governance, where needed.

Mr. Murphy had then stated that NILGOSC delegated the selection of investments held to its fund managers and did not impose any investment restrictions in relation to social, ethical and environmental issues. NILGOSC had instructed its active fund managers to take account of environmental, social and corporate governance considerations, provided the primary financial obligation was not compromised.

He had concluded by stating that NILGOSC ensured that the fund managers whom it appointed were capable of appropriately considering environmental, social and corporate governance issues when making investment choices and that it monitored the managers' action in this area. It worked with the fund managers and the investment sector to ensure that sufficient data was available to aid effective decision-making.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor McLaughlin,
Seconded by Councillor Murphy,

That the Committee agrees to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to invite Mr. Murphy to attend a future meeting in order to discuss NILGOSC's divestment policy and principles in greater detail.

On a vote, twelve Members voted for the proposal and six against and it was declared carried.

Motion - Transfer of Regeneration Powers to Local Authorities – Response from Department for Communities

The Members of the Committee were reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st July, had passed the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor McReynolds and seconded by Councillor Hanvey:

“The economic impact caused by Covid-19 has had a devastating impact on many of our businesses and it is essential that the Council has the necessary powers and funding to support the rebuilding of our local economy.

The new councils formed in 2015 were designed to be larger and more powerful, and since then Belfast City Council has demonstrated its competence and capability. Successfully undertaking planning and local economic development functions and delivering vital services.

One of the key levers that councils were promised, and is now needed, is the power of regeneration. Place shaping is increasingly becoming a critical part of the recovery process, especially in an environment where places will be different and there is a need of local solutions. Obtaining control of regeneration powers will also complement the Local Development Plans and our community planning framework.

In recognition of the consultation on Programme for Government, Investment Strategy and Budget, lobbying by NILGA and other stakeholders, we call on this Council to write to The Executive Office and the Department for Communities calling for the transfer of full regeneration powers and associated resources to local authorities as a matter of priority, as soon as an equality statement is agreed by all councils, to ensure the principle of objective need is central to any use of future powers or resources.”

The City Solicitor informed the Members that the Council has received a response from Mr. C. Donnelly, Director of the Belfast Regeneration Directorate, on behalf of both the Department for Communities and the Executive Office.

Mr. Donnelly had begun by stating that he was aware of the continued calls for the legislation to extend regeneration powers to local government to be reintroduced and that the Minister for Communities had addressed those calls on a number of occasions.

He had then proceeded to set out the Department’s current position on the matter by explaining that the Department for Communities had a range of powers which could be used to take forward physical, economic and social regeneration, including community development activities. The principal powers currently used by the Department to pursue physical regeneration projects were mostly contained within Part VII of the Planning (NI) Order 1991. These provided the legislative basis for progressing development schemes, acquisition, disposal and development of land for planning purposes and the extinguishment of public rights of way over land held for planning purposes. The Department exercised these statutory powers in the public interest in the assembly and vesting of lands for the purpose of comprehensive development schemes and projects. He highlighted the Victoria Square as being one example where the Department worked closely with a preferred developer and had used its vesting powers to acquire the necessary land to enable a Development Scheme to complete.

An alternative provision in the Planning Order 1991 allowed the Department for Communities to acquire land where it was expedient to do so for a purpose which it was necessary to achieve in the interests of the proper planning of an area in which the land is situated. This provided it with scope to vest land in circumstances where it had not prepared a Development Scheme, such as where the use proposed would be consistent with strategic policies and site-specific proposals in the current Area Plan.

Mr. Donnelly had gone on to state that, as part of the Reform of Local Government, certain regeneration responsibilities and the associated resources had been due to transfer from the Department to local government. To give effect to that decision, a draft Regeneration Bill had been prepared, which provided for the powers available to the Department to be conferred on councils to allow them, where necessary, to address issues related to social need and to take forward regeneration within their areas. It provided also for the transfer of functions associated with Laganside to the Council.

The Department for Communities and its immediate predecessor (The Department for Social Development/DSD) had developed proposals to transfer regeneration powers to local councils on a number of occasions, as part of the wider Reform of Public Administration (RPA) and a number of attempts had been made to put the necessary legislation in place (2011, 2015 and 2016). On each occasion, this had not progressed, due to a lack of consensus on the issue. He stated that there had been significant practical difficulties associated with the reintroduction of similar legislation, including the requirement for primary legislation, and that it would not be possible to complete the passage of such legislation in the current Assembly's mandate.

He had pointed out that, since the decision in 2016 not to progress the Regeneration Bill, the Department had been working more closely with councils and this collaboration was working well at present. The relationship had been strengthened further in the response to Covid-19, where the Department had liaised with councils and other stakeholders to develop locally designed recovery plans funded through the Covid-19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme.

Mr. Donnelly had concluded by stressing that the Minister was committed to strengthening this collaboration and focussing even more on partnering, co-design and delivery.

After discussion, the Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the response and agree that the Council should, in future, in responding to consultations relating to regeneration, emphasise the benefits for Belfast of councils being provided with regeneration powers.

Governance

Update on Standards and Business Committee

The Members of the Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of the current position and the decisions which are still required following the Council's decision to establish the Standards and Business Committee.**

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May 2021, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- 1. note the previous decision to establish the Standards and Business Committee and approve the Terms of Reference;**
- 2. note that the City Solicitor/Director of Legal Services will undertake the role of Monitoring Officer;**
- 3. note that the Committee will consist of 20 Members and representation will be based on the Quota Greatest Remainder system;**
- 4. note the allocation of the positions of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson for the remaining 2 years of the Council term;**
- 5. approve the payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance to the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson of the Standards Committee, and approve the proposed reallocation of the SRAs as outlined below;**
- 6. approve the changes to Standing Orders; and**
- 7. note that, following ratification by the Council, the Committee will be established with effect from 1st September, 2021.**

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

3.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the decisions which have been previously agreed and those which are still required to be taken regarding the establishment of the new Standards and Business Committee.

3.2 Members will be aware that the Council, at its meeting on 1st July, ratified the decision to establish the Standards and Business and approved the Terms of Reference. It also approved the new process for Notices of Motion.

3.3 To give effect to those decisions, it was noted that changes would be required to be made to Standing Orders and that a report would be submitted to a meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee indicating the changes required. It would also require agreement that an associated Special Responsibility Allowance be allocated to the

Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson positions of responsibility and funded from the reallocation of the existing Special Responsibility Allowance fund.

Monitoring Officer

- 3.4 The Committee, at its meeting on 20th September, 2020, in considering the proposals in relation to a Standards Committee, agreed to the designation of the City Solicitor into a new 'Monitoring Officer' role responsible for all issues in relation to standards. The City Solicitor will continue to undertake this role in the new Standards and Business Committee.

Representation on the Committee

- 3.5 The Committee will consist of 20 Members. The appointment of Councillors to Committees is made in accordance with Section 13 and Schedule 2 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 "The Act" using the default method, that is, the Quota Greatest Remainder method of proportionality, which allocates places to Parties based on the number of Councillors who stood in the name of the Party when elected using the formula outlined in Schedule 2.
- 3.6 The representation will be as follows:

One-off Quota Greatest Remainder

SF	DUP	ALL	SDLP	GREEN	PBP	UUP	PUP
6	5	3	2	1	1	1	1

Additional Positions of Responsibility

- 3.7 With the establishment of the Standards and Business Committee, there are an additional 4 Positions of Responsibility places to be selected for Years 3 and 4, that is:

Year 3	Year 4
Chairperson	Chairperson
Deputy Chairperson	Deputy Chairperson

- 3.8 These positions are allocated in accordance with Schedule 1 to the Act and using the d'Hondt order of choices. Therefore, these seats will fall to the Alliance, DUP, SF and SDLP Parties, in that order.

Special Responsibility Allowance

- 3.9 The Council pays a Special Responsibility Allowances to those Councillors it considers having 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 and include all the Chairpersons and the Deputy Chairpersons of each of the Council's Standing Committees.
- 3.10 The Department for Communities has set the maximum amount which a Council may pay to Members in respect of Special Responsibility Allowances at £117,774, of which £61,425 is paid to the Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons. At its meeting on 19th March, 2021, the Committee agreed to increase the rates of all SRAs to meet this limit.
- 3.11 Therefore, to enable the payment of additional SRAs to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Standards Committee, it will be necessary to reallocate the amount which each Position of Responsibility receives.
- 3.12 The current and proposed rates, to include the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Standards Committee, are set out below:

Position	Current Allowances	Proposed Allowances
Chairpersons	£6,300	£5,460
Deputy Chairpersons	£3,150	£2,730
Chair BW&UH Cttee	£3,150	£2,730
Dep Chair BW&UH Cttee	£1,575	£1,365
Total	£61,425	£61,425

- 3.13 The Committee is asked to approve the proposed allowances.

Changes to Standing Orders

3.14 As previously indicated, a number of changes to Standing Orders are required to give effect to the Committee. These are as follows:

13. Notices of motion

3.15 **Amendments required to SO 13**

(a) All notices of motion shall be given in writing to the Chief Executive not later than ~~seven~~ **fourteen** days at least before the Council meeting. Such notices shall clearly state the nature of the motion intended to be submitted to the Council and shall bear the names of the proposer and seconder.

(g) If a notice of motion fails to be considered at a meeting of the Council, such notice of motion will only be included on the Summons Paper for the following meeting if submitted in writing to the Chief Executive by the Member concerned not later than ~~seven~~ **fourteen** clear days, at least, before the date of that Council meeting.

3.16 **Additional paragraphs to SO 13**

(m) The Standards and Business Committee will have delegated authority to adopt or reject Notices of Motion. The Lord Mayor will indicate at the Council meeting those Notices of Motion that have been considered by the Standards and Business Committee and whether such Notices of Motion were rejected or adopted. In either case, the proposer only may speak on the issue at Council.

(n) The Standards and Business Committee will refer all Notices of Motion directly to a standing committee when the matter to which the Notice of Motion refers falls within the remit of that committee. At Council, the Lord Mayor will indicate that the Notice of Motion was received and referred. There will be no speakers on such Notices of Motion at Council.

(o) The Standards and Business Committee will refer Notices of Motion for consideration by full Council when the Notice of Motion relates to a strategic or constitutional matter.

- (p) The Standards and Business Committee will not have the power to amend the wording of any Notice of Motion that is being referred to the full Council for debate.
- (q) Any amendments to Notice of Motions to be proposed at the Council are to be furnished at least one day in advance of going to the full Council and will be circulated to Party Group Leaders in advance of the Council meeting.
- (r) In referring any matter to the full Council, the Standards and Business Committee may determine to restrict contributions to the debate in relation to any Notice of Motion to one per political party. At the Council meeting, the Lord Mayor will clearly indicate if the restriction applies.

17. Amendments to be submitted in writing and seconded

Amendment required to SO 17

- 3.17 All notices of motion shall appear on the agenda for the Council meeting. ~~All amendments to amend a notice of motion and~~ Any amendments to Notices of Motion to be proposed at Council are to be furnished at least one day in advance of going to the full Council and will be circulated to Party Group Leaders in advance of the Council meeting.
- 3.18 All amendments to amend a motion that the proceedings of a Committee are approved and adopted shall, where practicable, be submitted to the Lord Mayor in writing by the proposer, and read to the meeting, and such amendment shall not be discussed by anyone other than the proposer until it has been seconded.

36. Standing Committees

Amendment required to SO 36

- 3.19 The following shall be the Standing Committees of the Council:

(h) Standards and Business

37. Duties of Committees

- 3.20 The Standing Committees shall be responsible to the Council for the matters described hereunder and shall control the various Departments which carry out the functions of the Council, that is to say:

(h) Standards and Business Committee

The main functions of the proposed Standards and Business Committee is to promote, sustain and safeguard the conduct of Councillors within the Council; to promote a collaborative working relationship between senior officers and Members; to ensure the probity of all the Council's proceedings; and to review and improve processes in relation to bringing business before the Council

(The Standing Order to include the remit of the Committee as previously agreed by the Council and appended to the report).

Next Steps

- 3.21 If the Committee agrees to the recommendations, then Democratic Services will, prior to the meeting of the Council on 1st September, seek from the Party Leaders the names of those Members being nominated to sit on the Committee and, from the relevant Parties, the names of those Members who will act as Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson in year 3 of the Council Term.**

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.22 As the proposed Special Responsibility Allowances will be paid from a recalculation of the existing SRA budget, there are no additional financial or resource implications related to the above recommendations.**
- 3.23 The Committee will be serviced by existing resources within Democratic Services and Governance and Compliance.**

Equality or Good Relations Implications

- 3.24 There are not any equality or good relations considerations associated with this report."**

After discussion, it was

Moved by The High Sheriff (Councillor Long),
Seconded by Councillor Lyons,

That the Committee agrees to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to reject recommendations 5 and 6 within the report.

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

The Members of the Committee subsequently agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the recommendations contained within the report.

**Review of Active Belfast Limited/Governance
Arrangements – Terms of Reference**

The Members of the Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To present draft terms of reference for a review of Active Belfast Limited and the current tri-partite governance arrangements.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May 2021, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- consider the draft terms of reference set out below; along with the comments submitted by the Active Belfast Limited (ABL) Board,**
- approve the review timeline set out below; and**
- agree that officers proceed with the procurement of an independent consultant to conduct the review.**

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

3.1 The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 20th November, 2020, agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting setting out the terms of reference for a review of the Council’s governance arrangements, in relation to the delivery of its leisure service.

3.2 The Committee noted the motion and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting setting out the terms of reference for a review of the ABL board, including its membership and governance arrangements.

3.3 Work to progress this action has been significantly delayed by the most recent COVID lockdown, however, officers have now had an opportunity to draft Terms of Reference for consideration.

- 3.4 The draft terms of reference set out below were presented to the ABL board on 9th August 2021 for comment. Members of the Board were content with the terms of reference, however, they had suggested that the review takes account of the boards own 2020 – 2025 strategy, as well as some of their other strategic development work (i.e. aquatics strategy). (The minutes of that meeting are being presented separately to the Committee for noting under agenda item 9d.)

Draft Terms of Reference

3.5 **Introduction / Purpose**

Belfast City Council intends to conduct a review of the tri-partite operating model currently in place to govern the delivery of its leisure service with particular reference to the role, membership and governance arrangements of the Active Belfast Ltd (ABL) board.

3.6 Specifically, the objective of the exercise is to:

- 1 Undertake a review of the overall performance of the ABL Board against the Council's original objectives.
- 2 Review the ABL governance arrangements including the board's role in monitoring contract compliance and the performance of the strategic operating partner (GLL).
- 3 Review the level of control delegated to the ABL Board.
- 4 Provide a commentary on the overall status of the partnership and governance, between the three parties to the contract.
- 5 Make recommendations in terms of how governance arrangements could be amended/improved going forward.

3.7 It is recommended that the work undertaken will include the following:

- Review the existing tri-partite contractual arrangements. Any review of contractual arrangements will need to take into consideration input and advice from legal services.
- High level assessment of the ABL governance arrangements including a review of performance.
- Review the membership of the ABL Board.

- Engage with members of the ABL Board for their views – including Council officers, GLL, current Board members and, where possible, previous Board members (up to 3-year period of notification of termination of membership).
- Review the level of added value provided by ABL within the current tri-partite arrangements.
- Consider how contractual and governance arrangements could be improved based on review findings and engagement with Board members.
- Regular progress meetings with, and reports to, the agreed project manager or management team.

Presentation of a final report with recommendations to the Committee.

Expected Outcomes

3.8 Based on the above activities, the following outcomes are expected:

- A report on the membership and governance arrangements of the ABL board.
- An options paper with recommendations for how governance arrangements for the Council's leisure service should operate in the future.

3.9 **Proposed Timeline**

Agree Terms of Reference	CMT Active Belfast Ltd SP and R	June 2021 9th August 2021 20th August 2021
Appointment of independent contractor	CNS	October 2021
Commence review		October/November 2021
Draft report and findings	CMT SP and R Active Belfast Ltd	January/February 2022

Communications and Public Relations

3.10 None.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.11 Funding associated with the review will be resourced from within existing revenue estimates.

Equality or Good Relations Implications

- 3.12 None.”

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the recommendations contained within the report.

National Association of Councillors’ Annual Conference

The Members of the Committee were informed that the National Association of Councillors’ annual conference would this year be held in Carlisle from 1st till 3rd October. The theme for the event would be “The Future for the Regions/Levelling Up” and delegates would examine how the Government’s commitment to levelling up across the whole of the United Kingdom to ensure that no community would be left behind, post Covid-19, would be managed and if it would be affected by the current financial situation.

The City Solicitor pointed out that, in previous years, the Committee had granted authority for any of the eight Members appointed by the Council to the National Association of Councillors (Northern Ireland Region) to attend the conference. The fee per delegate would be £350 and there would be additional travel and accommodation costs.

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve the attendance of any of the eight Members appointed to the National Association of Councillors (Northern Ireland Region) at the conference.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Update on City Region Growth Deal

The Members of the Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 This report is to provide the Committee with an update on the progress of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD), including progress on the development of the Programme Business Case for the Digital Programme and next steps in the establishment of Belfast City Council as the Accountable Body for the deal.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note:

- the development of the deal document, based on the agreed approach to delivery of a phased deal;
- that Belfast City Council will act as the Accountable body for the deal ensuring that decisions are made in accordance with all legal, financial, and administrative requirements;
- the programme overview and the progress that has been made in the Digital Innovation Programme Business Case; and
- the update in respect of the BRCD Council Panel.

3.0 Main Report

Programme Update

3.1 In May, the Committee received a detailed update on progress across the programme and an outline on the development of the deal document. The key components for a phased deal are now well advanced, with Business Cases submitted and being reviewed by NI and UK Governments across the programme. Discussions continue with UK and NI Governments to agree a timeline and process for negotiation and approval of the deal document, in parallel with the formal consideration of Outline Business Cases (OBCs).

3.2 As outlined previously the overarching deal document is supported by both an Implementation Plan and Financial Plan. Following the last update to Members in May work has continued with the NI and UK government departments and the Deal document and both the Implementation and Financial Plans are now well advanced. The BRCD partners are aiming for autumn for these plans to be finalised, allowing the deal to be signed and funding to start to flow to the projects.

3.3 As previously reported the Tourism and Regeneration and Innovation OBCs have been submitted to the relevant Government Departments for formal review. Four of the Innovation OBCs have been approved through Casework and by the Economy Minister and await Department of Finance approval. The remaining Innovation OBC is to be reviewed through Casework in October. Two of the Tourism and Regeneration have Casework dates confirmed for September and Partners are working closely with

Departments to schedule Casework dates for the remaining projects.

- 3.4 The Employability and Skills Proposition for the BRCD has been developed, following a detailed engagement process with partners and key industry stakeholders, with the aim of creating a collaborative model for identifying and providing the skills required for the jobs that are being created through the BRCD programme of investment. It incorporates three core component elements of an Employability and Skills Partnership, a core E and S programme and approach to deliver inclusive growth. Partners continue to work to develop and implement collaborative partnership projects in support of the BRCD objectives.

Digital Innovation Programme Business Case (PBC)

- 3.5 As previously outlined to Members, as part of the Deal, partners led by Belfast City Council have been developing a Programme Business Case (PBC) for the £125m BRCD digital innovation programme, which sets out the strategic areas of intervention under the Digital pillar. The Digital Advisory Board, chaired by the Digital Innovation Commissioner, has overseen the development of this business case which sets out an approach to create an agile, place-based funding environment to help address core societal and regional challenges through digital innovation.
- 3.6 This has been produced in line with HMT Green Book guidance and will enable a long-term and flexible investment programme, which continues to respond to economic and social challenges and opportunities. As with all BRCD projects, specific investments will require full Outline Business Cases in order to receive expenditure approval for significant expenditure.
- 3.7 Utilising BRCD funding, the Digital Innovation programme sets out to establish:
- A £55 million Innovation Challenge Fund designed to help address the regional Grand Challenges of Health and Wellbeing, Artificial Intelligence and Data and Sustainability and Resilience providing potential for competitive grant funding, equity/debt finance and an SBRI-style programme;
 - £40 million investment in Enabling Infrastructure to support the Belfast Smart District and regional connectivity through investment in advanced wireless infrastructure and data infrastructure; and

- £30m investment in Regional Innovation Hubs (including £5m of capital contributions from partner Councils outside Belfast) to ensure diffusion of innovation and skills throughout the region, building further on sub-regional strengths including the creative sector and cleantech.
- 3.8 The PBC has been developed in a highly collaborative way with detailed engagement and input from the Department for Economy, Department of Finance, Invest NI, Innovate UK, and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport as well as with private sector organisations through an Industry Reference Group. Following detailed feedback and engagement from January 2021 until June 2021 the PBC has been updated to address stakeholder views – resulting in an assurance statement from UK Government that it is supportive of the proposals.
- 3.9 Following this, at its June meeting, the Digital Advisory Board recommended that the BRCD Executive Board support formal submission of the PBC to the Department for Economy and UK Government. With the Executive Board agreeing the recommendation the PBC has now been formally submitted with approval expected from NI Government in the coming weeks.
- 3.10 In parallel with development of the PBC, a Digital strategic narrative has also been advanced, as per the attached appendix, and will provide a strong communications tool for both the Digital Pillar and the overall Programme.

Next Steps – Establishment of BRCD Accountable Body

- 3.11 Members will be aware that Belfast City Council is the Lead Authority for the BRCD, which means it carries out a range of functions that support and enable regional partnership working, such as employing the Programme Management Office and providing administrative, professional and technical support as required to support the Deal.
- 3.12 When the final deal document is signed, Belfast City Council will also be the Accountable body for the deal ensuring that the partnership makes decisions in accordance with all legal, financial, and administrative requirements.
- 3.13 The main role of the accountable body is to:

- Ensure that BRCD funds remain identifiable from Belfast City Council's own finances and are released and used appropriately and in accordance with the funding terms and conditions;
 - Put in place all financial and budget management arrangements and processes to ensure the BRCD funding is managed and accounted for. This will be through Belfast City Council's financial systems and subject to the Council's Financial Regulations
 - Establish appropriate accounting and reporting arrangements in line with the requirements set out in the letter of offer, financial plan and financial agreement
 - Prepare set of annual accounts
 - Provide appropriate internal audit services;
- 3.14 All grant funding for BRCD from the relevant NI government department will flow to the council, with the exception of projects delivered directly by NI departments (DfI) and the Council will then distribute the funding to the BRCD partners.
- 3.15 The Council is now working with the Department of Finance to agree funding flow and governance arrangements including the development of letters of offer, processes for the drawdown of money and reporting and monitoring requirements.
- 3.16 Over the coming weeks, officers from the BRCD team, finance and legal services will also work to ensure appropriate internal processes and procedures are put in place to allow the organisation to carry out the functions of the Accountable body as set out above.

BRCD Council Panel

- 3.17 Members will be aware that the BRCD Council Panel provides a forum for members from all six partner councils to meet to jointly discuss issues, progress and benefits of the BRCD. Each council is represented on the Forum by four members and, as previously agreed by this Committee, the four BCC nominees are the party group leaders (or their nominees) from the four largest parties.
- 3.18 Members received an update on the last Council Panel meeting in May and are asked to note that the next Council Panel meeting will be hosted by Belfast City Council on Wednesday 29th September.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.19 All costs associated with the BRCD are within existing budgets.

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

- 3.20 The approach taken to develop the City Deal has been subject to independent equality screening and rural proofing and states that;

'BRCD is inherently inclusive, affording an opportunity for the region to grow in a way that will benefit the economy of Northern Ireland as a whole, thereby enhancing the lives and well-being of its citizens. If during further development of the programme it becomes apparent that there may be an adverse impact on certain groups or communities then the partnership commits to carrying out further Section 75 work and including screening and EQIAs as and when appropriate.'

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the report.

Supporting Belfast's Digital Innovation Ambition

The Members of the Committee considered the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 To outline proposals for a Belfast Digital Innovation framework that seeks to unlock the power of digital innovation to support the city in its post-Covid recovery and longer-term plans. The framework will seek to maximise the combined impact of a series of planned initiatives and investments on the social, economic and environmental challenges facing the city over the next decade. Members are asked to approve the approach and agree to a number of temporary roles to support the work.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- 1. note the works strands on digital innovation in the city;**
- 2. approve the recruitment of four temporary roles (three years) to support the further development of this work (an Advanced Wireless Infrastructure – Innovation Broker, Smart District Innovation Broker and two Innovation Challenge Fund managers);**
- 3. note the rationale for a Belfast digital innovation framework and agree that proposals will be brought to the September Committee meeting; and**
- 4. note that Mr. Mark Gillan has been appointed (via SIB) as the Interim Belfast Digital Innovation Commissioner to replace Jayne Brady who will take up her new role as Head of the Civil Service on 1st September.**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Over the past four years, the Council has been working with key institutions to develop a shared understanding of the importance of digital innovation to the future of the city and, more recently, seeking to build a common city level approach to maximise the opportunity that digital innovation represents in the post-Covid world.

3.2 This work began in 2017 with the Council's Smart Belfast programme developed in partnership with one of the UK Government's Catapults and local partners. Smart Belfast, which is managed by the Council's City Innovation team, has delivered a range of successful projects with industry, SMEs and our universities. Its core approach has been to clearly define shared urban 'challenges' and then create opportunities for business, academia and the public sector to collaborate and co-invest in developing innovative digital solutions, while at the same time generating opportunities for our local SMEs to develop ideas for new products and services. Over its life span Smart Belfast has delivered a diverse range of projects and attracted significant investments for the city and has been showcased at both a national and international level.

3.3 Earlier this year, the establishment of a new strategic partnership, Innovation City Belfast (ICB), which brings together the senior teams at Queen's University, Ulster University, Belfast Harbour, Invest NI and Catalyt, (has

significantly increased the City's ambition in utilising digital innovation to transform our economy and tackle major societal challenges). The partnership is supported by the Digital Innovation Commissioner and a number of other jointly funded staff, along with the Council's City Innovation team.

- 3.4 ICB is committed to nurturing an urban environment in which industry, academia and the public sector can collaborate on urban challenges such as climate change, technological disruption and the health of our communities. The Covid-19 crisis has not only amplified these challenges and opportunities but has greatly accelerated the time scales against which they need to be addressed.
- 3.5 The Partnership has agreed to prioritise three interconnected place-based projects that will have a significant impact on our city and its economy across three geographical areas:
1. The Innovation District - a 400 acre area along Queen's Island and reaching over to the Ulster University Campus. This location act as a 'digital innovation economy multiplier' - an inclusive, mixed-use urban environment for research, innovation, entrepreneurialism and investment. ICB has recently appointed an Innovation District Programme Director (Clare Guinness) to take forward the phase 1 development of this district.
 2. The Smart Port - With substantial investments in infrastructure and digital technologies, Belfast Harbour aims to become a Smart Port and Green Port, setting Belfast on the global stage with one of the world's best regional ports.
 3. The Smart District – Mapping closely to the boundaries of the city centre, the Smart District will be the location where new digital and data technologies can be tested, trialled, scaled and deployed in a real urban setting. The concept is to encourage partners to work together to remove unnecessary barriers and bureaucracies, to create the supporting conditions in which communities, researchers, SMEs, innovators and public sector bodies can co-develop world-first novel solutions to real-world challenges. The Smart District's emphasis will be on bringing world-class innovation to bear on the critical priorities for our city, particularly those articulated in the city's Bolder Vision for the city centre and in our Climate Plan.
- 3.6 Within these districts, challenge-owners will have access to world-class connectivity, physical assets, data platforms, challenge funding, collaborative partnerships, and operate in a supportive sandbox environment in which new ideas can be explored. To further stimulate innovation, we will develop a challenge programme that will incentivise local

businesses and academia to collaborate with us on societal challenges to help transform the local economy. As the Districts grow they will become the showcase for the city's innovation ambition and become attractors for co-investment and funding.

- 3.7 To take forward the key elements of the work described above four three-year contracts are required:

Smart District Innovation Broker – This role will provide a programme approach to the development of the various strands of work within the smart district. This includes aligned of the co-creation and co design of the Smart Healthy Neighbourhood, Smart Mobility and Smart Energy projects as well as developing co-investment opportunities and leading bids to government funding schemes. The broker will also work to maximise the impact of Belfast Region City Deal digital and innovation investments on the city.

Advanced Wireless Infrastructure - Project Broker. This role will focus deployment of advanced wireless networks across the Districts and lead the development of a £30 million business case for submission to the Belfast Region City Deal Infrastructure Enabling Fund. The post holder will work with the mobile industry, city asset owners, and end-users to take forward the business case, and to establish a delivery vehicle to ensure that Belfast has world-class connectivity early in this decade.

Challenge Funds Managers (x2) – These roles will lead the development of challenges programmes and the business cases for drawdown from the £50 million Belfast Region City Deal. They will develop models for managing funds; lead the business case development; take recommendations and business cases through Council and the City Deal governance processes; and if successful in obtaining funds, initiate programmes to support delivery of the programmes.

Connected Places Catapult's Homes for Health Ageing

- 3.8 An early example of the 'attractor' role that the smart district is playing, even in its early stages, is Belfast's recent success in bidding to the Connected Places Catapult's Homes for Health Ageing programme. This £2.5 million programme will support a small number of innovative 'testbeds' that seek understand how scientists, engineers, and public policy leads can work more effectively with communities to develop technologies in the real-world setting of homes and neighbourhoods. In choosing our region, the Catapult was impressed with city's wider digital ambition and our long term plans for the smart district in particular.

- 3.9 A Northern Ireland consortium made up of Age NI, Belfast City Council, Connected Health Innovation Centre (CHIC), Market Development Association (MDA), Public Health Agency NI, Queen's University Belfast, The Health Innovation Research Alliance (HIRANI) and Ulster University is one of two UK partners selected for the programme, and has secured £50,000 for an initial scoping phase. Over the next two years, the NI consortium will explore and testbed innovative technologies to support people live longer in their homes and enjoy healthy, active lives as they age.**

Towards a new Belfast Digital Innovation ambition

- 3.10 As Members will note, the development of the Smart Belfast framework, the digital ambition of the Innovation City Belfast and the investments opportunities available within the Belfast Region City Deal, all took place in a pre-Covid policy environment. In the subsequent 16 months, the wider strategic environment has changed dramatically. The Covid crisis has both accelerated and highlighted a wide range of economic and urban policy issues facing the city. These range from the impact on the city's already underperforming economy, its impact on the future nature of the high street, through to Covid's implications for our approach to higher density urban living and travel modes.**
- 3.11 Alongside this, a number of major policy pieces have been produced that have brought greater clarity to the city' challenges – including the Resilience Strategy, the Belfast climate plan, and the draft Bolder Vision for the city centre. And, at a regional and national level, the new 10X vision for the economy and the UK Innovation strategy, both have implications for our approach to digital innovation.**
- 3.12 The new Digital Innovation Framework for Belfast will bring together the cities ambition and priorities for digital innovation and re-frame the Council's and the city's approach in the light of these new partnership initiatives and policy priorities. In particular, the revised framework would seek to ensure that the city maximises the positive impact of the planned Digital investments under City Deal to ensure they reflect the new priorities for the city.**
- 3.13 Members are asked to note that this framework will be co-designed with Members and stakeholders over the coming four months – with initial proposals presented at the September Committee meeting.**

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.14 Funding for the three (three-year) roles has already been identified within existing budgets, as follows:

Smart District Innovation Broker – Smart Cities Budget
Advanced Wireless Post – the Council’s BRCD budget
Challenge Fund Managers (x2) – the Council’s BRCD budget

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

- 3.15 None.”

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the recommendations contained within the report.

**Belfast Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission
‘Reset for Growth Report’ - Council Response**

The Members of the Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 To update Members on the final recommendations stemming from within the Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission, ‘Reset for Growth’ report and consider the Council’s response.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:
- i. note the [Reset for Growth report](#) and its recommendations;
 - ii. endorse the ‘Reset for Growth’ report;
 - iii. note the associated implementation plan; and
 - iv. note the proposed expenditure of £25,000 from existing departmental provision for research to assist with the implementation of the Commission’s recommendations.

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1** The Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission was set up to support the Council and city partners in the further development and implementation of the priorities as set out in the Belfast Agenda. A particular focus has been given to the priorities of (1) growing the economy and (2) city development. The Commission will seek to deliver the core objective of inclusive growth.
- 3.2** Regular reports on the work of the Commission have been brought to this Committee and to party group leaders, with Members regularly attending meetings of the Commission.
- 3.3** The Commission is made up of Independent, Authoritative, and knowledgeable voices from a range of relevant backgrounds. Brought together to develop constructive, deliverable and challenging proposals that are focused on delivering radical change to Belfast and Northern Ireland's long-standing challenges in areas including:
- Lack of productivity
 - Economic inactivity
 - High levels of deprivation, and
 - Poor health
- 3.4** The commission is unique in that its independent and is viewing these challenges in the round, recognising the interrelated nature of the causes and effects.
- 3.5** It was initially envisaged that the Commission would be convened for one year. However, as COVID-19 took hold the Commissioners thought it was appropriate that it considered how it could be used as a potential recovery mechanism.
- 3.6** Commissioners seen the significant impact of the pandemic in terms of:
- Increasing unemployment,
 - Increasing deprivation and social isolation, and
 - accelerating decline in some critical industries, such as retail, tourism and hospitality and noted that Belfast and Northern Ireland's prolonged structural weaknesses mean these impacts are likely to be concentrated and longer lasting.
- 3.7** Because of the impacts of Covid-19, and the presence of some strategic funding opportunities including Levelling UP, the Comprehensive Spending review and the Belfast Region City Deal. The Commissioners concluded that Belfast and Northern Ireland stood at an inflexion point. A point where if the long running structural weaknesses were not addressed

it is likely that the standard of living for the people of Belfast and Northern Ireland could be eroded further.

- 3.8 The Reset for Growth report was launched by the Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission on 28th June 2021.
- 3.9 The report focused on five areas that were informed by Belfast and Northern Ireland's structural weaknesses. These proposals are aimed at delivering the Commission's overarching aim of: *'An inclusive sustainable, open and resilient city economy that functions effectively and provides good employment opportunities for its residents and others'*
- 3.10 Under each of these strands were a series of ambitious proposals that recognised some of the underpinning challenges that have contributed to the structural weaknesses. These areas of focus, the proposals and the underpinning rationale are listed below.

Renewed Future City

- More than 8,000 households in housing stress
- Lack of residential development in Belfast with only 3,700 units completed in the last five years
- Lack of city centre population
- Target of 11,500 sustainable homes to be built in 10 years, creating new sustainable communities

Sustainable Future

- Belfast will use up its carbon budget by 2030
- Reliance on fossil fuels exposes our most vulnerable communities to high levels of population and energy price volatility resulting in 1 in 6 families in Belfast living in fuel poverty
- Implement a carbon reduction programme in the city to reduce carbon emissions by 66 % by 2025
- To do this commence delivery of housing retrofit programme that will impact on our emissions and provide inclusive jobs
- To ensure that Belfast and Northern Ireland businesses and residents benefit from the economic opportunity of the transition to net zero, provide funding and a strategy for developing green businesses and jobs

Intelligent Future

- Current levels of investment are £300m less annually than other UK regions
- Lack of digital catapult
- Despite this strong performance in attracting FDI
- For every £1 of public money invested in R & D and return on investment of £7
- Secure the commitment to a digital catapult and £300m of annual ringfenced R and D funding

Global Belfast

- Strong FDI record
- Strong networks globally
- Diaspora
- Existing relationships Boston & China
- Maximise unique opportunities from Northern Ireland's unrestricted access to two markets and regulatory environments by growing the share of exports as percentage of GDP from the current level of 23% to 50% by 2025, similar to comparable economies.
- Develop and agree with partners a city to city trade and investment strategic action plan by 2022.

Inclusive Futures

- Changes in labour market
- Displacement as a result of Covid – 19
- Lack of skills in critical areas
- Growth in green and digital sectors
- Create a comprehensive programme of inclusive pathways to new growth areas

3.11 The proposals above do not recognise all of the recommendations contained in the report, each of the core proposals articulated above are supported by a range of steps to accelerate the delivery of these ambitious goals. The Commission also identified several foundation pillars which are listed below.

- Investment in education and skills to drive attainment and address economic imbalances and deprivation, and power economic growth and innovation
- Place-based multi-annual financing model supported by a more agile and risk-based approach to decision making
- Pursuing an inclusive growth agenda to ensure that economic benefits and success accrue to all residents

3.12 These recommendations are closely aligned to several council policies and current initiatives, including:

- Bolder Vision
- SSA/Housing Regeneration
- City Centre Living
- BCRIS
- City Imagining Strategy
- The Belfast Resilience Strategy

3.13 Given this alignment officers would recommend the formal endorsement of the recommendations contained within the Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission report, 'Reset for Growth'.

Next Steps

3.14 Commission members were acutely aware that their proposals are far-reaching and involve system-wide change. They recognised that, while their proposals are borne of their collective experiences in other cities and places, they also recognise they cannot simply be transplanted into Belfast. For that reason, the Commission have suggested that implementation is co-ordinated through lead departments and agencies. These lead departments and agencies will convene small groups of senior officials and stakeholders to bring forward these proposals. In terms of governance regular updates on progress will be of course brought back to the Committee.

3.15 During the implementation phase there is a need to undertake research to develop work programmes related to implementation. This work as a value of £25,000 and would be drawn from the existing Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission budget. The work involved includes:

- Developing projects and policies to deliver the Innovation City Belfast ambitions specifically around ensuring jobs in growth sectors are inclusive and open to all residents of Belfast.
- Assessing the economic, environmental and social benefits associated with the delivery of the IIGC's recommendations.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.16 Note the £25,000 funding request for research into the implementation of the 'Reset for Growth' report drawn from existing departmental budgets. This funding will be combined with partner contributions. This research will be used to educate departmental engagement and submissions.

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

3.17 There are no equality or good relations requirements related to this activity.”

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the recommendations contained within the report.

**Invitation to Inclusive Growth Network Annual
Political Leaders’ Meeting - Building Back
Places Towards a Green, Inclusive Recovery**

The Chief Executive informed the Members that the Inclusive Growth Network had been established in 2020, with a view to using shared intelligence, learning and experience to develop and test ideas for local interventions to tackle inequalities, alleviate poverty and improve productivity. The Network, which was hosted by the Centre for Progressive Policy, consisted of twelve councils and combined authorities from across the United Kingdom, including Belfast, leading the drive for inclusive local economies.

She reported that the Lord Mayor had received an invitation from the Network to attend this year’s Political Leaders’ Meeting, which would be based around the theme “Building Back Places: Towards a Green, Inclusive Recovery. However, given the relevance of the subject matter, it had been decided that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee should nominate a Member to attend. The event would be taking place via Zoom on either 14th or 15th September, depending upon the availability of those attending, and would, amongst other things, explore how the Network could facilitate the Council’s inclusive growth priorities in year two.

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve the attendance at the event of the Chairperson or the Deputy Chairperson (or their nominee).

**Consultation on draft Skills Strategy for
Northern Ireland – Council Response**

The Members of the Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the Committee with a draft response to the consultation on the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland – Skills for a 10x Economy. Subject to Council endorsement, this will be submitted to the Department for the Economy as the Council’s contribution to the consultation.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- **approve the attached response to the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland consultation for submission to the Department for Economy.**
- **given the deadline for submission of responses by 20th August (extended for the Council until 26th August), the Committee is asked to give delegated authority to officers to submit the agreed response before the deadline, with the proviso that it is subject to Council ratification on 1st September.**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 The Department for Economy (DfE) recently launched a consultation paper on the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland – Skills for a 10x Economy. The Department has asked for views on how the challenge of building a world-class skills system is to be met. This Strategy sets direction for the development of a flexible skills system for the next decade, in line with DfE’s 10x economic vision. It aims to align the skills system to better jobs and better wages across the economy. There is an overarching focus on creating a skills framework which can drive economic prosperity and tackle social inequality.

3.2 The Skills Strategy recommendations have been informed by preliminary work undertaken last year by the OECD. There has also been some stakeholder engagement through a Programme Board (including local government representation through Belfast City Council’s Chief Executive), as well as further data input through UUEPC’s NI Skills Barometer.

3.3 The draft strategy includes three broad objectives. These are:

- **Addressing skills imbalances, driving economic growth**
- **Creating a culture of lifelong learning**
- **Enhancing digital skills – developing a digital spine.**

3.4 It also contains three strategic “enablers” which will support the delivery of the strategy:

- **Enhancing policy cohesion**

- **Building strong relationships**
- **Investment in the skills system.**

3.5 Some of the key areas of challenge identified through the supporting research include:

- **Graduate and post-graduate levels: the overall number of qualifications produced in Northern Ireland is broadly in accordance with anticipated demand, but there is a need to rebalance the type of qualifications delivered towards STEM, with corresponding reductions in subjects more typically aligned to work in the public sector;**
- **Participation in lifelong learning: The Strategy sets a framework and objectives for the NI skills system to 2030. As 80% of the 2030 workforce will have already completed compulsory education, the education system needs to adapt to lifelong learning to adapt to a rapidly changing economy. OECD research suggests adults in OECD countries spend, on average, 30% more time in adult education than individuals here. As the skills demands of the labour market continue to grow, there is a risk that too many people are left behind, deepening inequalities even further;**
- **There is significant under-supply of level 3-5 qualifications (above GCSE and equivalent and below degree level). DfE assert that qualifications at this level will be vital in adapting to new technologies, driving economic growth and providing better jobs for more people. The Skills Barometer shows that too many people in the workforce have qualifications at level two or below. Jobs at this level are diminishing and, exasperated by Covid 19, low skilled individuals are more exposed to economic shocks and face challenges from automation;**
- **Enhancing digital skills: At the highest level, advanced digital skills are essential to develop the digital sector and key strategic clusters Digital, ICT and Creative Industries, Cyber Security, Agri-Food, Fintech/Financial Services, Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering and Life and Health Sciences (e.g. Digital Medicine) – all of which are essential to drive the necessary productivity and competitiveness improvements that the city needs to address. However, the Strategy recognises that, as the economy and workplaces become increasingly digitised, digital skills will be required across the board – at all skills levels.**

- 3.6 In order to address the challenges and deliver on the 10x growth ambitions, a series of costed interventions has been incorporated in the Strategy. Key proposed activities include:
- Lifelong learning project and action plan
 - A Flexible Skills Fund
 - Public sector and all age apprenticeships
 - Overhaul of Careers Guidance (for young people)
 - Publication of Work Quality Indicators
 - Skills Action Plans to support priority clusters
 - Review of Level 4/5 HE provision in FE
 - Further Skills and Innovation research.
- 3.7 Members will be aware of the Council's work with the Department for Communities (DfC) in developing Belfast Inclusive Labour Market Partnership (LMP). The purpose of the LMP is to make employability and skills interventions more effective and support an inclusive approach to growth in the city. It aims to bring together, in a single body, the necessary local knowledge and expertise to build on existing structures and identify priority interventions within employability and skills that will:
- Enhance the effectiveness of current interventions
 - Highlight specific areas of challenge that risk inhibiting the city's ability to develop in a way that is inclusive and ambitious and that supports our growth ambitions
 - Be informed by data and insights – and guided by local knowledge of “what works”
 - Enable testing at scale to be able to make a measurable impact on jobs and employment in the city.
- 3.8 Labour Market Partnerships form part of the local governance structure associated with a new approach to employability issues across government – called Employability NI. While DfC is the lead department, DfE is directly engaged in the work of the Labour Market Partnerships and the partnerships are directly referenced in the draft strategy as being critical vehicles for coordination and prioritisation of local employability interventions. Other relevant areas of work that are important considerations for the outworking of the skills strategy include the work of Innovation City Belfast (ICB) – and the need to ensure an appropriate supply of skilled labour to meet future growth prospects. ICB has also identified the importance of taking an inclusive approach to innovation, including in the approach to skills development. This will require the development of new routes into growth sectors, rather than relying on existing models that are largely based on university access.

3.9 It is recommended that the Council's response, as set out in the attached appendix, be submitted to DfE, subject to Council ratification. The response is structured in line with the consultation document issued by DfE. Some of the key points of the response include:

- Agreement with the overarching strategic direction aligned to the Programme for Government and 10x ambitions. There is a commitment to fully resourcing the Labour Market Partnerships and an ambition for greater engagement and – potentially – devolution of responsibility, at an appropriate point;
- Recommendation that Labour Market Partnerships are utilised as the sub-regional skills structures within the strategy as outlined in the consultation document;
- Proposal that the Strategy should not only concentrate on providing access to better jobs, but also support people who may require additional assistance in getting a first foot on the employment ladder, and helping others to build the confidence and skills to obtain a better job. This will require – among other things – a fit-for-purpose independent careers advice and guidance service is needed for adults as well as young people to ensure inequality is tackled and the skills gaps are addressed. This has also emerged as a priority area of work within the Labour Market Partnership;
- Recognition of the important role played by the VCSE sector in engaging with those who are further back in the labour market, those with lower attainment levels, those experiencing in-work poverty etc
- Recommendation that intelligence from the proposed Labour Market Observatory, within Belfast's LMP proposals (and likely to emerge within most Labour Market Partnerships), should be used in tandem with the Skills Barometer to inform decision making and allocate appropriate resources
- Recognition of the challenges in attracting and retaining workers across a range of sectors such as transport and logistics (all driving occupations), hospitality, social care etc. Initiatives therefore need to be agile to meet immediate skills shortages at level three and below. The Council's Employment Academy model has been successful to date: with 4 in 5 participants finding a job at the end of the intervention. Models such as this need to be flexed and scaled up to address sectoral demand

- Identification of curriculum gaps at all levels across a range of new and emerging job areas in the green economy. In our view, this sector has not received sufficient profile in the draft Strategy. Without sufficient provision at all levels, there is a risk that we will not fully embrace the opportunities that will be created by the green economy
- The Strategy document states that some sectors such as hospitality, social care etc. have a reputation of not providing 'better quality jobs', however there is a work to be done to support these sectors to tackle this. Business and employers are needed as partners in skill provision. To this end, we welcome the 'better job pledge' as quality of work is important, together with security, wages, contracted hours, progression potential and better protection against precarious employment. We recommend that the Inclusive Growth City Charter (Belfast Business Promise) being developed by the Council is utilised as the basis for developing this 'better jobs pledge'
- Given that the volume of replacement demand will significantly outnumber new job creation over the next ten years, it is important that skills interventions are open to employers across all skills areas – not just priority growth sectors. This will be particularly important in areas such as logistics, hospitality and social care.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.10 No specific financial or resource implications associated with this strategy.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.11 There are no equality implications in relation to our draft response.”

Belfast City Council's Response to the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland Skills for a 10x Economy - DRAFT

The Skills Strategy was considered by the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 20 August with the enclosed corporate response agreed. This response remains subject to ratification by Full Council on 1st September 2021 and we will inform you at that stage if there are any changes made.

1. ***Are you content with the overarching strategic direction set out in the section The Programme for Government, our Economic Vision (a 10x Economy) and the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland:***

“the Skills Strategy must be directly aligned to the PfG aim of improving wellbeing for all by supporting efforts to tackle inequalities, providing low skilled, low paid, or unemployed individuals with the opportunities they need to work in ‘better jobs’, whilst concurrently focusing on provision of the skills and qualifications needed to drive economic growth and competitiveness in the sectors where Northern Ireland has real global potential.”

The Council agrees with the overarching strategic direction aligned to the Programme for Government. In particular, the focus on lifelong learning is welcomed to ensure that no one is left behind in terms of skills provision in NI. However, to ensure this is met in practice, independent and fit-for-purpose careers advice and guidance is needed – both for young people and for adults - to ensure inequality is tackled and the skills gaps are redressed. Independent careers/skills advice and guidance is needed to shape aspirations and to create skills pathways that support outcomes for individuals (better jobs) but also increasing talent pool for our economy.

As documented in the Council’s response to the Executive on the PfG Outcomes Framework relating to Skills and Employability,¹ the Council calls for further devolution of employability and skills functions – such as those provided by Employability NI and the creation of the Labour Market Partnerships – to increase the effectiveness of interventions and improve outcomes for Belfast residents.

It is recommended that the Labour Market Partnership structures that have been established in each council area are designated as the subregional structures proposed within the Strategy. This will ensure that both Employability and Skills are aligned using a place-based approach.

The Council would wish to explore how we can work with partners to use and intelligence-driven and evidence-based approach to enhance the effectiveness of the planning work around future skills needs and training provision to meet these needs with the objective of supporting inclusive economic growth. To do this, the Council intends to establish a Labour Market Observatory for Belfast – bringing together data and intelligence both in terms of supply and demand, and we understand that other councils are exploring similar approaches. We recommend that these insights are shared across partners and utilised to inform the design of interventions that are agile, optimise outcomes (jobs, education, training) and ensure alignment between labour market demand and skills. To do this effectively, the Council recommends that better data sharing among central government departments and the council is required (in compliance with GDPR and Data Protection legislation).

¹ <https://minutes.belfastcity.gov.uk/documents/s90483/Programme%20for%20Government%20Outcomes%20Framework%20-%20Draft%20consultation%20Response.pdf> and <https://minutes.belfastcity.gov.uk/documents/s90485/Appendix%20-%20Draft%20Council%20Response%20to%20PfG%20Outcomes%20Framework.pdf>

In Belfast, the work of Innovation City Belfast will be critical in shaping and directing the skills interventions required to meet the growing demand in the sector. Significant investments such as the City Deal will create opportunities that can enhance competitiveness and productivity levels. These will necessitate commensurate levels of investment in skills in order to ensure that there is a sufficient and appropriate supply of skilled workers.

As the planning authority, the city Council is now in receipt of significant intelligence regarding future employment opportunities at key developments. The Council would wish to explore how we can work with partners to use this information to plan better around skills needs and training provision to meet these needs with the objective of supporting inclusive economic growth.

The Strategy should not only concentrate on providing access to better jobs, but also support people who may require additional assistance in getting a first foot on the employment ladder and have the confidence, skills and career path created to obtain a better job. Quality of work is important, together with security, wages, contracted hours, progression potential and better protection for unstable work.

2. Do you agree with the need to rationalise the skills landscape by limiting the number of strategies governing separate parts of the skills system, instead focusing on a single, overarching, Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland (see page 40-41)?

The Council agrees with the need to rationalise the skills landscape. We propose that DfE works closely with the Labour Market Partnerships to do this, creating an overarching framework for Employability & Skills that works to actively reduce skills mismatches by ensuring that provision is directly matched to intelligence-driven demand. In our view, employability and skills should be closely aligned.

3. Have you any other comments on the Strategic Context Chapter?

In reference to the over-provision up to Level One qualifications, the Council agrees there is over provision at that level and below. However, Level One and below needs to be provided to allow foundational skills to be built. The role of local provision to engage those who are further back in the labour market also needs to be addressed and the role of the VCSE sector is crucial in doing the outreach amination and engagement within local communities needed to create a skills pipeline that meets employer needs. The challenge is to build transparent and coherent pathways from level one towards higher skills levels or towards other vocational pathways, rather than them necessarily being an end in themselves.

4. Acknowledging the need for the development of 'SMART' targets, do you agree that the skills supply gap identified under the Skills Barometer's high growth scenario should be placed at the centre of the proposed Strategy (see page 43)?

The Council broadly agrees that the skills supply gap identified under the NI Skills Barometer's high growth scenario should be placed at the centre of the proposed Strategy. Belfast's Skills Barometer is in line with the gaps identified at levels three to five. However, the NI Skills Barometer needs to be supplemented to capture real-time market intelligence on labour supply and demand: this volatility has been highlighted by the effects of COVID-19. A greater focus on 'highly skilled' workers should not overshadow acute labour shortages which are threatening the sustainability and survival of businesses across many sectors. The Council recommends that intelligence from the proposed Labour Market Observatory, within Belfast's LMP proposals, should be used in tandem with the Barometer to inform decision-making and allocate appropriate resources.

In addition:

- The Skills Barometer is an invaluable data source to guide the focus of the strategy however, it would be beneficial to see focus on not just higher skills levels such as the 4 cluster areas proposed but also on skills needed for a strong regional economy including health and social care; the skills gaps created by the demand for 'replacement jobs' in sectors such as logistics and transport; and emerging skills demand such as the green economy (transport and retrofitting).
- There are challenges in attracting and retaining workers being reported by employers and representative bodies across a range of sectors such as transport and logistics (all driving occupations), hospitality, social care etc. Some sectors are directly linking labour shortages to EU exit. Other issues such as a "fear of further lockdowns" also means that workers who are currently furloughed are anxious about returning to work in specific sectors while many others have left the sector for other types of work meaning many businesses are now facing into staff shortages as the economy begins to open up again. Initiatives therefore need to be agile to meet immediate skills shortages at level three and below. The success rate of the Council's Employment Academy model in helping people access jobs or better jobs sits at 79% although further resources to address skills gaps in an agile way will be required to address sectoral demand.
- There is currently a lack of a skills development curriculum for new and emerging jobs in the green economy across all education and skills providers in NI. The green economy and related skills are largely overlooked in the strategy and, as a key growth area, it would be beneficial for a great emphasis on curriculum development and provision for new and emerging sectors if we want to future-proof the strategy. Without a proper curriculum (at all levels) it will be difficult to give local people the right skills to embrace the opportunities that will be created by the green economy
- The Strategy document states that some sectors such as hospitality, social care etc. have a reputation of not providing 'better quality jobs', however there is a work to be done to support these sectors to tackle this. Business and employers are key partners in employability and skills provision. To this end, the Council welcomes the 'better job pledge' as quality of work is important, together with security, wages, contracted hours, progression potential and better protection against precarious employment. We

recommend that the Inclusive Growth City Charter (Belfast Business Promise) being developed by the Council is utilised as the basis for developing this 'better jobs pledge' and are happy to share this information

- The Skills Strategy should provide support to ensure better jobs across all sectors – not just higher growth sectors – recognising the need to support 'replacement jobs' which experience significant skills mismatches such as logistics and driving occupations
- Although the Strategy document specifically recognises the under-provision of skills level between level two to five, the sectors identified tend to need at least level four qualifications as an entry level. There is a lack of support for the sectors that employ those with qualification level two to five, for example logistics, administration and care sectors. In addition, given the recruitment challenges in some of the high growth sectors, it is important that work is undertaken with employers to look at new and alternative entry pathways, as a means of securing the labour market supply for the future
- The NI Skills Barometer will also benefit from DfE's policy Objective 11, on page 96 regarding investment in the development of a consolidated portal, providing open access to information on current and forecast labour market skill needs and applicable study/work opportunities.

5. Are you content that the proposals contained in pages 43 - 56 provide an ambitious and comprehensive approach to 'Addressing Skills Imbalance, Driving Economic Growth'?

No	Proposal	Page	Belfast City Council Response
1	We will examine the potential to mainstream remote learning provision in key areas of essential skills, employability skills and digital skills for individuals and employers.	50	We welcome this approach
2	DfE will work directly with DfC to support collaborative approaches between local and central government to develop the education and training provision required to underpin both the Skills Strategy and the 'Employability NI' Strategy.	52	We strongly welcome this approach
3	The outcomes from the 'Transition of Young People into Careers (14 – 19) Project', jointly led by DE and DfE will be recognised within the new Skills Strategy.	53	The Council welcomes the commitment to develop and introduce new measures on careers guidance outcomes for young people. However, the service should align and join up with an overall career service encompassing young people and adults and the proposal under Point

			<p>13 on 'Preparing for Success'. Under Belfast's LMP, the Council is proposing a "Gateway" service to provide residents with timely advice and guidance to help them find work or upskill.</p>
4	<p>DfE will review how it collects information on the destination and outcomes for FE College leavers, to improve evidence on long-term outcomes for FE qualifiers.</p>	54	<p>The Council welcomes this approach and would encourage DfE to share this information as part of their engagement with Local Labour Market Partnerships in order to improve outcomes for participants and inform the content of new interventions.</p>
5	<p>We will ensure that Northern Ireland's Further Education sector has the resource and capability to deliver its dual objectives of providing essential, entry level pathways to education and professional and technical skills, to support economic and social prosperity.</p>	55	<p>The Council welcomes this approach. However, we also acknowledge the key role played by the VCSE sector, particularly in engaging those who are further back in the labour market, those with lower attainment levels and those experiencing in-work poverty etc. We consider that there is an opportunity for the development of local models whereby the VCSE engages in the essential outreach and early engagement work and is supported by FE and other providers to ensure alignment with vocational and employment demand.</p>
6	<p>A review of level 4 and 5 'HE in FE' education will be conducted. Recommendations and actions arising from the review will be incorporated in the implementation of the Skills Strategy</p>	55	<p>We welcome this approach in order to ensure appropriate levels of supply for future economic growth, particularly in key growth areas.</p>
7	<p>Relevant Government departments and arms-length bodies will contribute fully to the 'Independent Review of Education', announced by the Minister of Education in December 2020, to ensure our education system is sustainable, economically relevant and equipped to deliver the best</p>	57	<p>The Council welcomes this approach.</p>

	outcomes for our children, young people and society as a whole.		
8	We will increase collaborative investment between Government, research institutions and business in post-graduate education and research, which support the development of Northern Ireland's key strategic clusters set out in 'A 10x Economy'.	58	We support this approach. We consider that some of the models developed through the work of the Belfast Region City Deal can be useful blueprints for collaboration of this nature, and strongly endorse the work of Innovation City Belfast in taking some of these initiatives forward.
9	Recommendations emerging from the Women in STEM Working Group will be fully recognised in the Skills Strategy and subsequent skills action plans.	60	The Council welcomes this approach. We also suggest that there should be a commitment to supporting inclusion amongst all under-represented groups as part of all of the interventions that are proposed.
10	We will build on 'Preparing for Success', by developing and introducing new measures of careers guidance outcomes and by developing clear, common, transparent and accountable quality standards.	60	The Council welcomes this approach. Encouraging Lifelong Learning is an important objective. However, plans need to ensure that adults as well as younger people are aware of industry and employment/skills opportunities – and how they can change career if desired. Delivery plans should consider the needs of adults in a population that may already have had a negative experience of careers guidance. However, to ensure this is met in practice people need independent guidance to navigate through the myriad of employability and skills provision through a fit-for-purpose independent careers advice and guidance service for adults as well as young people – as recommended by the Belfast Labour Market Partnership - to ensure inequality is tackled and the skills gaps are redressed. Independent careers/skills advice and guidance is needed to shape aspirations and to create skills pathways that support outcomes for individuals (jobs/better jobs) but also reducing skills mismatches within the labour market.

11	We will invest in the development of a consolidated portal, providing open access to information on current and forecast labour market skill needs and applicable study/work opportunities.	60	The Council welcomes this approach. However, it requires sufficient resources in staffing and outreach is required to enable quality interaction with people (mentoring, careers guidance advice clinics, roadshows and employment opportunities showcasing what industries need).
12	We will enhance engagement between employers and the education sector to identify and publicise opportunities for individuals in education to engage with the world of work.	62	The Council welcomes the focus on providing employer engagement opportunities and work experience opportunities. This will provide opportunities to all, including under-represented groups and those requiring additional support. However, enhanced engagement is required as early as possible to maximise impact. Engagement with industry should happen at primary school and then be continually re-enforced throughout secondary school and beyond. Strong role models should be used as “influencers” particularly where there may be gender (or other) imbalances in employment in specific industries. This approach will require greater collaboration between the Department of Education and Department for the Economy.
13	We will develop bespoke skills action plans to support Northern Ireland’s key strategic clusters.	62	The Council welcomes this objective. However, it would welcome extending this approach beyond the “core” priority sectors to cover those sectors that are likely to experience significant demand especially logistics, social care, hospitality etc.

6. Are there any additional proposals you believe should be considered under the ‘Addressing Skills Imbalances, Driving Economic Growth’ objective?

Broadly, the Council welcomes this approach. Additionally, it would welcome a focus on gender inequalities in skills provision, skills levels and access to ‘better jobs’. Much of the skills provision is still unequal in gender balance, and this is particularly the case for high growth sectors.

7. Are you content that the proposals contained in pages 57 - 75 provide an ambitious and comprehensive approach to ‘Creating a Culture of Lifelong Learning’?

The Council acknowledges that the VCSE sector are a vital stakeholder in engaging with those who are further back in the labour market, those with lower attainment levels, those experiencing in-work poverty etc. and recommend that the provision of community-based education and skills development is recognised as a key mechanism to reach these residents in the city to support people’s empowerment, motivation and confidence – a vital starting point for the skills pipeline in the city and regionally. However, this can only work if the system is fully integrated and there is a need for much greater alignment to enable residents to benefit from clear pathways towards rewarding careers. We are exploring some interesting models in collaboration with the RSA e.g. digital badges and would be keen to engage with DfE on the outworking of these interventions.

No	Proposal	Page	Belfast City Council Response
14	We will assess the potential for more locally focused approaches, to support DE’s policy interventions in relation to vulnerable children, particularly in areas of high social deprivation. This will include an assessment of how data can be better used to monitor pupil outcomes from education and the efficacy of policy interventions throughout the education system.	59	The Council welcomes the potential for more locally focused approaches to support DE’s policy interventions in relation to vulnerable children, particularly in areas of high social deprivation. The Council is committed to addressing issues through Community Planning Partnership Structures, namely the Educational Inequalities within the Jobs, Skills and Education Board.
15	We will develop a new lifelong learning project and action plan, directly aligned to the achievement of the strategic goals set out in the new Skills Strategy.	60	For a number of years, Belfast has committed to being a “learning city” and is a member of UNESCO’s Learning City Network. We are currently revisiting the focus of this work and would welcome the opportunity to explore how we can contribute to and drive the regional approach.
16	We will develop proposals for the expansion of childcare support, to enable all individuals with parental responsibilities to participate in lifelong learning.	63	The Council welcomes this approach. However, plans should be extended to those who have other caring responsibilities (e.g. disabled or older relatives).
17	We will review funding exemptions to ensure more individuals can participate in ‘reskilling’ opportunities, aligned to under-supplied qualifications in engineering	63	We support this approach and consider that it needs to incorporate re-skilling across a range of skills levels, in order to create inclusive pathways to new jobs

	and technology, mathematics, computer science and physical and environmental sciences.		
18	We will develop, and consult on, legislation to introduce training leave allowances for Northern Ireland employees.	64	
19	We will work with the FE Sector to examine the development of remote/blended, modular learning approaches, tailored to the needs of individuals and their employers.	65	<p>The Council welcomes the Department's proposed commitment to remove current age-related barriers to make apprenticeship opportunities at levels two and three more available. However, the Council recommends that a new delivery approach is needed to offer 'portable' or 'flexi-job' apprentices. Some industries (construction and creative industries) cannot offer a long-enough placement with a single employer for apprentices to meet the government's minimum 12-month duration requirement. In the TV and film sector, for example, most roles are freelance and usually only run for two to three months. If we are to achieve the ambition of inclusive growth, a flexible intervention would greatly assist the Council [and the public sector], to deliver stronger social value outcomes within public procurement contracts, namely in construction. It will also lend itself to large construction infrastructure builds in city under City Deals. The Council recommends that a shared apprenticeship scheme is needed (for example, CITB's scheme in England and Wales, which supports apprenticeships while recognising that not all employers can provide full 104 weeks required for an apprentice to complete training).</p> <p>The strategy refers to public sector apprenticeships which should be welcomed; however, it must be balanced with support to the private sector to re-build and recover following Covid-19.</p>
20	Under the auspices of the new Skills Strategy, DfE will develop a renewed approach to management and leadership in Northern Ireland.	70	We strongly support this approach – and would propose that DfE works closely with councils to tailor interventions for local businesses – as a means of driving up

			competitiveness and productivity
21	We will introduce a business pledge to recognise and promote employers who actively engage with principles of the work quality indicators. Businesses with 50+ employees must subscribe and actively promote the principles of the 'Better Jobs Pledge' prior to engagement with publicly funded support programmes.	74	Creating an inclusive economy is at the heart of the council's agenda. One key commitment was the development and implementation of an Inclusive Growth City Charter for Belfast for employers across the city – setting a city wide standard in relation to procurement, employment and civic / neighbourhood engagement. Based on the engagement to date, the Council has drawn up a draft Charter – the Belfast Business Promise. The Charter focuses on good employment, procurement, and the role of businesses in their community through eight Charter Pledges. The Council therefore welcomes this proposal and offers that this city charter can inform the development of the 'better jobs pledge'.
22	The NICS will take steps to mark itself out as a leader in the adoption of High-Performance Working Practices and the development of management and leadership skills in Senior Civil Service grades.	75	The Council welcomes this approach.
23	We will develop a discrete, collaborative project, to define what employability skills means in the Northern Ireland labour market and propose a series of actions to improve the performance of our education system.	76	A focus is required, not only on traditional job search strategies but on enterprise, self-employment, social enterprises and job creation in the strategy. Supporting innovation and enterprise skills as a cross cutting skills set for the NI economy is particularly important as our comparatively low business start-up rates and high level of business deaths directly impact on productivity.

8. Are there any additional proposals you believe should be considered under the 'Creating a Culture of Lifelong Learning' objective?

No additional comments.

9. Under 'Enhancing Digital Skills, Creating Our Digital Spine' we include only one recommendation, that an expert panel is appointed to develop a specific

Digital Skills Action Plan for Northern Ireland (see pages 76 - 81). Do you agree with this approach?

No	Objective	Page	Belfast City Council Response
24	An expert panel of individuals from business and education will be appointed to develop a specific Digital Skills Action Plan for Northern Ireland.	82	The Council welcomes this approach and the work of Innovation City Belfast may be a useful model to consider. Digital skills are fundamental to the success of the economy as we move to economic recovery. The pandemic has accelerated the need for digital skills as those that were able to adapt and operate digitally were proved to be the more resilient. The Strategy recognises that digital skills are important for everyone in society, not just those with careers in the digital sector, and we fully support this.

10. Have you any other comments on the Strategic Goals and Policy Objectives?

No additional comments.

Chapter 5: Policy Enablers

11. The first two 'policy enablers': 'Enhancing Policy Cohesion' and 'Building Stronger Relationships' focus on a refreshed approach to the governance of the skills system (pages 84 - 90). Do you agree that these structures are a useful and appropriate approach to improving the development and implementation of skills policy in Northern Ireland?

No	Objective	Page	Belfast City Council Response
25	A new Northern Ireland Skills Council will be responsible for the implementation of the Skills Strategy. It will have ministerial leadership and include senior representatives from all government departments and local government.	86	The Council welcomes this approach. Cross-government buy-in and engagement is critical – at regional and local government level.
26	The Northern Ireland Skills Council should maintain an oversight role in the commissioning and development of all skills policies and related research.	86	The Council welcomes this approach in order to ensure greater coordination.
27	We will continue to work across central and local government to develop and implement sub-regional approaches to skills development, tailored to the needs of local businesses and communities.	87	The Council welcomes this approach and recommends that Labour Market Partnerships are used as the sub-regional structure.

28	The Northern Ireland Skills Council will be established to provide long-term, consistent, advice on the development and implementation of all aspects of skills policy. It will include representation from business leaders, senior representatives of education and employee representatives from trade unions.	88	The Council welcomes this approach. We recognise that there may be a need for additional working groups e.g. sectoral groups – but consider that the NISC should provide the vehicle for overall coordination. There may be an opportunity to consider how this aligns with the work of the Regional Employability and Skills Board
29	Under the auspices of the Northern Ireland Skills Council, we will review and rationalise the existing (skills) advisory infrastructure.	88	The Council welcomes this approach
30	Employer, employee and education institutions will be given a key role in determining the terms of reference for the Northern Ireland Skills Council.	88	The Council welcomes this approach
31	The Northern Ireland Skills Council should develop a sub-committee to consider how gender, and other diversity issues, can be better addressed across education, skills and employment policies and practices.	89	The Council welcomes this approach. Once agreed, these commitments should then be mainstreamed and should form part of the commitments for commissioned bodies that have responsibility for delivering key skills interventions.
32	The new Skills Strategy will be underpinned by 2, 5 and 10-year action plans.	90	We agree with the need for a longer-term strategic plan supported by shorter-term action plans.

12. The third policy enabler focuses on ‘Investment in the Skills System’. The programme of change proposed in this consultation document is likely to require substantial investment. Do you agree that this should be prioritised?

No	Objective	Page	Belfast City Council Response
33	The Skills Strategy will be endorsed, as a whole-of-government Strategy, by the Northern Ireland Executive, recognising the key, strategic importance of education and skills development to our social and economic prosperity.	93	The Council welcomes cross-departmental collaboration as well as effective support pillars to engage with local communities to promote inclusive growth and reduce inequalities.
34	A ring-fenced skills fund will be developed to provide new opportunities in the labour	93	The Council welcomes this approach. We also propose that the recent reductions in skills

<p>market and support the skills development of the working age population as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare for the economic changes brought about by our exit from the EU.</p>		<p>expenditure should be reversed as a matter of priority in order to support inclusive economic growth. We are content to ensure that the work of the Belfast Labour Market Partnership is aligned to relevant priority interventions.</p>
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The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve the foregoing response to the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland consultation for submission to the Department for Economy.

Belfast City Council Safeguarding Assurance Framework and Review of Policy

The Members of the Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Members the draft Safeguarding (All ages) Policy and to inform them of the proposed timetable for public consultation.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- i. approve the [draft Safeguarding \(All Ages\) Policy](#), which complies with the most recent developments in safeguarding. The Committee should note that the draft policy has been shared for comment across a range of frontline services including AGRS, Legal Services and corporate HR; and
- ii. endorse the public consultation timeframe for the draft policy document from November 2021.

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

3.1 The new policy includes a series of arrangements to support an enhanced and robust assurance framework for safeguarding compliance across the council. These include more stringent pre-employment checks and periodic checks during the course of employment (every three years), improved training, clearer reporting procedures and line management responsibility, coupled with a greater awareness and understanding throughout the organisation.

Background

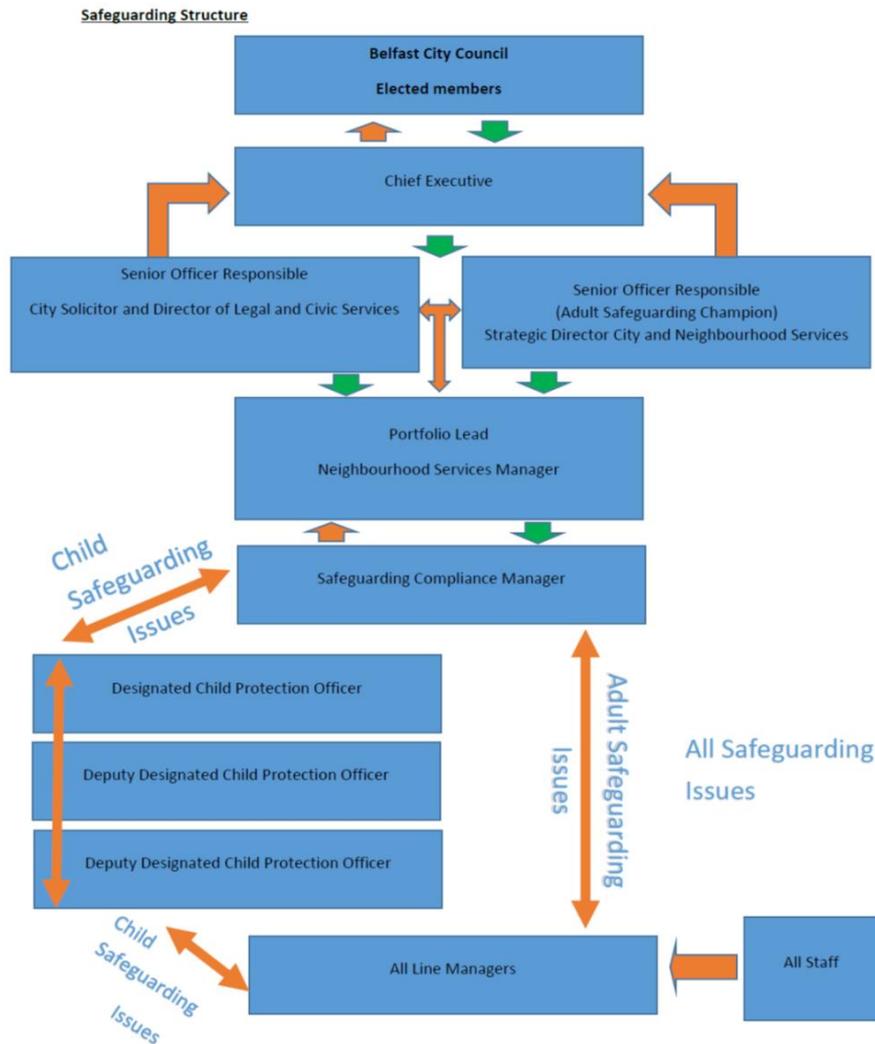
Context

- 3.2 Child protection has been a priority for organisations for many years, and there is a well-established process in place throughout Belfast City Council to deal with child protection issues. The current policy was written in 2009 and whilst it remains broadly compliant, changes in the wider operational environment, developments in technology, the rapid growth of social media and fluctuating socio-economic standards across the world has led to the need to revise the policy to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose. The main guidance for safeguarding is currently managed by Volunteer Now.
- 3.3 Adult safeguarding is a distinctly different area of practise and, in reality, it is still in its infancy in comparison with child safeguarding. In April 2009, the Department of Health (formerly the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety) commissioned the 'Our Duty to Care Team' from Volunteer Now to develop standards and guidance for good practice in adult safeguarding for voluntary, community and independent organisations based on their experience of developing 'Keeping Children Safe'. Since the guidance was first published, there have been considerable developments in the area of adult safeguarding in Northern Ireland.
- 3.4 The Council has a corporate responsibility for safeguarding all ages (children and adults) which is currently supported by 'Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults' which has been in operation since 2009.
- 3.5 The policy applies to elected members, BCC Chief Officers and all staff and volunteers who work within or in the name of the council. It is a demonstration of the Council's commitment to providing and maintaining services across all Departments that protect these service users from harm as well as protecting the organisation and our staff and volunteers from potential allegations.
- 3.6 The policy is broadly relevant; however, it is no longer fit for purpose and presents a significant risk to the organisation particularly when considered alongside rapid growth in social media, technology, and recent news reports concerning high profile Safeguarding issues.

Current Position

- 3.7 Since August 2019, officers have worked to review the existing provision, identify the areas for improvement and enhance the risk assessment for the Corporate risk register.

- 3.8 The new policy has been developed and has been circulated to Members. The document is based on the principles of current good practice, shared learning and current legislation and will be reviewed every three years in line with new developments and best practise. The policy document is supported with robust operational procedures and guidance for all staff.**
- 3.9 This policy is the basis on which the assurance framework will be built and will include the following steps:**
- Safeguarding is on the BCC corporate risk register with the Director of Neighbourhood Services as risk owner. This risk has recently been reviewed by AGRS and is subject to review on a quarterly basis. The risk is reviewed in line with corporate policy with the last review being June 2021.**
 - SROs: Director of Neighbourhood Services and the City Solicitor act as joint SRO's.**
 - Safeguarding Panel: Meets every two months starting April 2021 to provide strategic direction and leadership, discuss outstanding matters and is made up of senior Safeguarding champions from different departments across the Council.**
 - Safeguarding Operational Group: Will be established to disseminate information to the teams and help with the roll out of the new policy. This group meets in the alternate month to the Panel.**
 - Adult Safeguarding Champion: Although the Council does not currently have any regulated posts in relation to adult safeguarding, best practise would suggest that we should nominate an Adult Safeguarding Champion (ASC). Therefore, the Director of Neighbourhood Services was nominated and accepted by the panel as ASC. We can only name one ASC, however, there can be as many nominated persons as operationally required. The Panel suggestion is the Director of Neighbourhood Services will be the ASC and the responsibility is delegated to the Safeguarding Compliance Manager (SCM).**
 - There is now a clear structure, as demonstrated below:**



Training programme

3.10 The Panel has also agreed a new training programme, for both adult and child safeguarding. There will be four levels of training:

	Who	When	Delivery method	Time Commitment	Refresher requirement
Level 0	All staff	At induction	Online/Paper based/in person	1 hour	Every 3 years or in response to major changes.
Level 1	Staff working in regulated positions, line managers of regulated staff, staff with regular contact with the public and other identified staff	During the first six months of employment	Face to face facilitation	6 hours	Every 3 years or in response to major changes

Level 2	Line managers	During the first six months of employment	Face to face facilitation	3 hours	Every 3 years or in response to major changes
Level 3	Designated/nominated Officers	As necessary	Face to face facilitation	3 hours	Every 3 years or in response to major changes

- **Safeguarding training will be offered to all Elected Members.**
- **HR/Access NI checks: As part of the review process a piece of work has been completed to identify all ‘regulated positions’ within the council. This work is reaching completion and has to date identified 165 identified post holders undertaking regulated activity on behalf of the council. This provides a baseline for one part of the Safeguarding Compliance and assurance in the recruitment process.**
- **A list of regulated posts will be maintained and reviewed periodically.**
- **All new job roles will be reviewed and assessed using the defined descriptions of regulated activity by the continuous improvement department.**

Projected Consultation Timetable

3.11 Below is the expected timetable of events to allow the new policy to become operational, this is dependent on multiple factors and may be subject to amendment.

Date	Activities associated with Safeguarding Policy are as follows:
July 2021	Final draft policy to be presented to the Safeguarding Panel
	Present policy to CMT
August 2021	SP and R Committee report to be prepared and presented
	Equality Screening and RNIA to be undertaken
September 2021	New staff training rolled out.
September – November 2021	External engagement and consultation with relevant public bodies to be undertaken
	Public consultation to be undertaken

Ongoing	Explore communications needs with Corporate Comms – internal and external
November 2021	Consultation analysis
December 2021	Final Committee Report to be prepared and presented.
Jan 2022	Roll out of new policy and Communication to staff.

Financial and Human Resource Implications

3.12 The cost of the Safeguarding Compliance Manager - the salary is secured within CNS revenue estimates.

All other costs have been absorbed by existing budgets:

- **Training**
- **Access NI Checks**

Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs Implications

3.13 There are no relevant equality considerations associated with the report at this time. The implementation plan will include arrangements for Equality Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment of the new Safeguarding Policy.”

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the recommendations contained within the report.

Off-Street Parking Enforcement Services

(Ms. V. Brown, City Services Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The City Services Manager reminded the Members that responsibility for off-street public car parking had, on 1st April, 2015, transferred to councils as part of Local Government Reform. All eleven councils had, at that time, entered into an agency agreement with the then Department for Regional Development, which provided enforcement, cash collection and penalty charge processing services on their behalf. That agreement had been extended in November, 2016 and again in November, 2019.

She reported that the current arrangement with what was now the Department for Infrastructure would expire on 31st October, 2022, which would allow sufficient time to prepare the specification and tender documents, tender for the contract and embed the new arrangements. Eight of the nine councils which were still involved in the agency

agreement had indicated that they wished to terminate the arrangement and tender collaboratively for the services. This approach would allow those participating to explore other methods of enforcement, evaluate potential savings and efficiencies and offer more assurances around value-for-money. The Council which had, in 2019, left the agreement had also confirmed its interest in pursuing the collaborative approach,

The City Services Manager went on to state that, at the SOLACE meeting in March, Ards and North Down Council had offered to lead the procurement exercise, with support from other councils, including Belfast. Following the assessment and award of the tender, each council would draw services from the tender and manage those independently. This joint tendering procurement approach had, she pointed out, been endorsed by the Council's Legal Services Unit.

She added that, whilst a decision had been taken to end the arrangement with the Department for Infrastructure, the current pandemic had impacted upon the replacement process. It was possible, therefore, that the current agreement may have to be extended on a temporary short-term basis and the Department had been requested to confirm that it would facilitate the extension, if required.

After discussion, the Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- i. agree, in line with SOLACE, that councils should tender for enforcement services on the open market, rather than renew the service agreement with the Department for Infrastructure. This would involve a joint tendering procurement exercise with the other councils for car parking enforcement services and penalty charge processing;
- ii. agree that officers formally inform the Department for Infrastructure that the Council did not wish to enter into another agency agreement and that it would, alongside other councils, tender on the open market for off-street enforcement and associated services; and
- iii. note that a further report would be submitted to the Committee in relation to the procurement process, outlining potential efficiencies, value-for-money and any financial challenges in delivering the off-street car parking function beyond October 2022.

Funding Agreements to support the Belfast Climate Action

The Members of the Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Members approval for the following funding agreements, which are required to support delivery of Belfast’s programme of climate activity:

- **Linenquarter BID - £20,000 contribution towards the delivery of the Festival of the Circular Economy, which will align with COP26;**
- **Common Purpose - £10,000 contribution towards the delivery of the Common Purpose Legacy Programme which will focus on young leaders roles in relation to climate and be scheduled in advance of COP26;**
- **Woodland Trust - £45,000 for the delivery of volunteer coordination, community outreach and support for PR and communication for the Belfast One Million Trees Programme.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve the awarding of funding agreements to the following organisations which are supporting the delivery of the Belfast Resilience Strategy and the programme of climate activity linked to COP26, which runs from 1st to 12th November.

- **Linenquarter BID - £20,000 contribution towards the delivery of the Festival of the Circular Economy, which will align with COP26 in November 2021;**
- **Common Purpose - £10,000 contribution towards the delivery of the Common Purpose Legacy Programme, which will focus on young leaders roles in relation to climate and be scheduled for October 2021, in advance of COP26;**
- **The Woodland Trust - £45,000 for the delivery of volunteer coordination, community outreach and support for PR and communication for the Belfast One Million Trees Programme over a 3 year period.**

Members are also asked to note the ongoing work by officers on the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) and WWF One Planet City Challenge.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 The Climate Team within Council is leading on the delivery of the Belfast Resilience Strategy Ambitions Document and a number of associated workstreams such as planning for COP26, engagement with and capacity building for young people, and the development of Council's own Climate Plan.

3.2 Three projects are planned which require funding agreements to be put in place to allow delivery to take place. These are:

3.3 Linenquarter BID Festival of Circular Economy

The Linenquarter BID Festival of Circular Economy event will support business engagement around the concept of circular economy and will include high profile speakers including Belfast Lord Mayor and the Lord Mayor of Liverpool. The event is one of the key events in the City's programme of activity during the COP26 fortnight and will provide a platform to engage with business on a range of climate issues in the future. The Council is requested to fund £20,000 of a total £100,000 budget. The Council's contribution is included in the existing City and Organisational Strategy budget provision for the current financial year.

3.4 The event organisers will ensure that the event is linked to the ambitions of the Resilience Strategy and will acknowledge the role of Belfast City Council and the Belfast Resilience and Sustainability Board in supporting the event. The organisers will also produce an Evaluation Report for the event, which will demonstrate how it supports the ambitions of the Resilience Strategy.

3.5 Further information will be provided to Members as the event content and dates are confirmed.

Common Purpose Legacy Programme

3.6 The Common Purpose Northern Ireland Legacy Programme is an engagement and capacity building programme focused on young people.

3.7 Legacy programmes convene up to 100 young leaders (18-25 year-olds) – in and out of work, studying, campaigning and volunteering - to shape the future of their communities. The programme challenges them to think 20-30 years ahead to what their legacy will be and builds their confidence, know-how and social capital as well as identifying opportunities for them to get more involved in things ahead. Common Purpose have held Legacy programmes in Newcastle, Leeds, Sheffield and Bradford in 2020. Common Purpose plan to run second programmes in

each of those cities as well as in Northern Ireland, Lancashire, Glasgow and Edinburgh in 2021.

- 3.8 The Northern Ireland programme dates are 14th -15th October and 18th – 19th October 2021. The central challenge that the group will address is: How do we act together to transform our community into a cleaner and greener space for all?
- 3.9 Sponsorship of £10,000 from the Council for this regional programme will secure 10 places for Belfast. The Council will work with Common Purpose to ensure that participation from Belfast targets agreed cohorts under our Inclusive Growth ambitions, partner organisations/community sector and young staff within BCC. The Council will also input to the curriculum explore how we can contribute on the programme itself.
- 3.10 Further information for the Legacy Programme will also be provided to Members as the event content and Belfast participation is confirmed.

The Woodland Trust – Belfast One Million Trees Programme

- 3.11 Members will be aware that the Council leads and coordinates the Belfast One Million Trees Programme, working with a diverse range of partners across the city. A city steering group includes representatives from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. At the heart of the programme is a partnership with The Woodland Trust, who support a core delivery team which includes Belfast Hills Partnership, The Conservation Volunteers and the National Trust.

In April 2021, the Council secured £289,000 external funding through the Emergency Tree Fund for a number of critical workstreams to the success of the project, such as environmental impact assessments, tree nursery development, tree maintenance plans, tree planting, volunteer coordination, community engagement and education, communication, the development of the Belfast Tree Strategy, and the production of a Belfast I-Tree ECO Report.

- 3.12 This external funding is managed by the Council's Climate Team, with the support of colleagues in City and Neighbourhood Services. To facilitate delivery of the Volunteer Coordination, Community Engagement/Education and communication support role we propose to enter into a funding agreement with the Woodland Trust, who are the key delivery partner in the initiative. Funding will be £45,000 over a 3-year period, which will be fully funded through the external funding received through the Emergency Tree Fund. A detailed plan will be developed based on funding

targets and an agreed programme of activity which will be monitored and evaluated through the Climate Team.

Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) and WWF One Planet City Challenge

- 3.13 Members are asked to note that the Council has made a submission to the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) – ICLEI reporting platform, which is a global reporting framework to assess progress against climate ambitions at city level and is required as a prerequisite to a number of global climate campaigns. This submission will be assessed by CDP, with feedback and a score provided to the city by the end of 2021, which will inform the submission in 2022. A further report on CDP and other associate initiatives will be brought to committee at a future date.
- 3.14 The One Planet City Challenge (OPCC) is a friendly competition which supports cities in developing climate action plans and targets that align with the Paris Agreement's 1.5 °C maximum global warming goal. The OPCC recognises leading cities at the national and global level and inspires other cities to join the movement. In 2021, the OPCC celebrates 10 years of engagement during which time they have seen the participation of nearly 600 cities in over 50 countries.
- 3.15 To participate in the One Planet City Challenge cities must register by 31st August 2021 and Members are asked to note that work is underway to register Belfast for OPCC.

Financial and Resource Implications

Linenquarter BID Festival of Circular Economy and Common Purpose Legacy Programme

- 3.16 The £20,000 contribution to the development and delivery of the Linenquarter BID Festival of Circular Economy and £10,000 sponsorship for Common Purpose Legacy Programme will be funded from existing City and Organisational Strategy budget provision.

The Woodland Trust – Belfast One Million Trees Programme

- 3.17 The allocation of £45,000 over a 3-year period will be fully funded through the external funding received from the Emergency Tree Fund.

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

3.18 The participant selection process for the Common Purpose Legacy Programme will be reviewed to ensure that it is fully representative.”

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the recommendations contained within the report.

**Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman
Consultation on Complaints Handling Standards
for the Public Sector - Council Response**

The Director of Finance and Resources informed the Members that the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman had, in recent years, undertaken research with all public sector bodies, including the Council, under its remit. It had subsequently engaged with them to identify complaint management improvement opportunities, in partnership with each sector, with a view to introducing a public sector model complaints handling procedure.

He reported that the Ombudsman had been granted approval by the Northern Ireland Assembly, under Part 3 of the Public Services Ombudsman Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, to produce a set of principles and procedures to help standardise complaints handling by public bodies. The Ombudsman had, in June, launched its Complaints Handling Standards Public Consultation, which was open to public bodies, advocacy and support groups, politicians, members of the public and anyone with an interest in improving complaints handling and public services in Northern Ireland.

The Ombudsman had, alongside the consultation, launched its Research Report on 'Complaints Handling in the Public Sector in Northern Ireland', which had addressed the complaints handling procedures of public bodies in Northern Ireland, including the experience of complaining to a public sector body in Northern Ireland, barriers to improved complaints handling and improvements which might be made to complaints handling in the future.

The Director reported further that Party Group Leaders had been invited to complete the consultation questionnaire and he submitted for approval a draft Council response, which also reflected previous feedback from Chief Officers and senior management, as well as ongoing discussions with Departmental complaints officers, in preparation for both the consultation and subsequent co-design phases. He added that, once the consultation process had concluded, the Ombudsman would collate the responses, consider any changes and return to the Northern Ireland Assembly to seek final approval for its plans.

Consultation on Creating Complaints Handling Standards
for the Northern Ireland Public Sector

Council Response

This questionnaire provides an opportunity for organisations and other interested parties to provide feedback on the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman's (NIPSO's) proposals for a set of principles and procedures aimed at standardising complaints handling by public bodies. If you haven't already done so, you may wish to read the consultation document before providing your feedback by [clicking here](#).

The Statement of Principles

The draft Statement of Principles (SOP) consists of six basic principles that NIPSO believe all public bodies should follow when handling a complaint. The full SOP is available by clicking [here](#).

The six key principles are:

1. Start off right
2. Fix it early
3. Focus on what matters
4. Be fair
5. Be honest
6. Learn and improve.

For each of the six principles above, NIPSO has set out what it expects public bodies to do when they receive a complaint. These include: acknowledging mistakes at the earliest opportunity, providing clear reasons for decisions, investigating complaints fairly, and using complaints as an opportunity for improvement.

Is there anything you would like to see added or changed in terms of the content of the principles? If yes, please indicate which principles and provide details.

Please enter your response below

The principles as stated are sufficiently comprehensive, easily understood and will, in the council's opinion, meet the needs of both the council and its customers.

Model Complaints Handling Procedure

The draft Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) is designed to: make sure complaints to public bodies are dealt with in a straight-forward and simple way; provide a general complaints handling procedure that all public bodies will broadly follow where complaints are resolved early, and where this is not possible, complaints are thoroughly investigated. The draft MCHP also makes it easier for public bodies to analyse and learn from the complaints they receive. The full draft MCHP is available [here](#).

Please consider each element of the draft MCHP outlined below and comment on any changes or additions.

A Complaint Handling Procedure should contain an agreed definition of what is and what is not a complaint.

Please enter your response below

A suitable and agreed definition is important to ensure that complaints are identified as such, as quickly as possible, and provide guidance to both complainants and council, to promote the early resolution of all complaints.

A register of all complaints received should be kept by public bodies.

Please enter your response below

Agree. This is the groundwork of ensuring that council successfully manages all complaints received, and learns from complaints through purposeful analytics. In particular providing information on feedback trends that can be used in conjunction with other approaches to customer insight to achieve a customer focused approach to service improvement.

Complaints should be dealt with in no more than two stages; an initial 'frontline response' based on early resolution and a stage 2 'investigation' where early resolution is not possible and a complaint needs to be thoroughly investigated.

Please enter your response below

Council considers this to be a modern and sensible approach that both simplifies the complaints process for customers and council. And importantly, will serve to help reduce the frustration sometimes felt by customers who perhaps feel they are engaging in a long drawn out procedure.

Based on experiences in other places, a 'frontline response' should be responded to within a maximum of 5 working days, with the possibility of an extension in exceptional circumstances of up to 5 additional working days.

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Please enter your response below

This is a practical solution to give every opportunity for a frontline response to be provided in as many cases as possible.

All complaints escalated to stage 2 ‘investigation’ should be acknowledged within 3 working days.

Please enter your response below

Agree. This is achievable and is good practice.

A full response to stage 2 complaints should be provided as soon as possible but no later than 20 working days from the time the complaint was received for investigation

Please enter your response below

Based on council’s experience twenty working days is sufficient to bring to conclusion the vast majority of complaint cases.

In more complex cases, if it is not possible to meet the 20-day timeframe, a revised timescale should be provided, and an update at least once every 20 working days on the progress of the investigation.

Please enter your response below

This is a very practical and efficient approach which will allow more time when needed for complex complaints, such as those involving planning service, to be addressed within an extended time frame. And will also keep the complainant aware of progress at pre-agreed milestones in the investigation process.

Information about complaints received should be reported and publicised.

Please enter your response below

Agree. Council already reports on all aspects of complaints management. And equally an easily understood quarterly and annual report, posted on the council’s website, would meet this requirement.

Public bodies should demonstrate active learning from complaints.

Please enter your response below

Agree. This is fundamental to the council's culture of customer focussed learning and gathering insight into customer journeys and experiences in a structured and transparent way, including from complaints.

Suggested approach to implementation

NIPSO feels standardisation is necessary across all public bodies, however it also recognises that circumstances may sometimes differ between sectors. It is therefore expected that detailed discussions will be needed with public bodies within each sector, to decide precisely what their complaints handling procedures should look like.

Five distinct sectors have been identified: health and social care, councils, government departments, housing, and education.

NIPSO is proposing to introduce MCHPs for public bodies on a sector by sector basis. Do you consider this is the most effective approach? If not, what would you propose?

Please enter your response below

The council views a sector by sector approach as a sensible and effective way to introduce and implement the MCHP. It will enable a programme of work which can address and learn from issues as it rolls out across different sectors.

NIPSO has yet to decide the first sector(s) it will work with to introduce the MCHPs. Some of the factors being considered in this decision are: the number of complaints received by the sector, size/complexity of the sector, risk attached to public service provision. Do you have any views on this issue?

Please enter your response below

Given that the majority of local authority complaints are relatively straightforward and that referrals to the NIPSO are quite low, council would encourage the NIPSO to consider local authorities to be in the first tranche of sectors to adopt the revised approach. The Belfast City Council has been considering a change to a two stage procedure for quite some time and is well placed to implement 5/20 format following co-design.

Are there any issues or concerns specific to any particular sector or area of work, that you feel NIPSO should take into account when refining MCHPs?

Please enter your response below

If you have any further comments on these proposals, or any other suggestions

Yes, it will be important that all services within local authorities are considered in the co-design phase, encompassing and taking account of both the more operationally focused 'frontline services' as well as the more complex service providers such as, planning, building control and environmental health.

**or
comments about NIPSO's Statement of Principles, MCHP and/or approach for implementing complaints standards and ensuring compliance with them, please provide details below.**

Please enter your response below

Belfast City Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation and looks forward to working with NIPSO and other councils in the co-design and implementation of the complaints handling standards for the Northern Ireland public sector.

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to agree that the foregoing comments be forwarded to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman as the Council's response to the consultation on complaints handling standards.

Extension of Temporary Pavement Café Licence Scheme

The Members of the Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To consider and agree the extension of a scheme for the temporary licensing of Pavement Cafes.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Taking into account the information presented Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May 2021, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to agree that:

- 1. the temporary Pavement Café licensing scheme should be extended to 30th September 2022 and that any new licences that are granted be issued with the same expiry date;**
- 2. any application fees associated with the temporary Pavement Café licensing scheme should be waived until 30th September 2022;**
- 3. there should be a gradual return to normal and proportionate enforcement procedures in line with established council policy guidance, and**
- 4. a follow up report should be brought before the Licensing Committee prior to September 2022 to seek Members views on how to proceed in relation to Pavement Café licensing.**

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

3.1 The Licensing of Pavement Cafes Act (NI) 2014 (“the Act”) came into operation on the 1 October 2016. However, the Council did not implement the legislation at that time as the Department for Infrastructure, Roads had not, and still has not, issued their technical guidance in support of the Act.

3.2 That technical guidance was deemed crucial in that, among other matters, it was required to provide councils with the necessary information on an acceptable size and position of a pavement café such that there was clear demarcation between pedestrians and cafés to enhance health & safety regarding obstructions, tripping hazards and to provide a clear indicator for the visually impaired.

3.3 In June last year, a temporary process for considering pavement café applications was introduced. This process, and associated temporary guidance for applicants, was developed, based on DfC and Licensing Forum guidance, in unique circumstances to assist the hospitality sector during the pandemic. When introduced it was made clear to

applicants that it will be subject to review and that the council may modify or dispense with such aspects of the guidance as it thinks appropriate depending upon issues which may arise, or in response to changes in the Government's guidance in relation to Covid-19.

- 3.4 The aim of the scheme was to facilitate the controlled expansion of suitable premises such as cafes, restaurants and pubs, providing small businesses with an opportunity to boost their income at a time of economic crisis.
- 3.5 At that time authority was granted by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to waive the licence application fee given the prevailing circumstances.
- 3.6 The scheme was established with the intention of running for a year and all licences that have been issued have an expiry date of 31st August 2021.
- 3.7 Temporary Pavement Café Applications
- Since the scheme was launched 60 licences have been issued
 - More than 60 other applications have been received which we cannot progress due to applicants failing to provide sufficient information to consult with DfI Roads
 - A number of other pavement cafes are operating that have not applied for a licence.

Complaints

- 3.8 Complaints about pavement cafes and the licensing process are being monitored and any recurring themes will be used to inform how we implement the licensing process once the temporary scheme ends. Complaints about individual pavement café premises are investigated and followed up with licensees to address issues raised.
- 3.9 Many of the complaints received related to the re-opening of outdoor areas for the 2021 May Bank Holiday weekend and most were resolved quickly. Common complaints included:
- furniture obstructing pedestrian movement, particularly for those with disabilities,
 - furniture obstructing access to other premises,
 - problems for Cleansing Services,
 - the Pavement Cafe area not being managed effectively.

Enforcement

- 3.10 Over the course of the pandemic, the Council has responded to requests from the Assembly and industry to assist recovery and we have therefore been endeavouring to provide support and minimise impact on small businesses.
- 3.11 For that reason, there has been a very ‘light touch’ approach to enforcement in relation to those who have not made application or failed to provide the necessary information to progress their application as well as those who may not be operating in accordance with the terms of their licence.

Universal access

- 3.12 Consultation when the legislation was enacted included regular engagement with groups representing people with disabilities and relevant issues were captured in our “Pavement Cafes: Guidance for Applicants during the Covid19 Pandemic” document which was equality screened in June 2020.
- 3.13 The Council consults with DfI Roads on all licensing applications received and the impact on pedestrians and particularly for disabled people is considered.
- 3.14 At a recent meeting with a representative of the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC) on Pavement Cafés, their feedback was generally positive on extending the temporary licence scheme as people with disabilities are still cautious about going out and feel safer sitting outside in well ventilated spaces.
- 3.15 Whilst highlighting that there are some problem premises there was support for how we have implemented the scheme but it was suggested we should be taking more proactive action where premises don’t apply.

Proposed extension to the temporary scheme

- 3.16 As the pandemic has continued for much longer than anticipated when the scheme was set up last June, and in recognition that the hospitality sector remains subject to operating restrictions, Members are asked to consider that the temporary Pavement Café licensing scheme be extended for a further period of time.

- 3.17 Recently the Business and Planning Act 2020 (Pavement Licences) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 came into effect which extended temporary pavement licence provisions in England to 30 September 2022.
- 3.18 It is suggested therefore that all existing temporary licences due to expire on 31st August 2021 be extended to 30th September 2022 and that any new licences that are granted be issued with the same expiry date.

Fees

- 3.19 Members are asked to consider that any application fees associated with the temporary Pavement Café licensing scheme be waived until 30th September 2022.

Enforcement Stance

- 3.20 As restrictions continue to ease, it is suggested that there is a gradual return to normal and proportionate enforcement procedures in line with established council policy guidance. This will include addressing applications which cannot progress because sufficient information has not been provided and commencing proactive action in relation to unlicensed pavement cafes.

Transition to a Permanent Scheme

- 3.21 If the temporary scheme is agreed, a follow up report will be brought before Licensing Committee prior to September 2022 to seek Members views on how to proceed in relation to Pavement Café licensing. The additional period will enable further process review to take place and any issues arising from enforcement measures to be considered.
- 3.22 This will also provide an opportunity to review and improve our guidance, particularly in terms of accessibility, but also in relation to pavement café furniture and the standards that we should set to ensure a vibrant and attractive city.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.23 The grant application fee for a 5-year pavement café licence is £225.00 with an annual licence fee of £55.00 for the subsequent 4 years. If the temporary scheme is to be extended and the fees are waived there will be a total lost income of at least £31000 on the basis of applications granted and pending at present.

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

- 3.24 If the temporary scheme is to be extended as proposed the equality screening exercise undertaken in June 2020 will be reviewed and updated as necessary.”**

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the recommendations contained within the report.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Leisure Transformation Programme - Assets Update

The Members of the Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 This report updates Members on the development and implementation of the £105m leisure assets capital programme.**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note:**

- i. that the ICT and Business Case consultant for the proposed new leisure facility at Girdwood have been appointed and options are currently being developed in advance of public consultation, as outlined in paragraph 3.1;**
- ii. that S & P Architects have now completed Phase A of the Future Options review for those centres not currently included in the Leisure Transformation Programme and agree that a special SP and R meeting and Party Group briefings are organised to update Members, as outlined at 3.2;**
- iii. that the three new leisure facilities at Lisnasharragh, Brook and Andersonstown have all now fully re-opened following lockdown and continue to see strong membership numbers as outlined at 3.3; and**

- iv. that works are progressing at Avoniel and Templemore centres and both facilities remain on schedule as outlined at 3.4

Main Report

3.1. Girdwood Integrated Sports Facility (GISF)

Following appointment of the ICT and business case consultant, a range of options for the new facility have been developed in line with the previous options developed by SIB/DfC back in 2017. These options all include a new community pool, changing for the existing 3G pitch alongside a new dry side leisure offering. The options are currently being tested through the business case with a view to arriving at a preferred option. It is currently envisaged that the preferred option will be developed by end September. This will then be presented to Members before being consulted on with the local community and key stakeholders. This consultation will help inform the final design of new facility.

It is currently envisaged that work on the new facility will commence in summer 2022.

3.2 Future Options Review – (Ozone, Ballysillan, Whiterock, Shankill, Loughside and Belvoir)

Members will be aware that Space and Place Architects (S&P) have been appointed to perform a review of current leisure provision across the city, with a specific focus on the impact to date of LTP and the future options for those centres not included in the current programme of redevelopment. This commission was split up into three distinct phases (A-C), with each phase to be brought into Committee for approval before proceeding with the next phase.

- Phase A – Baseline Review
- Phase B – Consultation –consultation with Members and a wide range of key stakeholders with a view to begin the process of developing options for the remaining six centres.
- Phase C – Concept Designs - Phase C would then involve the development of concept designs as required.

Phase A specifically focused on the performance and future strategic options for those centres not included in LTP Phases 1-3 and included carrying out a full analysis of the performance of the six existing centres, including metrics such as facilities mix, usage, catchment, condition, revenue costs and current subvention levels. The study also looked

at the current supply and demand across city taking into account LTP phase 1-3 developments (both completed and underway) and reported on likely demand for the replacement/re-purposing of the 6 remaining facilities under a potential further phase of works.

- 3.3 Leisure has been identified by Members as being a key priority for the next few years and it is, therefore, recommended that a future special SP and R Committee meeting (to which all Members will be invited) and Party Group Briefings be organised in order to present the findings from Phase A and to agree next steps which will inform Phase B. Members are asked to agree to S&P attending a future meeting and Party Group briefings.

Phase 2- Update on new centre performance

- 3.4 Lisnasharragh, Andersonstown and Brook centres are now fully re-opened and continue to enjoy strong membership numbers. Despite all leisure facilities experiencing a significant drop off in membership numbers over lockdown, the new centres have recovered extremely strongly with Lisnasharragh experiencing higher member numbers than pre-Covid. Lisnasharragh currently has 3,838 live pre-paid members (109% of pre-lockdown figures), Brook 1,700 (93% of pre-lockdown figures), and Andersonstown 1,708 (opened post lockdown). These figures are well in excess of the UK average which shows gym memberships currently averaging around 60%-70% pre-lockdown figures and is testament to the strength of the offering.

Phase 3- Project Updates (Avoniel and Templemore)

Avoniel – The majority of works are now complete including construction of the pavilion, the laying of the five-a-side and seven-a-side 3G pitches and the installation of the new car park. The eleven-a-side 3G pitch will be laid later this month, while the internal fit out of the building and the finishing touches to the outdoor spaces are now underway. It is currently envisaged that the new facility will be completed by late Autumn 2021 (photos at Appendix 1).

Templemore – the contractor has been on site since late last year and works are progressing on schedule. In terms of the existing building, significant works have been completed such as complete re-pointing of the existing chimney and installation of new lantern roofs over the main pool, derelict pool and slipper baths. A new roof has also been installed over the old courtyard to incorporate the new café area.

Significant progress has also been made on the new build element of the project. Foundations have been completed, the pool tank has been installed and the structural steelwork has also been completed. Blockwork has now commenced to the internal and external walls. It is currently envisaged that construction will complete on the facility by May 2022. Following construction completion, the interpretive fit out will take place (circa 8-10 weeks) in advance of a planned opening in late summer 2022.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.5 **Financial – Templemore and Avoniel - The design costs limits for each centre were agreed by Committee in April 2015 as part of the overall £105m leisure programme.**

Leisure Phase 4 – no financing in place

Resource - Council to act as delivery partner for Girdwood Phase II ICT engagement. To be managed through current LTP governance arrangements.

- 3.6 **Equality or Good Relations Implications**

There are no direct equality implications.”

After discussion, during which the Director of Physical Programmes confirmed that those independent recreation centres which were still under the ownership of the Council were also under consideration, the Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the report.

Update on Physical Programme

The Members of the Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 **The Council’s Physical Programme currently includes 170 capital projects with investment of £150m+ via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Council’s Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. This report requests a movement under the Capital Programme (IT Programme) and provides an update on contracts awarded.**

2.0 **Recommendations**

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- Proposed Movement - '*IT Programme – Replacement Hardware for NIHE System*' (Stage 3 – Committed on the Capital Programme) - Note that a satisfactory tender return has now been achieved and that it is recommended that a maximum £360,000 is now allocated to this project. The Director of Finance & Resources has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.
- Contracts awarded in Q1 2021/22 – note the update in relation to contracts awarded

3.0 **Main Report**

Capital Programme

3.1 Members agreed that all capital projects under the Council's Capital Programme 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.

3.2 Members will recall that, in June 2021, the stage movement was agreed for *IT Programme: Replacement Hardware for NIHE System* project to *Stage 3 – Committed (Hold at Tier 0 – Scheme at risk pending tender return)*. This was to be brought back to Committee for sign-off and confirmation upon receipt of the tender returns. Members are now asked to note that the tender has now been returned within the affordability limits of the Council and that it is recommended that a maximum £360,000 is now allocated to this project.

Project	Overview	Stage
IT Programme: Replacement Hardware for NIHE System	The Council has a major contract to support systems on behalf of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. This project is to update IT hardware for that system.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed (Tier 2 – Scheme Underway)

Contracts Awarded

- 3.3 Members are asked to note the award of tenders for capital works, including services related to works set out below.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.4 Financial – IT Programme: Replacement Hardware for NIHE System - up to a maximum of £360,000. The Director of Finance and Resources has confirmed this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

Resources – Ongoing operating costs are within existing revenue budgets.

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

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

**Schedule of Contracts Awarded (Works
and Works Related) for Notation (Mar-July 2021)**

Contract Awarded	Supplier	Date of Award
PeaceIV – Single Party Construction Framework	McQuillans	15/03/2021
Holylands Environmental Improvements Scheme	Clive Richardson Ltd	10/03/2021
Waterfront Hall Replacement Escalators	ThyssenKrupp	19/05/2021
Boodles Dam Decommissioning Works	McQuillans	08/06/2021
SIF – Main Contractor for Mornington Community Centre	M&N Contracts	08/06/2021
Balmoral Bowling Club - Floodlight Installation and Ancillary Works	AG Wilson	07/06/2021
Refurbishment of CHP unit at Ballysillan LC under a self-financing energy supply contract ESCo	Harvey Group PLC	22/06/2021
Upgrade of Castle Place Kiosk	Fabrite	01/07/2021
Design and Operation of an E-Cargo Bike Trial Scheme	StreetDock Systems Limited	19/07/2021

Contract Awarded	Supplier	Date of Award
Supply & Installation of Football Goals for Avoniel Leisure Centre	Podium 4 Sport	23/07/2021
Supply & Installation of Café & Office Furniture at Avoniel Leisure Centre	Joseph Flanigan & Son	26/07/2021

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the recommendations contained within the report.

Update on Area Working

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve and adopt the minutes of the meeting of the East Belfast Area Working Group of 21st June.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Update on Contracts

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

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

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Estimated Total Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Replacement Building Control solutions IT system which provides functionality to manage service delivery	Up to 7 years	£636,000 1st year capital	A Reid	The existing legacy solutions are considered not fit for purpose in the current constantly changing digital age.
The provision of Insurance Brokerage Services	Up to 2 years	£2,700,000 (this includes the annual insurance premium payments plus any potential broker fee)	R Cregan	The provision of insurance brokerage services is needed to ensure that suitable insurance policies are purchased for the Council on the most cost-effective basis
Replacement of vehicles and mobile plant	Up to 1 year	£3,200,000	S Toland / R Black	Current vehicles have exceeded the Council's recommended replacement criteria (age & mechanical condition)
Delivery and supply of live and frozen animal feed	Up to 3 years	£72,000	S Toland / R Black	Animal feed for Belfast Zoo
Supply and delivery of frozen fish to Belfast Zoo	Up to 3 years	£84,000	S Toland / R Black	Animal feed for Belfast Zoo
Replacement of hardware that supports the NIHE environment	Up to 1 year	£263,719	R Cregan	Existing hardware becoming end of life (being reported retrospectively)
Deliver a programme of cross community activities - Forth Meadow Community Greenaway - Peace IV	Up to 11 months	£150,000	S Toland / R Black	To improved footfall along the Greenway's connecting foot / cycle paths, encouraging movement between communities and creating unique

				experiences for local residents, and people from other communities.
PEACE IV Youth Engagement & Civic Education Project	Up to 11 months	£160,000	S Toland / R Black	A key deliverable of the PEACE IV Shared Space & Services theme, that will build positive relations between young people along the Forth Meadow Community Greenway and contribute to building positive relations.
Supply of hay, meadow hay, barley straw, lucerne and browse	Up to 3 years	£126,000	S Toland / R Black	Animal feed for Belfast Zoo
Provision of public address, staging and lighting equipment	Up to 4 years	£480,000	A Reid	PA, staging and lighting equipment for a planned events programme
Hire of ancillary equipment for Council events	Up to 4 years	£250,000	A Reid	To provide a range of equipment at Council Events
Inspection, cleaning and maintenance of automatic public conveniences	Up to 6 years	£600,000	S Toland / R Black	Maintenance and cleaning support contract of automatic public conveniences
Tender for qualified professional team to explore regeneration opportunities and produce a concept place-making plan for Council owned land at Corporation Street and Exchange Street	Up to 6 months	£50,000	A Reid	To prepare a place making concept for regeneration of Brownfield Council land at Corporation Street and Exchange Street that will facilitate residential opportunities as part of the Strategic Sites Assessment (Housing Led Regeneration) workstream

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Total Value	SRO	Supplier
Improvement of the efficiency of the heating and cooling systems within the Waterfront Hall	£45,000	S Grimes	Hysopt
Bobbin Café City Hall - contract extension	£45,000 income	J Walsh	Now Group - Loaf Catering
Supply of a range of fruit and vegetables to the Canteen	£45,000	J Walsh	North Down Group
*Appointment of integrated design team to provide design development services to support Covid19 'Revitalisation programme' (funded)	Additional £45,000	A Reid	MMAS/OGU Architects

* For Information - addendum to the STA approved in January 2021 for £60k with an additional £45k value added.

Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Contract Duration	Modification	SRO	Supplier
T1852 - Delivery and supply of live and frozen animal feed (lot 3 frozen meat)	Up to 3 years	Additional 4 months and £6,000	S Toland / R Black	WD Meats
T1883 - Supply and delivery of frozen fish to Belfast Zoo	Up to 3 years	Additional 4 months and £6,000	S Toland / R Black	Marine Nutrition
T1947 - Delivery of Peace IV Transform for Change	Up to 2.5 years	Additional 6 months	S Toland / R Black	The Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action

Table 4: Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Title of Contract	Duration	Value	SRO	Supplier
T2149 - Event management and support services to deliver collaborative public private partnership (Renewed Ambition Programme RAP)	Up to 8 months	£70,400	A Reid	Lanyon Communications
Measured Term Contract for mechanical services including callouts and repairs	Up 2 months	£120,000	S Grimes	WJM Building Services Ltd
Consultancy Services – strategic support for C&NS	Up to 8 months	£125,000	J Tully	Deloitte

Request for Funding - Belfast Youth Cup

The Director of Finance and Resources informed the Members that the Council had received a request from Playing for the Future CIC for funding towards the costs of hosting the Belfast Youth Cup soccer tournament.

He explained that the organisation worked to bring people together to create opportunities for local children and celebrate diversity and that it operated Playing for the Future Academies in Belfast and Lurgan. It had established the Belfast Youth Cup in 2019 as a pilot initiative in order to provide young people with an opportunity to gain experience from playing in an international youth tournament and to showcase Belfast to a wider audience. Whilst, it had been the intention initially to limit the number of teams to eight, twenty-four teams from Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, England and Scotland had actually participated. The tournament, which had in 2020 been expanded to include teams from Denmark and South America, had been cancelled due to Covid-19 which, in terms of this year, had resulted in 30% of revenues through team registrations being lost, due to a knock on effect.

He reported that 120 teams from across Ireland had participated in this year's competition, which had taken place between 12th and 15th August, and that Seaview, Ulidia Playing Fields and the Ulster University Jordanstown had been used as venues. 500 bed nights had been created, 45% of which had related to the City centre. He drew the Members' attention to financial information which had been provided by Playing for the Future which had revealed that, as things stood, there would be a net loss of £29,244 associated with this year's competition. It had been emphasised that, should this not be addressed, it would have implications for next year's competition, as the number of participants would have to be significantly reduced.

The Director added that Playing for the Future had not requested a specific amount from the Council and he suggested that, should Members be minded to provide financial support by, for example, covering the £544 hire charge for Ulidia Playing Fields or making a contribution to help reduce the tournament deficit, it would be met through the Covid-19 reserve fund.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Pankhurst,
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

That the Committee agrees to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to allocate £5,000 to Playing for the Future towards the cost of hosting the Belfast Youth Cup.

On a vote, thirteen Members voted for the proposal and four against, with one "no vote" and it was declared carried.

Request for Funding - Tri-Cities Golf Event

The City Solicitor informed the Members that representatives from the councils of Belfast, Dublin and Edinburgh had, since 2002, participated in an annual Tri-Cities Golf competition. The event, which had originated from the Cities of the Isles network, had been developed with the aim of establishing strong social capital networks across the three cities, as well as providing opportunities for networking, collaboration and engagement on a range of shared challenges.

He explained that this year's competition would take place in Belfast, with Belvoir Park Golf Club being used on 2nd September and Dunmurry Golf Club on the following day. Participants would meet their own travel and accommodation costs and would receive no subsequent allowances or expenses. He pointed out that, each year, the host city met the cost of green fees for the visiting teams and provided a meal after each day's competition and, accordingly, recommended that funding of up to a maximum of £2,000 be allocated from existing budgets to cover those costs.

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the recommendation.

Equality and Good Relations

Update on Language Strategy

The Members of the Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update on the Language Strategy.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the report.

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 The Council agreed a strategic approach to progress the Language Strategy in May 2021 including approving the establishment of:

- **a cross-party, bi-annual / quarterly Member Language Strategy Working Group;**

- a new external Irish Language Forum and a new external Ulster-Scots Forum to add to the existing Council stakeholder fora for the other language communities; and
- an internal Language Strategy officer working group.

Key Issues

Progress update on Language Strategy

- 3.2 A report agreeing the next steps for the Language Strategy was brought to the Equality and Diversity Network – Strategic, which is chaired by the City Solicitor, in June where it was agreed that the Governance and Compliance Manager would carry out Departmental Management Team briefings so senior officers are aware of the implications of the Language Strategy. These are currently underway.
- 3.3 The internal Language Strategy officer working group has been established and comprises officers from Marketing and Communications; Customer Focus; Good Relations; Tourism, Culture, Heritage and Arts; Building Control; Corporate HR; City and Neighbourhood Services; Physical Programmes as well as the Language Officers. The key outcome from this officer working group is to develop draft action plans for each of the five language strands which we will bring to the first meeting of the Elected Member Working Group.
- 3.4 Nominations for the Elected Member Working Group will be sought in August, with the first and second meetings planned for September and October. It is planned to use these first two meetings to invite key stakeholders from the five language strands to brief the Working Group and for Elected Members to review and agree the draft action plans.
- 3.5 It is planned to establish and hold the new stakeholder fora for Irish and Ulster Scots in October / November.
- 3.6 In addition, English and Irish versions of the Council's logo have been provided to Glór na nGael to use for the Irish Language in Business Awards later this year and also Cairde Ard Eoin, a community group in Ardoyne, for local history storyboards as part of an environmental improvement scheme from the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme Business Cluster and Community Grant Scheme. This is in line with the decision made by the Joint Group of the Party Leaders' Forum and Historic Centenaries Working Group from [October 2013](#) which was agreed through SP and R to design a logo in Irish for use by individual Members and organisations. It is suggested that a process is developed so that these requests are approved and logged by the Irish Language Officer.

- 3.7 The Irish Language Officer is also working with Foras na Gaelige on the Council hosting an online event as part of the Foras na Gaelige and Scotland's Bòrd na Gàidhlig's joint Comicille1500 celebrations.

Progress update on the revised Dual Language Street Sign Policy

- 3.8 Following the ratification of the revised Dual Language Street Sign Policy in May 2021, an officer working group has been established and procedures have been developed for implementation of the revised policy. An external equality specialist has been engaged to carry out the EQIA and this work is currently underway. The revised procedures and other steps necessary to establish the policy will be brought through the Elected Member Working Group in the coming months.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.9 There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

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

- 3.10 The promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations are key principles within which the Language Strategy is delivered. The Language Strategy was subject to the Council's usual screening process."

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the report.

Audit of Inequalities and Equality Action Plan 2021-24

The City Solicitor reminded the Members that the Committee, at its meeting on 19th February, had approved the Draft Audit of Inequalities and the Equality Action Plan for 2021-24 for public consultation. The documents had been prepared as part of the Council's compliance requirements under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, with the Equality Action Plan scheduled to run from 2021 until 2024, to align with the Corporate Plan.

He provided a brief overview of the consultation process and the list of consultees and confirmed that:

- i. data gathered would be considered through the internal officer Equality and Diversity Network Strategic and Operational groups and would be fed into specific, relevant programmes;

- ii. no changes had been made to the draft Audit of Inequalities and this would now, subject to approval, be submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and published as a final document; and
- iii. no changes had been made to the draft Equality Action Plan 2021-24 and this would now, subject to approval, be submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and published as a final document.

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve the [Audit of Inequalities 2021](#) and the [Equality Action Plan 2021-24](#) for submission to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

**Equality and Diversity - Quarterly Screening Report
Report and Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report**

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note a summary of equality screenings and rural needs impact assessments for the period from April to June 2021 and approve the submission to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs of the Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Return for 2020/21.

**Equality Impact Assessment for the Transport Hub
and Associated Masterplan – Response to Translink**

The City Solicitor informed the Members that the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company, trading as Translink, had carried out an equality impact assessment of the Weavers' Cross Integrated Transport Hub, in accordance with the statutory duties contained within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The assessment had included associated works and projects, up to and including the final build stage of the project.

He explained that the draft equality impact assessment report had been made available as part of the formal consultation stage of the process and that the Council had been invited, as a named consultee, to submit comments on both it and the preliminary recommendations around measures to mitigate any potential future adverse impact and/or alternative policies. He drew the Members' attention to the Council's proposed response, which had welcomed the development, as being in line with the objectives set out within the Belfast Agenda.

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve the submission of the following comments to Translink, as the Council's response to the equality impact assessment for the Belfast Transport Hub and Wider Masterplan:

Belfast City Council response to Translink on the Equality Impact Assessment for the Transport Hub and Associated Masterplan

Background

Translink has opened a period of public consultation on an Equality Impact Assessment for the Transport Hub and Associated Masterplan. An extension to the consultation period was agreed to allow for approval of our response at Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 20 August 2021, with the response then to be submitted subject to Council approval in September 2021.

Introduction

Belfast City Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Equality Impact Assessment for the Transport Hub and Associated Masterplan. It should be noted that the Council's City Growth and Regeneration Committee is scheduled to receive a presentation on the Transport Hub/Weavers Cross development in August 2021 which will also provide an opportunity for discussion on the development.

We have given due consideration to this EQIA given the synergies between the aims of the Transport Hub and Associated Masterplan, and its potential to contribute to the ongoing transformation of Belfast. Comments were sought from across the council for inclusion in the response and we welcome any opportunity for further dialogue on any of the areas noted.

Contributing to the Belfast Agenda

As noted in the EQIA, the Transport Hub, is a key transport-led regeneration project that will contribute to Belfast's community plan (the Belfast Agenda) ambitions and vision for the city in 2035 that *Belfast will be a city re-imagined and resurgent. A great place to live and work for everyone. Beautiful, well-connected and culturally vibrant, it will be a sustainable city shared and loved by all its citizens, free from the legacy of conflict.* As a key city infrastructure development it will contribute to our shared city outcome that by 2035:

- Belfast is vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city.

The Transport Hub is also identified as a transformational intervention for the city centre in the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) which recognises the pivotal role of the city centre for the success of the city and for the region. This sets out the Council's ambition for the continuing growth and regeneration of the city core and its surrounding area up to 2030 and has been adopted by the Department for Communities as the policy framework for the city centre.

BCCRIS identifies the South Centre of the city centre as the primary focus for Belfast's office sector, at the centre of NI's knowledge economy and an essential driver of the region's economic growth. The Transport Hub and associated masterplan will be a major improvement in convenience and connectivity as well

as promoting sustainable and active travel, catering for over 14 million passengers per year; the impact of its reach will extend well beyond Belfast city centre. However, it is more than a multi-modal transport facility, the development will redefine a key gateway to the city centre as well as offering significant regeneration potential.

The Transport Hub will also have a key role in contributing to the Bolder Vision for Belfast, a shared vision with commitment to further collaboration from Belfast City Council, Department for Communities and Department for Infrastructure. As a key gateway to the city for employment, social-life and tourism the Transport Hub will contribute to the Bolder Vision's key principles of prioritising integrated walking, cycling and public transport as well as providing inclusive, shared spaces and improving access for all communities to the city centre.

Serving our communities

Inclusion and accessibility need to be at the centre of the Transport Hub for its success, and travel to and from the hub. We welcome recognition of the ongoing need to take cognisance of the diverse needs of those who may choose to use the hub. Given demographic changes and as the Covid-19 recovery is felt in the tourism industry and the broader economy, it is likely that there will be increasing diversity in needs as the development progresses and is operational. We note the mitigating measures that have been prioritised along with the ongoing engagement with stakeholders such as IMTAC. We would also encourage engagement with stakeholders from all of the Section 75 protected characteristics groups.

The Council has received several representations from local business and residents' groups in relation to the development of the Transport Hub/Weavers Cross. We would therefore emphasise the importance of ongoing, meaningful community engagement as the Transport Hub and associated masterplan progresses to ensure that the economic and connectivity benefits of this development are felt by local communities and businesses.

As referenced in the EQIA, the establishment of a Community Committee and the commitment of the dedicated community engagement manager for the Belfast Transport Hub since 2017 are welcomed, given the significance of this development. These are vital resources in recognising the needs and maintaining dialogue with all communities of interest; particularly in catalysing the regeneration in the surrounding areas and maximising the benefits for the local communities.

The partnership working to date between the Community Engagement Manager, Belfast City Council and the contractor has resulted in a bespoke 'Belfast Transport Hub Construction Employment Academy' to offer employment opportunities for local people, who had been out of employment. 24.9% of the working age population in Belfast are employment deprived (compared to a regional figure of 20.6%) and 38.1% of the working age adults have no or low levels of qualification (compared to 35.6% regionally) ² and The Transport Hub has highlighted the role that flagship developments in the city centre can play in delivering on inclusive growth and social value commitments through measures such as this. While not specifically identified as a Section 75 group, the cumulative impact of multiple sources of disadvantage – low incomes, benefit

² NISRA (2018) NI Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017

dependency, low skills levels and qualifications – are likely to combine together to impact on an individual’s opportunity and capacity to participate in employability programmes. The impact of Covid-19 has also served to accelerate the inequalities in society emphasising the need for an inclusive and sustainable recovery.

The first Employment Academy in 2020 saw 101 people signing up through 6 sign-up events, including two dedicated sign-up events in Sandy Row and Grosvenor Rd to promote access to employment for the adjoining communities. Of those who met the criteria, 16 participants were selected for the Belfast Transport Hub Construction Employment Academy, which resulted in 9 job outcomes relating to the Enabling Works.

Plans for the Construction Employment Academies for the Main Works are already in place with Social Value job opportunities due to come online from January 2022.

This commitment to inclusive growth and social value of the Transport Hub has been recognised through the achievement of two National Social Value Awards in 2021 for its delivery, in partnership with Belfast City Council and the contractor, working with the local community.

We welcome the continued engagement and commitment of the Transport Hub to inclusive growth and the development of the Inclusive Growth city charter.

Good relations

We welcome cognisance of the historical status of the site of the Boyne Bridge within the project and that it will continue to be afforded due and proportionate regard through ongoing engagement with the local community. The aim of such engagement is to ensure that good relations are maintained and enhanced, this is key to the diversity of our city as outlined in our Good Relations Strategy, agreed by all the political parties on Council in September 2019.

While much of the current focus is on the construction phase, it may be worth considering at this stage, the ultimate potential of the new Transport Hub and Wider Masterplan to be a new Shared Space for people from all backgrounds. The Good Relations Strategy details shared space principles and how they fit with the strategic vision for the city. When we use the term Shared Space we are describing space that is welcoming, accessible, good quality and safe.

- Welcoming

- Shared Space should be welcoming, where people feel safe to visit and to take part in activity within that space, increasing an overall sense of shared experience and community**
- Activities within the public spaces will respect diversity and promote inclusion**

- Accessible

- There will be equality of opportunity afforded to all those using public spaces and accessing goods, facilities and services**

- In a Shared City, public expressions of identity will be respected and respectful
- Shared Spaces should reflect the values of diversity and inclusion
- Good quality
- Shared Space should be good quality, with attractive, high quality services and well-designed buildings and spaces
- Safe
 - Shared Space should be safe for all

We welcome the stated purpose of the purpose of the Masterplan as being: ‘to create an accessible, safe, comfortable and attractive environment for the Hub’s customers, visitors and employees alike that is functional and practical to operate, cost-effective to maintain, commercially attractive, efficient and sustainable’. There is also potential for the project to contribute to an additional outcome of our Good Relations Strategy, focused on shared services. Through this aim we will:

- Focus on inclusion and social innovation
- Improve our use of data and evidence-based planning
- Evidence and articulate where division exacerbate social and economic issues
- Co-design and co-create new solutions to challenging issues
- Promote integrated planning
- Encourage projects that build the capacity of organisations and communities to be confident to access services throughout the city
- Encourage attitudinal and behavioural change.

Use of datasets in EQIA Appendix 3

We welcome Translink’s research and the inclusion of supporting datasets within the EQIA. One such dataset presented is contained in Appendix 3 of the draft EQIA which outlines Data on Residents of Belfast. This is an *extract from the Belfast Local Government Plan Topic Paper 17: Population, 2017*. It should be noted that this topic paper is a supporting document in relation to the Belfast Local Development Plan *draft Plan Strategy 2035*.

The *draft Plan Strategy* is still in draft form and we are currently awaiting the Planning Appeals Commission’s report following the Independent Examination earlier this year. It is therefore potentially subject to modification, adoption or withdrawal once the final report is. The policies in the *draft Plan Strategy* cannot be used until such time as the Plan is adopted. It is therefore possible that the Weavers Cross proposal will be considered under the current planning policy framework. We trust that as a public authority, Translink is however willing to commit to the proposals identified within Appendix 3 without necessarily being planning policy driven.

Therefore, we would ask for the following changes:

- a. Removal of the reference to “In land use planning terms” at para 4.3,

as this relates to the *draft* Plan Strategy and is not current land use planning policy. We would suggest the revised paragraph should read as follows:

‘The principle of promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between people’ must be a key objective behind the plan and will be a central theme of the sustainability assessment. This means ensuring everyone benefits from quality housing, employment, and access to public services and recreation facilities. These themes will be addressed in more detail in later papers. However, this paper begins the process of identifying issues and needs facing different groups within the area over and above the general population, so that these can be considered at every stage of the plan making process. If an aim of the plan is also to help build a cohesive society then it must also be recognised that this can only be achieved by “sharing space” and “accessing opportunities”.’

- b. **Removal of the reference to “that planning provides” at para 4.4, as this relates to the *draft* Plan Strategy and is not current land use planning policy. We would suggest the revised paragraph should read as follows:**

‘The age structure of a population has obvious implications for planning. A growing young population will impact on the demand for and provision of childcare facilities, nursery, primary and secondary schools. A growing working age population would necessitate adequate housing especially for those entering the housing market and employment opportunities. For a growing elderly population, adequate services and housing to meet their specific needs must also be considered.’

The Council reiterates its broad welcome for the proposals set out in respect of the Transport Hub and asks that this response be considered going forward.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Shared City Partnership

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve and adopt the minutes of the Shared City Partnership of 9th August, including the recommendations:

- i. to invite the CYP2 Delivery Partner Active Communities Network to present to a future meeting;
- ii. to invite Mediation NI to present the Shared History Narratives for the Shared Space to the Partnership at its meeting in September;
- iii. to approve a reallocation of budget to enable the funding awarded to NBIN/TASCIT for the Challenging Conversations project under BCC 8 Our Safe Community to be increased from £5k to £6,565; and
- iv. to note that the Dean Clarke Foundation has, under delegated authority, been allocated £1,940 towards a diversionary programme of activity for the Tigers Bay/ Mountcollyer area under the Strategic Intervention Programme.

Operational Issues

Minutes of the Meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve and adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 12th August.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Social Policy Working Group

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve and adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Social Policy Working Group of 30th June.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Working Group on the Climate Crisis

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve and adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Working Group on the Climate Crisis of 23rd June.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Active Belfast Limited Board

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the minutes of the meeting of the Active Belfast Limited Board of 9th August.

Requests for Use of the City Hall and the Provision of Hospitality

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the recommendations made in respect of those applications received up to 9th August, as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
2021 EVENTS						
Royal British Legion	26 September 2021	<p>Celebration to mark Centenary of the Royal British Legion</p> <p>- Reception and service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph. We would then be leaving City Hall to march to Belfast Cathedral for a service'.</p> <p>Numbers attending – 120</p> <p><i>* Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.</i></p>	C	No (charity)	Yes, Tea/ Coffee Reception as centenary	Approve No charge Yes, hospitality
University of Atypical	1 October 2021	<p>Launch of Bounce Festival – annual arts festival that showcases outstanding new work by deaf and disabled writers, producers, actors, dancers, musicians, and directors.</p>	D	No (charity)	No Hospitality	Approve No charge No hospitality

		<p>Numbers attending – 12</p> <p><i>* Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.</i></p>				
Belfast Trust	18 November 2021	<p>Launch of Men’s Health Week to showcase support available for men locally to get connected.</p> <p>Numbers attending – 35</p> <p><i>* Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.</i></p>	A & D	Yes - £115 (Government Dept)	No Hospitality	Approve Yes charge No hospitality
2022 EVENTS						
Ulster Hockey	21 January 2022	<p>Celebration dinner for 125th Anniversary of Ulster Hockey</p> <p>Numbers attending – 300</p> <p><i>* Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with</i></p>	C	No (charity)	Yes, Wine Reception as significant anniversary	Approve No charge Wine Reception

		<i>COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.</i>				
British Transplant Society	3 March 2022	<p>Celebration dinner for 50th Anniversary of British Transplant Society BTS will be holding their Congress in ICC for 400 delegates, City Hall will be the conference welcome and anniversary dinner</p> <p>Numbers attending – 250 -</p> <p><i>* Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.</i></p>	C	No (charity)	Yes, Wine Reception as significant anniversary	Approve No charge Wine Reception
Catholic Chaplaincy, Queens University	10 June 2022	<p>Golden Jubilee Ball to celebrate 50 years of Catholic Chaplaincy at the Elmwood Avenue.</p> <p>Numbers attending – 400</p> <p><i>* Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in</i></p>	C	No (charity)	Yes, Wine Reception as significant anniversary	Approve No charge Wine Reception

		<i>line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.</i>				
2023 EVENTS						
International Society for the Study of Individual Differences	20 July 2023	Conference Welcome Reception and Dinner to four-day conference taking place at Queen's University Belfast. Numbers attending – 250	A & B	No <i>£825 waived due to links with Visit Belfast</i>	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality

Other Business

Belfast Maritime Consortium Supervisory Board

The City Solicitor informed the Members that the Chief Executive had been invited to become a member of the Belfast Maritime Consortium Supervisory Board. He confirmed that he had reviewed the proposed terms of appointment and was satisfied that there was no conflict of interest for the Chief Executive.

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve her appointment to the Belfast Maritime Consortium Supervisory Board.

Recruitment of Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty

The Members of the Committee were reminded that, at the meeting on 18th June, they had agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to agree that the post of Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty be recruited on a permanent basis and that the Elected Members on the selection panel consist of the Chairperson of the Committee (or her nominee), together with Councillors McLaughlin and Pankhurst.

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The Chief Executive reported that she had since been informed that Councillor Pankhurst would be unable to participate in the selection panel and that he had been unsuccessful in securing a replacement from his Political Party.

Accordingly, she sought a nominee from a Political Party other than those which were already represented on the recruitment panel and referred to the need to balance the panel in terms of gender and community background.

After discussion, the Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note that the Alliance Party would, in the first instance, seek to nominate a Member to sit on the selection panel.

Chairperson