

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 17th December, 2021

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

**HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

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

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

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported on behalf of Councillor McReynolds.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 19th November 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 December, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Walsh declared an interest in relation to agenda item 2d – Requests for Funding – People and Communities Committee, on the basis that he was on the Board of Coláiste Feirste, which was being recommended for ad hoc funding, and left the meeting whilst the item was being considered.

Councillor Black declared an interest in relation to agenda item 5d – Summer Community Diversionary Festival Programme, in that she was involved in an organisation which had delivered diversionary activities in August 2021, and left the meeting before the vote was taken.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following nine 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.

Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2022-23

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 19th November, it had received an update on the development of the revenue estimates and the setting of the District Rate, with an indicative rates increase for 2020/21 in the region of 2.99% having been suggested and a further report to be submitted to the meeting in December. Accordingly, the Director of Finance and Resources submitted a report which set out the current position and provided further information on business-as-usual cost pressures, efficiencies, rate base projections, Departmental growth proposals and next steps.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. agreed the following Departmental and Growth proposals:
 - a. Finance and Resources: £331,158 (Strategic Policy and Resources Committee);
 - b. Climate and Inclusive Growth £523,423 (Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and People and Communities Committee);
 - c. Legal Services £46,764 (Strategic Policy and Resources Committee);
 - d. City and Neighbourhood Services Committee £748,683 (People and Communities Committee and City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Zoo));
 - e. Place and Economy Department £125,808 (City Growth and Regeneration Committee); and
 - f. Capital Financing £500,000 (Strategic Policy and Resources Committee).

- ii. agreed to recommend the following cash limits for 2022/23:
 - a. a cash limit of £48,311,171 for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, including £3,270,000 for the Belfast Investment Fund and £3,000,000 for City Deal;
 - b. a cash limit of £87,423,434 for the People and Communities Committee;
 - c. a cash limit of £19,461,512 for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee;
 - d. a cash limit of £1,462,301 for the Planning Committee; and
 - e. a Capital Financing Budget of £22,274,022.
- iii. noted the next steps in setting the District Rate, as outlined within the report;
- iv. agreed that the Director of Finance and Resources would provide the Party Leaders with additional information on projected year-end Departmental underspends;
- v. agreed that the post of Belfast Region City Programme Director be made permanent, in line with the postholder's contract;
- vi. agreed to proceed at risk with the recruitment of the two City Protection Manager posts referred to within the report; and
- vii. agreed that the aforementioned decisions would not be subject to call-in, as that would cause an unreasonable delay in striking the rate by the legislative deadline of 15th February, 2022, which would be prejudicial to the Council's and the public's interest.

Organisational Reviews and Change Programme

The Committee noted the contents of a report setting out the indicative timescales and prioritised work programme for the Organisational Reviews and Change Portfolio projects and agreed that it should receive an update on progress on a quarterly basis.

Employees on Temporary Contracts

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 19th November, it had been provided with a breakdown, on a Departmental and unit basis, of the number of staff currently employed on temporary contracts and the length of time on which they had been on them.

The Committee's attention was drawn to a report providing additional information which had been requested at that meeting on the total number of staff employed in those sections which had been identified as having staff in temporary posts and on the actual length of time that those staff who had been identified as being in a temporary

post for more than five years had been in that post. It was pointed out that information on the current position of the staff who had vacated temporary posts between June, 2018 and November, 2021, which had also been requested, was not readily available in Departments and would require the diversion of considerable resources from other services to collate it manually. This information would be held electronically moving forward.

The Chief Executive and the City Solicitor reviewed the work which was being undertaken to reduce the number of staff on temporary contracts and confirmed that wider potential solutions were currently being explored.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the contents of the report;
- ii. agreed that those staff who had been employed on temporary contracts in more than one role should be taken into consideration in future discussions around the wider potential solutions which were currently being explored; and
- iii. agreed that it should receive an update on progress on a quarterly basis, with the next such report to provide details also on the number of agency staff employed across the Council.

Requests for Funding – People and Communities Committee

The Committee acceded to a request which had been made by the People and Communities Committee, at its meeting on 9th November:

- i. to provide 'ad hoc' funding of £51,426 to An Spórtlann, Coláiste Feirste, as financial bridging support, to enable the facility to remain open to the public to the end of March, 2022 and allow the review of the first year of public use provision, which had been requested by the People and Communities Committee, to be completed; and
- ii. to establish a specified reserve to the total of £631,360 from the Council's Covid-19 reserve, to be used to top up the micro/medium grant scheme during 2022/23.

Recruitment of Senior Posts

(With the exception of the Chief Executive, the Senior Democratic Services Officer and the Democratic Services Officer, all officers left the meeting whilst this item was under consideration.)

Chief Executive

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 22nd October, it had approved the recruitment of the post of Chief Executive on a permanent basis and had agreed the shortlisting and final interview panels.

The Chief Executive submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing details around the advertisement of the post and recruitment schedule and recommending that it approve the accompanying recruitment documentation, namely, the job specification, person specification, core competencies/indicative behaviours and job advertisement.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and approved the recruitment documentation.

Director of Neighbourhood Services

The Chief Executive informed the Committee that Mr. Ryan Black, the current Director of Neighbourhood Services, would be leaving the Council at the end of March.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed:

- i. to approve the recruitment of the post of Director of Neighbourhood Services on a permanent basis; and
- ii. that the shortlisting and interview panel consist of the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson (or their nominees) and Councillor Bunting.

The Committee noted that the Chief Executive would shortly brief the Party Leaders on the proposed interim arrangements to be put in place until such times as a Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services and a Director of Neighbourhood Services had been appointed and agreed that there was a need to examine, in consultation with the Party Leaders, the operation and functions of the City and Neighbourhood Services Department moving forward.

**A City Imagining Cultural
Strategy – Update on Events**

The Committee considered a report providing an update on the ongoing development of City events, as part of the ten-year cultural strategy, A City Imagining. The report made specific reference to the new approach being adopted to delivering St. Patrick's Day events from 2022 onwards and outlined the three-stage process which had been used to assess applications to deliver pilot projects next year.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and adopted the recommendations therein to:

- i. approve the commissioning of the two highest ranking organisations, namely, Beat Carnival and The Duncairn, to deliver pilot projects in March, 2022 and to allocate funding of £100,000 and £80,000 respectively; and

- ii. agree to extend the development phase for the two remaining projects, namely, Féile an Phobail and MayWe, to enable each of them to provide an updated proposal for delivery in March, 2022.

Review of Climate Function

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 17th December, 2019, it had, as part of the Revenue Estimates and District Rate setting process, allocated £611,500 towards the establishment of a permanent team to deliver the Council's obligations under climate mitigation/resilience.

He reported that a Commissioner for Resilience role had been created initially and strategies developed to enable the Council and the City to become more resilient to the threats posed by climate change. Temporary roles had also been put in place.

The Continuous Improvement section had since been commissioned to examine the roles which the organisation would need to deliver on its climate mitigation/resilience commitments, both internally and externally, with extensive benchmarking, stakeholder analysis and a review of strategies having been undertaken. He drew the Committee's attention to the resulting staffing structure and associated job roles which had now been created and confirmed that posts would be filled, as appropriate, by redesignation and recruitment, via a Council-wide trawl or public advertisement, in line with the Council's agreed policies and procedures.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

City Hall Recovery Plan – Update on Progress

The Committee noted a report providing an update on the progress being made across each of the operational areas in implementing the City Hall Recovery Plan.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

City Centre Built Heritage

Councillor Murphy highlighted the importance of the built heritage within the city and referred also to the history associated with many buildings and landmarks. He highlighted the recent strategic acquisition by the Council of the former Metro building and proposed that the Committee agree to engage with the owner of another building of architectural and historical significance in the inner North of the City, which was currently empty, with a view to bringing it into Council ownership and exploring potential uses.

The Committee agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting on how the proposal could be progressed, resourced and managed and that it also identify similar buildings at risk across the City, potential funding streams and any role to be played by Central Government.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

**Motion Rent Controls - Response
from Department for Communities**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st November, had passed the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor O'Hara and seconded by Councillor Groogan:

"This Council supports a system of rent controls in the City.

The Council notes with grave concern the escalating prices of rents in all parts of Belfast, notes the failure of the Executive to regulate the rental market and notes the significant additional number of students moving to the City, with the relocation of the University of Ulster campus to North Belfast. The Council is concerned about the increasing number of Houses of Multiple Occupancy spreading across the City and the escalation of living costs, while wages stagnate and National Insurance contributions increase.

The Council, therefore, calls upon the Northern Ireland Executive to immediately bring forward a Rent Control scheme for the City."

The City Solicitor informed the Committee that a response had been received from Mr. D. Polley, the Director of Housing Supply Policy within the Department for Communities.

Mr. Polley had pointed out that Minister Hargey had stated that the Private Rented Sector was a priority area and that she was committed to improving both standards and affordability in that sector.

He had explained that the Private Tenancies Bill, which was currently progressing through the Northern Ireland Assembly, was the first phase in a legislative programme which, amongst other benefits, would bring forward improvements in safety and provide tenants with greater protection from eviction. The Bill also contained a clause which permitted only one increase in rent in a twelve-month period, thereby protecting tenants from unexpected rises.

He had gone on to state that Minister Hargey was also committed to looking at fair and affordable rents in the private and social sector and had requested that this work begin as soon as possible in the next mandate, as part of a further phase of reform. The Minister also wished to increase affordable housing supply and to expand housing options and, on 18th October, a consultation had been launched on one such affordable housing product, namely, Intermediate Rent.

Intermediate Rent, in terms of rental costs and length of tenancy offered, occupied the space between the social and private rented homes and sought to deliver a new supply of more affordable, good quality, well-managed homes, providing an additional rental choice for lower income households. It could provide a suitable housing option for people and families who were living in the Private Rented Sector and struggling with high rents and poor housing conditions.

Mr. Polley had concluded by confirming that the aforementioned consultation would close on 14th January 2022, and that a Government response would be published in due course. Subject to approvals for a scheme and its funding, the first homes could be made available during 2023.

The Committee noted the response.

Governance

Re-Establishment of the North Foreshore Members' Steering Group

The City Solicitor reminded the Committee that the North Foreshore Members' Steering Group had been established in 2016 to oversee the management of the North Foreshore, particularly in relation to policy, resource allocation and financial risk.

He explained that the Steering Group had not met since 2019 and suggested that, given the increase in development proposals coming forward, this would be an appropriate time to widen its remit to include the Belfast Castle, Cavehill and Belfast Zoo. The Steering Group would seek to ensure that economic, social and community benefits were fully maximised and would consist of one Member from each of the Political Parties represented on the Council, ideally from that part of the City.

The Committee approved the re-establishment of the aforementioned Steering Group and agreed that it be renamed the Castle, Cavehill, Zoo and North Foreshore Steering Group.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Belfast Poverty Commission

The Committee considered the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 This report outlines the proposed next steps in establishing a Poverty Commission to support the Council's work on Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty action planning.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The committee is asked to:

- i note the initial steps to engage with the Poverty Truth Network; and**
- ii nominate representatives to engage with the Poverty Truth Network during a series of exploratory meetings during 13th and 14th January, 2022.**

3.0 Main Report

Poverty Truth Network

- 3.1** The Poverty Truth Network helps cities to determine whether a Poverty Truth Commission would be right for their local area. Poverty Truth Network will accompany cities at every stage of their journey from asking '*whether a Poverty Truth Commission could happen here*' through to the establishment of a commission.
- 3.2** The Poverty Truth Network is a registered charity that supports Poverty Truth Commissions and encourages them to work together. Poverty Truth Network trustees have all been commissioners of local Poverty Truth Commissions and they aim to have at least 50% of their board made up of trustees who have had a direct experience of the struggle against poverty.
- 3.3** Every Poverty Truth Commission is invited to become part of the Poverty Truth Network after their opening event. A commission does this by proposing two of its commissioners to become members of the network.

Approach to establishing a Poverty Commission

- 3.4** An appendix providing a short introduction to the approach and principles of the Poverty Truth Network has been circulated to Members. The key phases of the Poverty Truth Network framework for establishing a Poverty Commission are outlined below. This approach has been applied in a number of locations since first used in Scotland in 2009, including Dundee, Leeds, Birmingham, Northampton, Salford and Swansea.

Phase 1

- 3.5** Organisations and individuals who are interested in establishing a local commission work with the Network to determine whether setting one up is right for the area. A key factor within this process is whether there is sufficient interest and commitment by people with a direct experience of poverty as well as organisations and institutions in the local area for a Poverty Truth Commission. A start up group is established of interested parties to help set up the commission.

Phase 2

- 3.6** Commissioners are recruited who have a direct experience of poverty. They meet regularly for a sustained period of time (about 6 to 8 months) to get to know each other. They explore their experiences and decide what they would like to

communicate about poverty to their area. Civic and business commissioners are recruited to form the other half of the commission. Phase 2 ends with a public event in which the first group of commissioners share their experiences of poverty.

Phase 3

- 3.7 All the commissioners start meeting regularly for full commission conversations to build relationships with each other and identify issues that they would like to address. Issue groups are formed to explore the issues the commission wants to address. One-to-One meetings enable commissioners to encounter and understand each other's world.

Phase 4

- 3.8 A closing event is held to communicate the findings of the commission with the wider public. This will include the work done in issue groups and the effect that the process has had on commissioners. Work continues to help commissioners to embed what they have learnt into their communities, organisations and institutions.
- 3.9 A short video providing further information on the Poverty Truth Network's approach is available at: <https://povertytruthnetwork.org/commissions/what-is-a-poverty-truth-commission/>

The proposed role of Poverty Truth Network in a Belfast Poverty Commission

- 3.10 The Poverty Truth Network is offering to help Belfast determine whether a Poverty Truth Commission would be right for the city at this time. Poverty Truth Network has offered to support Belfast at each stage of the journey from asking '*whether a Poverty Truth Commission could happen here*' through to the establishment of a commission.
- 3.11 By drawing upon the experience of the different commissions, Poverty Truth Network proposes to help Belfast understand what a Poverty Truth Commission looks like. Poverty Truth Network has offered to explain how they operate and what resources are needed to make one happen. The Poverty Truth Network team is proposing to visit Belfast to communicate about Poverty Truth with key stakeholders and be available for regular online meetings. The Belfast Poverty Commission, if established, would be responsible for their own work.

- 3.12 The Poverty Truth Network supports commissions in a number of different ways. They hold an annual gathering for commissioners from all of the different Poverty Truth Commissions. They also have developed peer support for facilitators of local Poverty Truth Commissions. Regularly facilitators meet online to discuss issues that they are facing and share insights with one another. They also get together in small groups and as a wider team of facilitators to support and encourage one another as well as to identify and develop useful resources.

Proposed Next Steps

- 3.13 It is proposed that the initial work to explore the approach to a Belfast Poverty Commission commences in parallel with ongoing recruitment of the Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty, and the work of the Council and Community Planning Partnership to adopt an urgent approach to food poverty and minimising the impacts of fuel poverty in the city this winter.
- 3.14 The Poverty Truth Network has offered to attend a series of exploratory meetings in Belfast with Elected Members, CMT, Community and Voluntary Sector representatives, Businesses, Anti-poverty organisations, people who are struggling with poverty and other key stakeholders during the period 13-14 January 2022.
- 3.15 The committee is asked to note these initial steps to engage with the Poverty Truth Network and nominate representatives to engage with the network during this visit.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.16 There are no financial implications to this report. The work of this initial visit on 13th and 14th January 2022 will be funded by the Poverty Truth Network.
- 3.17 If approval is given to proceed, a further report will be brought back to the Committee outlining the proposed approach and associated costs of the commission.

Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Implications

- 3.18 Corporate policies will be followed during the development of the Poverty Commission's approach and appropriate screening and mitigating actions delivered where necessary."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Consultation on Draft Smart
Belfast Urban Innovation**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1** To present to the Committee the refreshed Smart Belfast urban innovation framework and to seek approval to use this draft as a basis for consultation with stakeholders, prior to the publication of a finalised framework in April, 2022.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1** The Committee is requested to:

1. note the contents of the Smart Belfast urban innovation framework;
2. approve an eight-week stakeholder consultation on the framework, commencing on 11th January 2022; and
3. note the plans for individual party briefings from early in 2022.

3.0 Main Report

Smart Belfast framework refresh

- 3.1** First devised in 2017, the Smart Belfast framework aims to foster an environment that supports collaborative innovation between our partners from across industry, academia and the public sector in order to address urban and economic challenges. It is based on the understanding that Belfast’s more complex challenges will often require novel solutions that are difficult for the public sector to develop on its own.
- 3.2** This refreshed framework incorporates the practice and learning of the past four years, and reflects the challenges and opportunities of this pandemic era. We have sought to consider how digital innovation can best contribute to the Council’s priorities for city growth, economic recovery and our response to climate change.
- 3.3** Smart Belfast also reflects the growing impact of new technologies on urban policy and planning. It seeks to maximise opportunities represented by new investments, including the Belfast Region City Deal digital programme, and the emergence of Innovation City Belfast as a regional partnership for innovation.

- 3.4 The framework has two main sections. In the first, we set out specific plans for a Belfast ‘Smart District’ and how this location can act as a place where the Council and its partners can directly develop and test real-world innovative policies and interventions in an environment that supports innovation and experimentation.
- 3.5 It is proposed that the Smart District will be particularly important in leveraging innovation to support the delivery of the new Bolder Vision for the city centre. As such the initial geography of the District is co-terminous with the city centre. Thematic areas where the District is likely to make a significant contribution include:
- Re-imagining the future of the high street
 - Supporting the creative environment for the planned Belfast Stories investment
 - Bringing innovation in design and development to support healthy urban neighbourhoods
 - Contributing to sustainable multi-model travel
 - Supporting the energy transition to zero carbon
 - Digitising and modernising city operations and services.
 - Building community capacity and skills to navigate the opportunities and challenges of our data-driven society and economy.
- 3.6 In the second section of the framework, we describe the wider urban innovation ecosystem that is needed to deliver innovation initiatives. Based on the learning from the last four years and building on global research, we propose eight ‘pillars’ for this ecosystem that partners, collectively, have a role to play in strengthening.

The initial Project Pipeline

- 3.7 A number of major projects associated with the District are already under way or at an advanced development stage. This initial project pipeline includes:
- The delivery of €7.9 million ‘Hub-In’ Horizon 2020 project that aims to transform the Maritime Mile through community-based innovation and local enterprise.
 - The development of a new £20 million ‘Innovation for Societal Impact Fund’ to support collaborative innovation between the city region SMEs, researchers and public bodies. The fund will seek to address major urban challenges while at the same time supporting the growth of our region’s most innovative sectors.
 - The £2.5 million Connected Places Catapult ‘Homes for Healthy Ageing’ programme seeking to bring

innovation to issues around loneliness in older people.

- The €1m ‘Access to Finance’ project that is working with local SMEs and Economic Development teams to design new tools for designing future grant programmes and interventions.
- The Innovative Procurement Playbook project with Sejong, South Korea, which aims to improve our understanding of the challenges of innovative procurement and of exporting innovative products to international markets.
- We are also working with the mobile industry, asset owners, businesses and public sector partners to develop a £30 million Belfast Region City Deal proposal that aims to accelerate the roll-out of advanced wireless connectivity across the Smart District, university campus areas and Titanic Quarter.

Consulting on the New Framework

3.8 From January to April 2022, we will be engaging through a number of channels:

- Party briefings
- The Belfast City Council ‘Your Say’ platform where organisation and individuals can respond formally to a series of questions on each element of the framework
- A public Smart Belfast webinar series will offer insights into urban innovation practice from keynote speakers and more detail on the delivery of the programme
- Community focused workshops on the citizen in a smart city.

3.9 Following a successful consultation, it is proposed that the framework is publicly launched in April 2022.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.10 Resource planning for new projects will form part of the detailed planning for the new framework. Current projects have been identified in the existing City Innovation team budget.

Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

3.11 An equality screening will be carried out as part of the consultation programme.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Covid-19: Operation of Household Waste
Recycling Centres/Access to Community Centres**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of:

- i the recovery operations and practices in place to mitigate the transmission of Covid-19 in relation to the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs); and
- ii the impact of Covid-19 regulations on the delivery of services and access to bookings at Council community centres.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- note the report on HWRCs; and
- note the outlined restrictions in place due to Covid-19 regulations and the extent of service delivery and bookings being delivered at community centres.

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, on 19th November, agreed that a report be submitted to its next meeting addressing the issues which had been raised by Members around gaining access to Household Waste Recycling Centres and Community Centres and providing details of Covid-19 restrictions which were still in place across the Council and their impact upon service delivery.**

Background to HWRCs

- 3.2 In March 2020, the Covid-19 global pandemic struck, resulting in the first national lockdown, regulations on essential travel only and a working from home directive, measures all aimed at containing the transmission of the virus.**
- 3.3 HWRCs were closed for a period of around 8 weeks (mid-March to mid-May 2020) and in the intervening period a recovery plan was developed. This required Local Authorities and contractors to adjust their operational arrangements to ensure that these services were restored and the risk to public health minimised through; hygiene (wash hands often), social distancing and ‘catch it - bin it’ messages.**

3.4 This resulted in a number of adaptations to our operating practices at the HWRCs including:

- Proof of address may be requested as the sites will only be open for those living within the Belfast City Council area. Examples of proof of address include driving licence, utility bill (gas, electricity, broadband supplier), or bank statement;
- Separation of general waste and recycling before arriving at the recycling centre, to reduce delays;
- Vans and light goods vehicles bringing domestic waste on site must book before visiting a recycling centre;
- Further details on the booking system available on the web site and details highlighted below;
- Site visitors will be responsible for unloading their waste to maintain social distancing from staff; and
- If self-isolating or symptomatic of coronavirus (COVID-19) you should not visit a recycling centre or civic amenity site.

3.5 It should be noted that the recovery plan was a phased approach with the four recycling centres opening initially followed by the civic amenity sites. This was to ensure that sufficient staffing resources were available to operate the sites. The civic amenity sites have one additional operational practice currently in place to mitigate against Covid-19 transmission, while at the same time maintaining service provision.

- For Civic Amenity sites, no vehicles permitted direct access to the CA sites. Users are requested to park up and bring waste onto site. For larger items residents should avail of recycling centres.

Bookings for Vans at HWRC

3.6 When the HWRCs re-opened in May 2020, there was an initial period of approximately 8 weeks when vans and light goods vehicles were not permitted on site. However, this was relaxed in July 2020 with the introduction of the booking system. Customers can now view the web site to check if their vehicle needs to be booked in advance. Online booking system for vans and light goods vehicles (belfastcity.gov.uk).

- 3.7** It is a very simple procedure to book a vehicle online as the system captures the email and vehicle details (make and colour) of the customer. An email confirmation is then issued to the customer and they bring this along on their visit. The site staff receive a daily print-out of bookings and can thereby control site access and traffic. This enables residents to access a digital solution and is an increasingly common service delivery platform being adopted by many councils and ties in with the council's aim to seek IT driven solutions.
- 3.8** When introduced in July 2020, there were initially 704 booking slots per week across the four sites. In the summer of 2021, this increased to 1,128 slots per week to meet demand and the average booking demand currently sits at approximately 75%, with slots generally available within 24 hours.
- 3.9** The online booking system greatly assists with maintaining social distancing measures and traffic management at the sites. In the absence of such a system an influx of commercial type vehicles onto a site can result in a number of challenges:
- traffic management - these vehicles can block skip access and be on site for extended periods of time as they deposit their substantial waste load, meaning much lower throughput for cars and possible queues on main roads which could potentially result in site closure by PSNI;
 - capacity issues with skips filling faster and not being available to those residents accessing the site in household cars;
 - potential health and safety issues - associated with larger box type vehicles and those with tail lifts. These vehicles are also more likely to carry additional personnel, resulting in further social distancing challenges; and
 - Potential trade misuse – the HWRCs are for the disposal of household waste only. Commercial waste comprises waste produced by a business or commercial activity in the course of its operations. A commercial operator disposing of commercial waste at a HWRC is placing an additional burden on the domestic rate payer and a potential income loss for the Council in terms of a commercial waste customer.
- 3.10** In addition to the above, this control measure is welcomed by staff as it provides improved traffic management and

customer engagement at the site and the potential for reduced work-related violence when site visitors become accustomed to the system.

- 3.11 The Service believes the online booking system has been invaluable supporting customer and staff safety during Covid and continues to do so. The customer and operational benefits resulting from these changes at the HWRCs are being reviewed and considered for inclusion within the proposed Waste Access and Acceptance policy presently being developed by the Service. The current software is a relatively basic system and the Service will consider how it could be developed to drive positive behaviours, increased recycling along with improved health and safety.

Community Centres

- 3.12 All Community Centres are fully operational with services and bookings permitted in line with current regulations and guidelines. Detailed risk assessments are in place for building operations all of which are approved through Corporate Health and Safety and Trade Unions prior to commencing operations. As restrictions are eased activity specific risk assessments are taken though the recovery assurance protocols to ensure safe and compliant service delivery.
- 3.13 General restrictions in place which affect community centre operations and activities include a requirement for service users to restrict access when exhibiting symptoms of coronavirus and to self-isolate; mandatory use of face coverings; practicing social distancing; and hand sanitising.
- 3.14 Some centres have seen a decrease in the number of bookings. This decrease is mainly due to:
1. Covid anxiety/worry particularly with bookings involving older people or health related;
 2. On-line/virtual contacts replacing booking at centre e.g. counselling sessions;
 3. Groups 'folded' during lock down;
 4. Some bookings have cancelled due to the Covid related restriction on room capacity

In respect to item (4) above, the requirement to adhere to social distancing requires application of maximum room capacities and overall building capacity. Safe management of the specific building and room capacities requires access control through the buzzer system and is afforded only for specific bookings or pre-arranged appointments e.g.

designated staff and contractors. Drop-in and casual access to the buildings are not permitted.

- 3.15 There have been some comments from user groups on the requirement for bookers to have their own risk assessments in place prior to commencing activity following easing of restrictions. To mitigate this concern capacity support is provided to groups and in many instances the groups have noted that the exercise in developing their risk assessment is beneficial and provides assurance to many of their members.
- 3.16 Most recently, approval for independently delivered bookings related to dance and provided hospitality e.g. tea dances and Christmas dinners have been approved through the recovery assurance protocol. Risk assessments for staff supported activities of these types have been drafted and are being processed through the recovery assurance protocol.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.17 There are no financial or resource implications associated with this report.

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

- 3.18 There are no equality or good relations issues associated with this report.”

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

**Summer Community Diversionary
Festival Programme**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the proposed delivery model for the 2022 Summer Community Diversionary Festival Programme and seek approval from the Committee to proceed with the update scheme.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to agree to the 2022 Summer Community Diversionary Festival Programme delivery model as outlined within the report.

3.0 Main Report

Background

- 3.1** The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed, in December 2018, to allocate £500k to a summer diversionary and festival programme, this was in context of the Revenue Estimates and District Rate report agreed as part of the rate setting process. The recommendation was approved at the January Council meeting. This programme was delivered in 2019, but due to Covid restrictions, was postponed in 2020.
- 3.2** At the Council meeting on 1st July 2021, Members agreed to develop an interim scheme for 2021 due to the tight turnaround as a result of the pandemic. This allowed groups who were funded in 2019 to access funding to deliver community diversionary festival activity outside of the normal summer dates. This programme was not an open call and funding was awarded to groups who received funding in 2019 up to a maximum of their 2019 funding allocation.
- 3.3** At the Committee meeting in September 2021, Members asked officers to review the existing process, with a view to setting a benchmark to ensure that groups who apply for the scheme in 2022 have the capacity to deliver events in line with the relevant guidelines that the Council has in place for organising events on its land.
- 3.4** To allow for the timely administration of this funding programme, officers have undertaken a review and are seeking approval from the SP and R Committee on the recommended 2022 approach outlined in this report.

Key Issues

- 3.5** When the Summer Community Diversionary programme was developed in 2018, it was based on the following agreements from the Committee:
- the total programme budget was £500,000, with £250,000 allocated to the July programme and £250,000 allocated to the August programme;
 - no financial limit was placed on geographical areas for July and August programmes;
 - £25,000 (min) and £100,000 (max) funding was available for successful applicants;

- eligible community diversionary festival activity was defined as follows; ‘Community diversionary festival activity is about the celebration and the promotion of positive cultural expression specifically in the lead up to and over the periods of the 11th July night and the 8th August. It should be developed from within the community. Festival activity should therefore be initiated and led by a community organisation or a community-led partnership. It is not enough to run festival activity for a community – the community must own it and play a strong part in developing and delivering it. All festival activity should also support the diversion of young people who are at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour over the two specified periods.’

Programme 2022

- 3.6 In developing the approach for 2022, officers considered operational learning from the 2021 (and previous schemes) review of similar Council programmes and feedback from Members.
- 3.7 Feedback on the delivery of the scheme has included the need to ensure that applications are of a quality standard and that there is equitable access for groups to apply across all geographic areas of the City.
- 3.8 On an operational basis, to improve the scheme, officers have also identified an opportunity to introduce more robust outcomes to the programme and ensure that organisations report back on the impact of their projects in a more meaningful way. There is also a need to assess the ability of applicants to deliver safe, well managed large-scale events/programmes. The recommended changes also seek to complement relevant council programmes and strategies such as our cultural and good relations strategies.
- 3.9 As part of this report, we would like to remind members that Council offers support for community festivals and a range of diversionary activities through established funding programmes. Groups who apply for this scheme in 2022 may be signposted to these schemes in the event that their application is not suitable or does not meet the criteria or benchmark score for funding from this scheme. These include:
 - Community Festivals fund – grants of up to £10,000 are available. In 2019/20 we invested in 18 grants to support not-for-profit festivals and events in Belfast. Applications for 21/22 closed on 15th October 2022. Community Festivals Fund operates with match

funding from Department for Communities (DfC). DfC are currently unable to confirm this funding for 2022/23;

- Community provision Micro/Medium grants – grants of £1,500 and £5,000 available to support summer programmes, which can include cultural/diversionary programmes;
- In previous years, the Council delivered a Bonfire and Cultural Expression Programme through its District Council Good Relations Programme. This programme was not delivered in 2021 and instead groups were able to access a similar level of support through the Community Provision micro grants (above).

3.10 Based on the above, the Committee is asked to consider and approve the following changes:

Proposed Definition 2022

- The Summer Community diversionary festival programme provides support for the delivery of community based festivals and programmes. All funded activity will make a significant contribution to the reduction of anti-social behaviour linked to key dates over the summer period specifically the 11th July and the 8th August. *All activity should promote positive cultural expression and contribute to achievement of the T;BUC¹ outcomes of increasing participants sense of community belonging and celebrating cultural diversity.*

3.11 **Eligibility Criteria 2022**

- Applications must be received by constituted community/voluntary organisations based in the Belfast City Council area;
- The total programme budget is £500,000, with £250,000 allocated to the July programme and £250,000 allocated to the August programme
- No financial limit is placed on geographical areas for both July and August programmes;
- £25,000 (min) and £100,000 (max) funding is available for successful applicants;

¹ Together; Building a United Community - NI Assembly Good Relations Strategy

- For events being delivered, applicants must confirm that they have technical support and expertise and approvals in place to ensure that all health and safety requirements are met. This will include confirmation that activity being delivered will have appropriate licences or approvals in place. As part of this, officers will provide guidance to applicants in advance of any submissions on what is required and advise groups that their capacity and technical expertise will be assessed at an initial Stage 1 to ensure they have the capability to run festival events. This will follow the same process that is undertaken for all events on Council land with groups expected to complete a 24-point event plan template which will be assessed by officers.

Two-stage Eligibility Assessment Process

- 3.12 A revised process is being recommended for 2022 based on learning from previous years. This new process seeks to mitigate the risk that Council are funding large scale events where the necessary knowledge, skills and capacity to organise and follow the detailed and sometimes complicated processes that are required to host events may not always be available. One of the main objectives of this scheme is to run festivals at times in and around July and August bonfires, where there is potential to have increased ASB and heightened tensions across the city. It is important that we encourage these types of events, rather than smaller scale workshops and youth intervention projects being the main source of activity.
- 3.13 It is, therefore, important for applicants being assessed to demonstrate that they have the necessary knowledge and experience to host large scale events and also have the capacity to deliver these events. If this isn't in place, it results in significant last minute pressure on the groups who receive funding and organise events, but also on Council officers from across a range of functions who are required to fast track important requirements through committee structures such as approval to use our land and entertainment licence applications.

3.14 Amended Scoring Criteria

Stage 1 – Capacity to deliver

1. Capacity to run Festival/similar type events. This will include submission of an event plan template that outlines initial details of how you will organise your

event and will follow a similar process undertaken for all events taking place on Council land.

TOTAL Marks Available – 100 (Scoring threshold 60%)

Only those applicants who achieve the minimum benchmark of 60 at Stage 1 will progress to Stage 2 for assessment. Those applicants who do progress to Stage 2 will retain their score from Stage 1 to be part of their final score.

Stage 2 – Contribution to objectives of the scheme (100 marks available, benchmark 50 marks)

1. The extent to which the application has clearly identified need and provided detail of participants, partners and content that will meet this need (25 marks);
2. The extent to which the project activity will reduce anti-social behaviour linked to key dates over the summer period (including consideration of timings, location/s, partnership working and identification/inclusion of at risk young people (25 marks);
3. The extent to which the project will promote positive cultural expression by increasing participants sense of community belonging and celebrating cultural diversity. This should include examples of potential negative behaviour that the project will address (25 marks);
4. The extent to which the project is well planned and requested amounts represent value for money (25 marks)

Total Marks Available – 100 (Scoring threshold 50%)

Please note that the slightly higher benchmark score of 60 applicable at stage 1 is due to the importance of ensuring applicants have the necessary knowledge and capacity to manage what are important legal, health and safety and compliance requirements.

3.15 Funding Allocation

It is recommended that funding will be allocated on the same basis as previous years with £250,000 for July and £250,000 for August. Final recommendations to Members will combine Stage 1/Stage 2.

3.16 2022 timetable (Draft)

- The programme will open on 21st February 2022 and close on 25th March 2022;
- The programme will be advertised as an open call and information will be available on the Council's website, information sessions will also be held;
- Officers will complete the assessment process and bring final recommendations to Members for consideration as early as possible April 2022;
- Project delivery must take place by 31 August;
- Groups with outstanding documentation from previous funding will not receive payment until all documentation in relation to this fund has been received/signed off.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.17 Resources have been included as part of the revenue estimates process.**

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

- 3.18 Equality, Good Relations implications and rural needs assessment will be considered before the scheme is advertised."**

After discussion, it was

Moved by the Chairperson (Councillor Groogan),
Seconded by The High Sheriff (Councillor Long),

That the Committee agrees that applications from groups seeking solely to run workshops and youth intervention projects as the main source of activity also be considered for funding.

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

The Committee subsequently approved the Summer Community Diversionary Festival Programme delivery model for 2022, as set out within the report.

**Consultation Response - Setting of
Decapitalisation Rates in Northern Ireland**

The Committee considered the following report and accompanying response in respect of the Department of Finance's consultation on the setting of Decapitalisation Rates in Northern Ireland:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to make Members aware of the Department of Finance's consultation on Setting of Decapitalisation Rates in Northern Ireland and to seek Members' approval of the Council's draft response.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1** The Committee is asked to consider the draft response and approve its submission to the Department of Finance, subject to any comments or amendment provided, with the proviso that the response is subject to ratification by the Council on 10th January, 2022.

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

- 3.1** Members are advised that, on 20th October 2021, as part of the Northern Ireland Revaluation 2023 exercise, the Department of Finance launched an 8-week Consultation on the Setting of Decapitalisation Rates in Northern Ireland, to seek views on this element of the Contractor's Basis of valuation. While most commercial properties are valued for rates using rental information, the Contractor's Basis is used instead for properties where there is little or no direct rental evidence available. Approximately 12,000 non-domestic properties here are valued wholly or in part using the Contractor's Basis.
- 3.2** These properties include schools, universities, hospitals, fire and police stations, halls, and airports.
- 3.3** The decapitalisation rate is a core part of the Contractor's Basis. It is a percentage figure which is used to convert the effective capital value of a property into an annual rental value, and ensures that the costs and benefits of owning a property, compared to renting a property, are taken into account when calculating the rateable value.
- 3.4** Members should note that the closing date for responses was 15th December 2021, but officers have sought an extension to allow the draft response to be brought to this

Committee. A copy of the draft response to the consultation follows this report. As the closing date for responses is prior to the January 2022 Council meeting, it is proposed that the response, subject to any comments or amendments from Members, be submitted with the caveat that it is still subject to ratification by the Council.

- 3.5 The consultation is seeking views on 4 key questions.

Question 1 Do you agree the Department should continue to prescribe the decapitalisation rates used in the Contractor's Basis of Valuation?

Question 2 Do you agree that the Department should continue to prescribe two decapitalisation rates in Northern Ireland, i.e. a standard rate and a lower rate?

Question 3 Do you have any views on the methods for setting the decapitalisation rates (including any suggestions for alternative methods), on the range of values generated by each method, or on the merits or otherwise of each method?

Question 4 Do you agree with the proposed approach for setting decapitalisation rates in Northern Ireland?

A copy of the draft response to the consultation is attached. The Committee is asked to consider the draft response and approve its submission to the Department of Finance.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.6 There are no implications associated with this report.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.7 There are no implications associated with this report."

Council Response

Response to LPS Consultation on the Decapitalisation Rate for the 2023 valuation List – Note for Belfast City Council

The main purpose of a revaluation is to adjust the liability of properties relative to others within the non-domestic rates tax-base. This ensures the rate liability is spread fairly between ratepayers and is based on up-to-date rental values. At each revaluation, all properties are assigned a new rateable value. Preparations are underway for new rating lists to be introduced in Northern Ireland from

1st April 2023. Land and Property Services are responsible for compiling and publishing the new rating lists and will ensure all non-domestic properties are assigned a new rateable value based upon its estimated annual rental value as at the Antecedent Valuation Date (AVD) of 1st October 2021.

This consultation seeks views on the parameters and methodology to enable the prescription of the decapitalisation rate/s to be applied when determining the net annual value of any hereditament by reference to the contractor's principle for the purposes of any NAV list coming into force on or after 1st April 2023. The contractor's principle is the method of ascertaining the net annual value of a hereditament by reference to its actual or notional cost of construction or provision or to its capital value.

The decapitalisation rates for the current valuation list are 2.67% in the case of a church hereditament, educational hereditament or healthcare hereditament and 4% in any other case. These rates were prescribed in the Valuation for Rating (Decapitalisation Rates) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and took effect for the 2020 non-domestic revaluation.

The corresponding decapitalisation rates for the purposes of the valuation list which came into force on 1st April 2003 were 3.67% and 5.5% respectively and provision is made for those rates to continue to have effect in relation to that list.

The suggested answers to the specific questions are as follows:

Question 1

Do you agree the Department should continue to prescribe the decapitalisation rates used in the Contractor's Basis of Valuation?

Yes, provided that the rates are reached by transparent means the Department should continue to prescribe decapitalisation rates used in the Contractor's Basis of Valuation.

Prescribing rates is the only way to overcome the valuation of properties where rents and receipts and expenditure details are lacking. If the rate applied is lowered this will have an adverse impact on those who are valued by a rental or receipts and expenditure approach. A large number of public buildings would be valued using a prescribed rate and a low or lower rate would see a fall in value for these properties and result in a higher liability for other ratepayers.

Ending prescribed rates would bring significant uncertainty to local government rates income; and this is particularly significant for local authorities as they struggling to cope with the financial impact of the pandemic.

Question 2

Do you agree that the Department should continue to prescribe two decapitalisation rates in Northern Ireland i.e. a standard rate and a lower rate?

There is an argument to consider three prescribed rates. The categories of hereditament to which these should be applied must vary according to the nature, mode or category of each actual occupation; but as ability to pay has been held to be a factor in determining the measure of liability in each contractor's test case, it would seem to be appropriate that:

- the highest rate should apply to hereditaments where the mode or category of use is one in which, commercially, there would be likely to be funds available to pay for the cost of construction and the land.
- Where access to funds is restricted, but the actual occupier can expect to gain some financial benefit from its occupation, then the middle rate should be considered. This group would seem to be perhaps the widest, including hereditaments created with public or philanthropic funding
- In a case where the occupier has no realistic hope of any tangible benefit for its occupation, then the lowest rate would apply.

Question 3

Do you have any views on the methods for setting the decapitalisation rates (including any suggestions for alternative methods), on the range of values generated by each method, or on the merits or otherwise of each method?

The courts have held that the hypothetical tenant will not be prepared to pay a rent which exceeds the annual equivalent of the cost of replacing the property.

It is submitted that this risk can be eliminated, or at least mitigated, by the use of a range of decapitalisation rates rather than by adoption of a "one size fits all" approach. In the event of a dispute as to value, the argument would focus, not on economics, or on the identity of the occupier, but on the nature of the occupation itself, which is what falls to be valued, for rating.

Clearly, even when prescribed, interest rates to be applied must be such as to reflect the principles of valuation for rating, and it is vital therefore that affordability is suitably reflected in the decapitalisation rate adopted. We wish to reinforce the point that a low or lower decapitalisation rate would put additional pressure / cost on those whose properties are valued by reference to rental or receipts and expenditure approaches, as a lower decapitalisation rate will lower the rateable value and ultimately result in there having to be a higher multiplier.

Question 4

Do you agree with the proposed approach for setting decapitalisation rates in Northern Ireland?

The methodology employed should be transparent and subject to open consultation in the interest of fairness and to seek to avoid litigation. We suggest that the evidence available must be seen to be complete as at the antecedent valuation date; and we therefore take the view that, while an early consultation is always welcome, in this case the evidence-gathering exercise prior to the publication of the proposals, is likely to be incomplete. Notwithstanding these comments we would agree with the proposed approach.

The Committee approved the foregoing response for submission to the Department of Finance.

Consultation on Draft Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland

The Committee considered the following report and accompanying response in respect of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs' consultation on the Draft Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland:

"1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1** To advise the Committee that a response to the Draft Green Growth Strategy has been collated by Council officers. Should the Committee approve the draft consultation response, it will be submitted to DAERA on behalf of the Council.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1** The Committee is asked to approve the draft consultation response for submission to DAERA. Any additional comments received from Members these will be incorporated in the response.

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1** DAERA has produced a Draft Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland which is currently under public consultation, with a closing date of 21st December 2021.

- 3.2** The Draft Green Growth Strategy can be accessed [here](#), and a draft response to the questions set out by DAERA within the consultation is attached below.

- 3.3** The Draft Green Growth Strategy is high level in nature, setting out a vision for Northern Ireland by 2050 whereby:

'Northern Ireland has taken significant action for the climate and our environment, has placed nature and biodiversity on a path to recovery, and moved from a high to a low emissions society. We have made this change fairly and have demonstrated a responsibility for each other and for the place in which we live. As a result of all our efforts, we have a more resilient environment with a healthy ecosystem and a strong sustainable economy. More people are employed in green jobs and all generations benefit from improved wellbeing.'

- 3.4** The Draft Strategy will be followed by a detailed Climate Action Plan which will be developed in 2022, with a focus on sectors that are identified by the Climate Change Committee (CCC), including agriculture, energy supply, waste

management, transport, business, other, residential, land use, land use change and forestry.

3.5 The Draft Strategy notes that two Draft Climate Bills currently exist and commits to making any necessary changes to fit with the final agreed Climate Bill.

3.6 The Draft Strategy draws on the evidence-based approach set out by the Climate Change Committee (CCC), underpinned by a commitment to Just Transition, engagement and setting in place appropriate governance and processes to measure progress.

3.7 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no financial or resource implications at present.

3.8 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment

There are no direct equality or good relations/rural needs implications.”

Council Response

Questions set out within the Draft Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland:

Q1 - Is our Vision 2050 the right vision? If not, what would you change?

Belfast Resilience Strategy sets out the goal for Belfast to “transition to an inclusive, net-zero-emissions, climate resilient economy in a generation.” To align with the language used in the Belfast Resilience Strategy and that used in the Belfast Net Zero Carbon Roadmap we would encourage the use of the phrase net-zero-emissions society rather than low emissions society. We feel this would set the appropriate level of ambition for all stakeholders across Northern Ireland society, and recommend that appropriate support is put in place to facilitate this transition.

Q2 - Are our Green Growth principles right? If not, what should be included / taken out and why?

Yes, we feel that the Green Growth principles are appropriate for a high-level strategy such as the Draft Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland. Furthermore, a commitment to a local placemaking approach would enhance the role of local authorities in coordinating local action to address the climate crisis, with appropriate resources put in place to facilitate this process.

Section 2

Q3 - Are we right to adopt a Green Growth approach bringing together green jobs, climate action and the environment?

Yes, we believe this is the correct approach. We refer you to the recommendations of the Reset for Growth report produced by the Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission which is summarised in the following report and attached for your information:

<https://minutes3.belfastcity.gov.uk/documents/s93148/Belfast%20Innovation%20and%20Inclusive%20Growth%20Commission%20Reset%20for%20Growth%20Report%20-%20Council%20Response.pdf>

More is needed in terms of growing specific clusters and industries like the hydrogen industry. There needs to be a clear strategy for this.

Q4 - Is a statutory Green Growth test needed to ensure we put climate action, environment and green jobs at the heart of policy development?

Yes, however the test and the process of application should be clearly defined to ensure that it is used effectively. We further recommend that it is applied across all programmes of government and to all funding programmes. We welcome the linking of public funding to climate responsibilities as this will focus minds and ensure deliverables and outcomes are clearly linked to addressing the climate crisis. Potentially the test should prevent actions that have a negative impact on Green Growth as well as supporting those with a positive impact.

Q5 - Should Green Growth be one of our top Executive investment and budgetary priorities?

Yes, it should be a top priority given the cross cutting and urgent nature of the issues being addressed. The Committee for Climate Change and the Draft Green Growth Strategy recognise the need for action throughout the 2020s to ensure that “by the 2030s choices in all areas must be the low-carbon option.”

This needs to include access to various forms of funding including the Green Investment Board and joint investment frameworks with the private sector.

Section 3

Q6 - Do we need specific targets for each sector set out in Climate Action Plans? If yes, how would this be brought about; and if no, how should we ensure we drive change?

Yes, specific targets should be set out in the forthcoming Climate Action Plans, linked to relevant strategies such as the forthcoming Energy Strategy and the forthcoming Environment Strategy. These should be developed through an evidence-based approach, in collaboration with key stakeholders in each sector. Reports such as the Belfast Net Zero Carbon Roadmap set out a potential pathway to achieving net zero across a range of sectors including housing and transport

https://pcancities.org.uk/sites/default/files/Belfast%20Net-Zero%20Carbon%20Roadmap_0.pdf

We propose that a robust results framework is established with indicators, milestones and targets that cascade from regional through to sectoral and local levels. We also recommend that a costed implementation plan is developed (incorporating an economic appraisal of delivery options) along with a resource mobilisation plan to ensure that the strategy can be delivered within the timeframe. This will require innovative financial models that can crowd in private sector finance. We are working closely with colleagues at PCAN, the UK Climate Investment Commission and LSE on potential financial models and are happy to share this experience.

A public facing report should be produced annually – commitment must be given now to quicker wins such as housing retrofit, transport, decarbonisation and energy transition.

Q7 - Do you agree on the definition of the sectors?

Yes, we agree with the alignment of sectors to those defined by the Committee for Climate Change (CCC) to allow measurement of progress to be undertaken by the CCC as well as through local mechanisms.

Section 4

Q8 - Do you agree with the adoption of a Just Transition approach? If not, what approach should we be taking and why?

Yes, the Just Transition approach is at the heart of the work of Belfast Climate Commission, a partnership between Belfast City Council and Queens University of Belfast. It is vital that those most vulnerable in society, and those potentially most impacted by the anticipated changes are protected from negative impacts, that all members of society have a voice in the process, and that an affordable and fair transition is made available for all across society.

Q9 - How do we ensure this Just Transition - is a Commission the right way forward?

We believe that a Just Transition Framework is the right way forward, with appropriate governance to ensure integration across policies and action, at the regional and local level. The VCSE sector is often the voice of the vulnerable and underrepresented in our society and should be given a role in advocating for and ensuring that the most vulnerable are protected throughout the transition. The VCSE panel within Belfast Community Planning Partnership is an example of how that voice can be incorporated into a strategic programme of planning and delivery.

Q10 - How do we make sure the public and all stakeholders (including young people) are actively engaged with Green Growth? Is a Citizen Assembly Panel the right structure?

We recommend a review of existing engagement mechanisms in Northern Ireland to identify strengths and weaknesses, supporting existing good practice where possible and addressing gaps in representation where they exist. A wide-ranging engagement framework would ensure that there is the greatest chance of hearing as many voices as possible, including people of all ages. Oversight and coordination should be incorporated into the framework, and the framework should be appropriately resourced.

Section 5

Q11 - How can we work most effectively with businesses, local government and organisations across Northern Ireland to maximise and deliver our decarbonisation and Green Growth efforts?

Through the Green Growth governance arrangements, forthcoming climate action plan mechanisms, the co-design and co-delivery of programmes at both regional and local authority levels, to ensure a joined-up approach across sectors. Thematic advisory panels may be required as sectoral targets and plans are

developed, and to address underpinning issues such as climate finance, innovation and technology.

We have drawn on the recent positive engagement through the LGA with UK government departments to highlight below the importance of a place based approach and the role of local government in encouraging a strong public and private sector partnering approach.

Regional and local government collaboration will be essential to delivering the strategy. Supporting green growth requires significant national, regional and sector leadership, but only local government can mobilise and join-up the collective action of all partners, businesses, and people in places. Local government therefore has a unique and powerful place leadership and delivery role on cross-cutting issues like climate change, which was exemplified during the pandemic.

More than half of the emissions reductions that are needed rely on people and businesses taking up low-carbon solutions. These are decisions that are made at a local and individual level, and many of these decisions depend on having supporting infrastructure and systems in place.

Places are very different, which can mean a quite fundamentally different journey to Net Zero. The journey facing a town or city economy will be different from a rural area dominated by the agriculture sector. Variations include population density, shape of the economy, infrastructure, geographical features, etc.

Local government holds a wide range of important powers and assets for decarbonising and adapting to climate change in places and achieving a just transition to Net Zero, and it is ambitious to fulfil this potential as an essential delivery partner.

However, there is a need to grow the capacity and skills in local government rapidly. This includes on exchanging experience of what works in different places, how the impacts of different initiatives can be understood, success replicated, and the need to upskill within local government.

Crucially though, the overall strategy towards green growth should outline the support for local government to fulfil its role, and provide clarity on the expectations of local government and so the certainty on where they will need to invest in developing capacity.

Day to day local government engages with a multiplicity of regional agencies and schemes, on a range of different programmes with overlapping objectives. There is lots of positive work underway, but a fragmented policy and funding environment creates complexity, uncertainty and missed opportunity; and often without the scale to deliver the level of change necessary.

Within this complexity there is not the overall long-term regional strategy around what local authorities are working towards and clarity of what is expected of them. This can limit the huge potential of local government to play its leadership role in place, and to build its own capacity and local path to support green growth and deliver against Net Zero commitments.

BCC would like to work towards building a partnership which ensures the right balance of powers, responsibilities, and where resources rest at the right level to best achieve different outcomes. We propose:

- including a chapter in the Strategy on the role of local government in place which sets out how regional government and local government will work together to deliver the strategy in places;
- creating a leadership group of government departments and local government to take forward this chapter of the Strategy, developing, leading and overseeing the delivery of a single framework / programme for local government;
- agreeing some underlying principles moving forward, including clarity of ambitions and time frames; expectations of local government; what/how to prioritise actions; powers and accountabilities to move to the right level for delivery; resourcing for duration; local flexibilities; support for local capacity building/learning.

Next steps to develop a collaborative programme of actions could include:

- preparing a statement of intent marking the beginning of renewed collaboration across all levels of government;
- developing a cross-departmental and local government green growth leadership group to take forward the Strategy; (similar to a City/Growth Deal structure) and
- establishing sub-groups to work on priority and complex issues (such as decarbonising and adapting homes and places, decarbonising and adapting transport, supporting green jobs and skills, building consensus for change etc.), developing evidence and information sharing, mapping how everything works in places.

Q12 - How should the public sector be leading by example on Green Growth?

Belfast City Council has undertaken a range of measures including the declaration of a climate emergency in October 2019, establishing a Resilience and Sustainability Board within the Belfast Community Planning Partnership, establishing the Belfast Climate Commission in partnership with Queens University of Belfast, appointing the first Commissioner for Resilience in Northern Ireland, and subsequently appointing the Belfast Climate Commissioner, with the aim of driving forward a programme to address the climate crisis.

The Council has developed a draft Adaptation Plan and is in the process of developing a Council Decarbonisation Plan, with a small budget established to enable this work programme. Council part funded the Belfast Net Zero Carbon Roadmap and commissioned the Belfast Climate Risk Assessment. In addition, Belfast City Council has signed up to the Carbon Disclosure Project, and to a number of global frameworks such as the Race to Zero, Race to Resilience, WWF One Planet City Challenge, the Core Cities UK COP26 Declaration, and the Glasgow Food and Climate Pledge.

Through the Place Based Climate Action Network (PCAN) and Core Cities Climate Investment Commission, Belfast City Council has been at the forefront of efforts to establish climate finance mechanisms as well as using Council resources to integrate green and blue infrastructure, lead on initiatives such as the Belfast One Million Trees Programme, and the Greenways Programme across the city. In addition, Belfast City Council will seek to ensure skills and job opportunities are available for all citizens, working closely with education providers and employers in the city. This Council is ambitious to do more, but will need to work with central government to ensure the right focus, programmes and resources to deliver.

Section 6

Q13 - What indicators should we use to measure the success (or otherwise) of our Green Growth strategy?

As noted above, we propose that a robust results framework is established with indicators, milestones and targets that cascade from regional through to sectoral and local levels. We recommend that a suite of indicators be developed that can measure progress against sectoral targets, assess the success of the Just Transition approach, and levels of engagement in the Green Growth process. These should be drawn from best practice with advice provided from relevant experts.

Given that this is a cross-cutting strategy, indicators should be aligned with related strategies and programmes of work in order to avoid duplication of effort. For example, indicators around Circular Economy should be aligned with those being developed for the NI Circular Economy strategic framework. Consider economic, environmental and social indicators.

Examples (not an exhaustive list) could include:

Number of Circular Economy Industries.

Number of jobs that have been reviewed and "greened"

Number of green social enterprises, e.g. sharing economy

Carbon footprint of products

Co2 production

Biogas production

Energy usage, including renewable

Water consumption

Material consumption

Waste prevented and waste reduction measures

Waste/material reused

Waste recycled

Locally produced products containing recycled material (and % content)

Total waste produced and amount sent to landfill/EFW etc.

Measuring sustainability of all new developments and industries

Q14 - How can there be effective oversight of Green Growth - should there be a dedicated Assembly Committee, or independent scrutiny?

A dedicated Assembly Committee would be essential to ensure cross party support and that there is an oversight mechanism at the heart of government. Potentially both a Committee and independent scrutiny mechanism. Each Permanent Secretary should be given specific targets.

Section 7

Q15 - Please add any other comments or suggestions you think are relevant to developing and delivering our Green Growth strategy.

We welcome the recognition of Belfast's work programmes in the Draft Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland and strongly recommend that local government becomes a coordinating and delivery mechanism for local programmes to drive the Green Growth Strategy as it delivers on the ground. Local government must be resourced appropriately to enable effective delivery and to support ongoing programmes of research, engagement and innovation. In relation to 'green jobs' there should be a focus on greening existing sectors of employment as well as support for new jobs that enable a green economy in Northern Ireland.

The Committee approved the foregoing response for submission to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and agreed that it be accompanied by a letter setting out the Council's overall view of the Strategy and highlighting any other areas which had not been covered by the questions posed within the consultation.

**Consultation on Draft Local Government
Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations
(Northern Ireland) 2022**

The Committee considered the following report and accompanying response in respect of the Department for Communities' consultation on the draft Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to make the Committee aware of the Department for Communities consultation on the draft Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 and to seek its approval of the Council's draft response.**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1** The Committee is asked to consider the draft response and approve its submission to the Department for Communities, subject to any comments or amendment provided, with the proviso that the response is subject to ratification by the Council on 10th January 2022.

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

- 3.1** On 8th October 2021, the Department for Communities published a consultation to seek views on changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme in Northern Ireland (LGPS(NI)). It outlines proposed changes to the LGPS (NI) to cover both the changes required by an Employment Tribunal ruling in relation to survivor benefits, and a number of technical amendments and minor policy updates. The Department for Communities (DfC) is consulting on changes to the regulations governing the LGPS (NI).
- 3.2** Members should note that the closing date for responses was 10th December 2021, but officers have sought an extension to allow the draft response to be brought to this Committee. A copy of the draft response to the consultation is attached and a summary of the key issues are outlined below. As the closing date for responses is prior to the Council meeting on 10th January, it is proposed that the response, subject to any comments or amendments from Members, be submitted with the caveat that it is still subject to ratification by the Council.

A Link to the Consultation is provided below.

[Consultation on the draft Local Government Pension Scheme \(Amendment\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2022 | Department for Communities \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

- 3.3** NILGOSC has provided information on the proposed key changes and these are outlined below.

In summary the key areas are:

- 1. Survivor Benefits**
- 2. 30 Day Rule**
- 3. Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs) – removal of 50% limit**
- 4. Refunds – discretion to pay out after five years**
- 5. Death Grants**

6. Exit certificates
7. Internal dispute resolution procedures
8. Forfeiture
9. Fluctuating emolument for final salary pay

The summary and rationale for the changes are as follows:

3.4 **1. Survivor Benefits**

Historically, the Local Government Pension Scheme (Northern Ireland) ('LGPS (NI)') had different treatments for survivors of marriages than took place while the member was either a deferred member or a pensioner. A surviving widow's pension was based on service from 6th April 1978, whereas a surviving widower's pension was based on service from 6th April 1988. Surviving civil partners were treated as widowers. Earlier in January 2020, amendments made some headway towards equalising survivors' benefits. Same-sex survivors' benefits were equalised with widows of opposite sex marriages and male survivors of opposite sex civil partnerships had the same benefits as widowers of opposite sex marriages for deaths from 13 January 2020. However, it is now proposed that both the changes made in January 2020 and these amendments are backdated to 2005 and that there will be equal treatment regardless of gender of the [deceased] member or the surviving spouse or civil partner

3.5 **2. 30 Day Rule**

At present members pay contributions for the first 30 consecutive days of absence e.g., while on a career break or authorised unpaid leave. It is proposed that this rule be amended so that employees only pay contributions where the break is for 30 consecutive days or less.

3.6 **3. Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs) – removal of 50% limit**

The regulations currently restrict member contributions to an AVC to 50% of pensionable pay in each pay period. It is proposed that this limit be removed.

3.7 **4. Refunds – discretion to pay out after five years**

Under current regulations refunds must be paid by NILGOSC within five years of the date of leaving. The amending regulations propose giving NILGOSC discretion to pay refunds out after five years has elapsed. Refunds must be paid out before age 75.

3.8 **5. Death Grants**

Currently, a death grant can only be paid where a member dies before the age of 75. It is proposed that this age limit is removed, and death grants would be paid to the estates/survivors of those over age 75 on the same basis as pensioners i.e., 10 times the annual pension earned less any pension payments already made. It is proposed that this be backdated to 1st April 2015.

3.9 **6. Exit certificates**

It is proposed that NILGOSC could issue an interim exit certificate, subject to the Department's approval and conditions. This proposal would allow NILGOSC to react quickly in some circumstances and issue an interim exit certificate e.g., insolvency. The final exit certificate would then be issued in due course once all the data was available and the actuary had calculated the exit position.

3.10 **7. Internal dispute resolution procedures**

The amending regulations propose increasing the time for each of the two stages from two to four months.

3.11 **8. Forfeiture**

At present it is difficult for an employer to seek forfeiture of pension rights as an offence must have been committed in connection with an employment for which an employee is convicted and because of which they left employment. Generally, these offences are not uncovered until after the employee has left employment. The amendments propose removing the requirement that the person must have left their employment because of the offence. As before, the forfeiture certificate can only be issued by a Minister.

3.12 **9. Fluctuating emolument for final salary pay**

Currently, for calculation of final salary pay, fluctuating emoluments are averaged over the period that they were paid for, if it is less than three years; otherwise, they are averaged over three years. The amendments propose reverting to the earlier position where these fluctuating emoluments are always averaged over three years. This only applies to those members who have final salary membership i.e., before 1 April 2015.

- 3.13 Members are asked to consider the attach draft response included in and approve its submission to the Department for Communities.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.14 There are no implications associated with this report.

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

- 3.15 There are no implications associated with this report.

Members are advised that DfC has undertaken an equality screening assessment on the proposed changes and this is available on their website.”

Council Response

“The Council notes that the changes proposed to the scheme, as indicated in section 3, brings it in line with ensuring equality of treatment regardless of gender or sexual orientation through equalisation of survivor benefits. It is also noted that it is best implemented through making both amendments retrospective to 2005.

However, as liabilities are underwritten by the employers any increase in benefits could potentially become an employer cost, therefore any financial impact on the employer should be considered by the Department.

In relation to the “Other Amendments” proposed in Section 4, the Council is in agreement with these proposed policy amendments.”

The Committee approved the foregoing response for submission to the Department for Communities.

**Northern Ireland Affairs Committee:
Inquiry - Investment in Northern Ireland**

The Committee considered the following report and accompanying response in respect of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee’s inquiry into investment in Northern Ireland:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 This report seeks the Committee’s approval to submit a response to the NI Affairs Committee inquiry into investment in Northern Ireland. The inquiry will consider the economic effectiveness of policies to deliver investment and look at how these may address long-standing economic issues.

2.0 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to consider and agree to submit the draft response to the call for evidence and to note that the deadline for receipt of submissions is 17 January 2022.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 The Council has the opportunity to submit evidence to the NI Affairs Committee Inquiry into 'Investment in NI.' The closing date for evidence has now been extended to Monday 17th January.

3.2 The NI Affairs Committee's inquiry will assess the economic effectiveness of UK Government policy to deliver investment in NI and look at how these may address long-standing economic issues in the region, and what further steps can be taken to stimulate investment, including foreign direct investment, in NI to encourage new jobs and economic growth. Many of the issues covered by the inquiry align with existing Council priorities and so it was felt that the Committee may wish that a formal response be submitted to the Call for Evidence.

3.3 The terms of reference for the inquiry are available at: <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1550/investment-in-northern-ireland/>

3.4 Key Issues

The inquiry is primarily concerned with investment, but this has been broken down into several areas including:

- Steps the UK Government can take to encourage investment in NI, including through the Levelling Up and Shared Prosperity Funds.
- Steps that business can take to invest effectively in NI.
- Steps the UK Government can take to support the decarbonisation of industry in NI and stimulate investment in a sustainable economy.
- Identifying sectors of investment and employment potential.
- Steps the UK Government can take to encourage investment that addresses the skills gap and increases employment opportunities for people with few or no qualifications.

- Status of technical, vocational education and apprenticeships.
- The importance of education, schools and local universities.

3.5 At this stage, no information has been provided as to when the findings from the inquiry will be published.

3.6 The attached draft response sets out some of the issues that Council may wish to highlight. These include:

- The need for clarity over future Levelling Up/Shared Prosperity funding arrangements;
- Involvement by Councils in how that funding will be determined and managed.
- The need to focus on supporting inclusive economic growth;
- The Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission's recommendations for actions to achieve the housing growth ambitions within the Belfast;
- The need to support high streets and city centres, and address underfunding of key infrastructure;
- The need to encourage private investment alongside public investment. And the use of social value;
- The need to invest in digital skills and the use of vocational and non-traditional routes into these skills;
- The need overcome barriers to inclusive participation in technology, particularly by young people, in order to inspire the next generation of scientists and entrepreneurs;
- The possibility of encouraging investment in industrial decarbonisation via Place-based Climate Finance Platforms; and
- The need to change perceptions to support decarbonisation via investment in active travel, recycling and housing retrofit programmes.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.7 There are no finance or resource implications attached to this report.

Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

3.8 There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications attached to this report."

Council Response

Investment in NI – Call for evidence for the NI Affairs Committee

Questions

Your submissions should:

- be concise - if it's over 3,000 words you should include a short summary as well
- include an introduction to you or your organisation and your reason for submitting evidence
- Your submission should not have been published anywhere already. This includes blogs, newspaper articles, websites and journals, for example.

The file you upload must:

- be less than 25MB
- be a single Word, ODT or RTF document
- contain no logos

Who are you submitting evidence for?
Group or organisations

An introduction to you or your organisation and your reason for submitting evidence

Belfast City Council is the largest Council in Northern Ireland. We work closely with the other councils in the Belfast City Region Deal area as well as those along the Belfast Dublin Economic Corridor. We also work closely with Invest Northern Ireland both locally and internationally to attract investment into the region.

We launched an extensive physical investment programme, which involved a £400 million citywide commitment to making Belfast a better place to live, work, visit and invest. The programme includes around 400 projects. This momentum has now been taken forward through our Belfast Agenda, the community plan for Belfast, which places attracting investment as one of the key levers to achieve our primary goal of sustainable inclusive economic growth where everyone in Belfast benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy, everyone in Belfast fulfils their potential, and where Belfast is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally friendly city. The Belfast Agenda sets an ambitious target of attracting £1 billion of private sector Foreign Direct Investment.

Steps the UK Government can take to encourage investment in NI, including through the Levelling Up Fund Shared Prosperity Fund and Internal Market Act.

Regarding the levelling Up Fund, Shared Prosperity Fund:

- The most pressing need is for clarity over future Levelling Up/Shared Prosperity funding arrangements and confirmation that the level of funding previously available through the European Union (especially ESF and ERDF) will be maintained. This is particularly important considering the rapidly approaching deadline for the end of EU funding in NI. This replacement funding is critical for continued social and economic development of the region.
- The approach to funding, needs to ensure that there is a focus on inclusive economic growth. Driving productivity improvements is important but there needs to be consideration of the historic long-term unemployment and economic inactivity within the region and ensure that resources are focused on addressing this issue.
- Consideration should be given to a place-based approach to investment support. Belfast as the regional economic driver needs consideration due to its unique role and position. There needs to be flexibility within funding programmes to address local issues rather than a one size fits all approach.
- It is important that resources are focused on key sectors such as fintech, CDI, cyber, creative, advanced manufacturing, education and tourism. These are the most likely to drive regional prosperity.
- To avoid duplication, funding streams should be designed in partnership with local and regional administrations.
- The delayed Levelling Up White Paper, which will set out the strategic direction for the Levelling Up Agenda, was due out in October but has now been postponed until the new year. Hence, like the Shared Prosperity Fund, there is much concern around the lack of clarity on these key funding programmes. Belfast City Council did not submit a bid to the Levelling Up Fund first call due to a lack of clarity around criteria and amounts available.
- Belfast City Council is concerned about how funding will be managed and administered at a regional level. The respective roles of the NI Executive and Councils remains unclear.

Regarding the issue of encouraging investment in NI:

Belfast City Council believe there are a number of steps government should take

- The Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission (IIGC) Report “Reset for Growth” June 2021 makes several recommendations. It identifies actions to achieve the housing growth ambitions within the Belfast Agenda (the Belfast area Community Plan). These actions are necessary if this growth is to come at the pace and scale necessary to make a lasting impact. Principally these are in terms of the structural models required to support

public-private collaboration and access to finance to bring forward developments.

- The IIGC propose the establishment of Housing Investment Funds. These will provide innovative financing vehicles aimed at removing the historical barrier to investment in housing in Belfast and Northern Ireland. In particular, they will work by de-risking investment.
- These actions need to involve a range of partners including local councils and other public and private sector landowners as appropriate. This would provide assurances to the market to support the delivery of city and regional ambitions and would lever additional resources for investment.
- There should be a refocus of existing funds, such as the Northern Ireland Investment Fund on residential, which could assist with gaps in affordable and viable finance products in the market. An increase in total funds available could also assist large-scale stalled development projects, which in turn would act as catalyst for other city centre regeneration programmes.
- Additionally, the reintroduction of grants or tax incentives for living-over-the-shops (LOTS) and Heritage in Housing could assist with retail investment stabilisation. This would be by providing options to counter retail rental decline whilst increasing the city centre population and potential consumer numbers.

High Streets and City Centres

Though not specifically asked for in the Call for Evidence, Council believes that strengthening High Streets and City Centres adds to the overall investment appeal of a region. In relation to overcoming and addressing the significant issues these currently face:

- There is a need for government to take steps to ensure the appropriate funding mechanisms aligned to policy and legislation are put in place. There is a need for the priorities around diversifying support for the future of our High Streets and City Centres and these should be within the Programme for Government. Additionally, these should be costed and presented in a multi-annual budgeting process across departments.
- The scale of commitment demonstrated through the £820 million 'Future High Streets Fund' and the £1.6 billion 'Stronger Towns Fund' put in place to support the high streets of over 200 towns within England, via councils, needs to apply in Northern Ireland. Similar investment programmes of scale, centrally funded, have been brought forward in the last 18 months in Wales and Scotland. A similar level of commitment is currently absent in Northern Ireland. Urgent consideration needs to be given to a similar scale of investment in NI. This should be in accordance with local community planning, development planning and growth planning priorities for Belfast.
- This could bring together multi-departmental, Council and other sources of funding into an aggregate multi-annual fund. Such a fund could be allocated and administered through councils with all partners (including

government departments) working to deliver an agreed solutions and action plans.

- High Street Renewal Funding could be used to target larger scale infrastructure and structural change and improve the viability of stalled city centre development schemes, especially those with mixed use development that encourage city centre living.
- Government should give consideration to reopening the Urban Development Grant scheme which can act as an enabler for private sector development that may need support to address viability issues. This has the potential to enhance existing Belfast City Council programmes of work for example the Vacant Premises Programme within the city centre and sustaining the Vibrant Business Destinations programme that is directed at arterial routes and local neighbourhood centres.
- Long term investment in water and wastewater infrastructure is of great importance. Water infrastructure concerns are affecting the viability of key projects such as Weavers Cross, and the ambitious housing plans. The latter is important both to deliver for people who are on waiting lists but also to ensure NI is an attractor of talent to grow our economy. The UK's Infrastructure Bank will provide £22bn of infrastructure finance to tackle climate change and support regional and local economic growth. Steps should be taken by the devolved administration to engage with the UK Treasury on how this resource can best be used in Northern Ireland.
- City Centres and a commitment to place-based innovation and, in particular, acknowledging the importance of urban centres as the foci for knowledge-based innovation is another important element of attracting investment. Belfast City Council's Smart District is being constructed on the evidence of work by the Brookings Institution and example of places such as Smart Docklands shows there are a set of factors (beyond the traditional FDI formula) that are necessary to attract modern high quality investment in innovation.
- These include commitment to collaborative innovation between enterprise, SMEs, universities and other institutions, and quality of life factors.

Steps the UK Government can take to ensure investment, including foreign direct investment, is economically effective

- As highlighted by The Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission (IIGC) Report 'Reset for Growth' there is an opportunity to:
 - take a more strategic approach to exploring and developing market opportunities,
 - build strategic networks and relationships,
 - develop viable investment propositions to bring to market,
 - build on Belfast's global brand and proposition as an investment location.

- Belfast City Council has been working collaboratively with DIT to promote capital investment opportunities in Belfast and the wider city region. This has involved:
 - promotion of the DIT NI Investment portfolio – a portfolio of £1.3bn worth of property investment opportunities;
 - attendance at MIPIM – an annual global real estate conference; and
 - invitations to present at investment focused events at 10 Downing Street.
- Council considers there is an opportunity for DIT and Invest NI to more proactively leverage their international networks to positively position Belfast globally for FDI and real estate investment and development. In particular, more could be done to maximise the unique opportunities arising from Northern Ireland's unrestricted access to two markets and regulatory environments.
- Assistance should also be provided to develop a targeted trade & investment strategic action plan. This should include specific FDI propositions for key growth sectors; market specific investment propositions, and vehicles to fully realise the potential of the Belfast-Dublin-London relationship and the Belfast-Dublin Economic Corridor. It should build on the work already established by existing Belfast city regions investment partnerships such as the Renewed Ambition partnership, and Innovation City Belfast.

The potential effect of City Deals on Economic Growth in NI

- Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) seeks to deliver a 10-year programme to increase GVA by £470m and create up to 20,000 new and better jobs across the Belfast City Region (6 Council areas). Within Belfast, it will support the delivery of the Belfast Destination Hub; active travel through a new cycle & pedestrian bridge; a Smart District; as well as innovative University-led centres of excellence in life & health sciences, data analytics and virtual production. It is expected to attract c.£150m of direct capital contributions plus a further £1bn of private sector investment. The BRCD funding of £850mn of UK and NI government funding will be a significant catalyst to attract even more investment across the region. While this City Deal was always going to be important for Belfast, as well as towns and rural areas; it is now a critical element of the post-Covid recovery.
- A key element of economic recovery will involve Digital Investments including:
 - £30m Investment in advanced wireless infrastructure. This investment is based on the premise that while investment in fibre is expected to reach sufficient levels in the next few years, investment in advanced wireless networks will lag considerably – potentially

undermining the region's growth ambition for key sectors and our universities' research ambitions.

- Wireless connectivity (4G, 5G, mmWave, 6G) is expected to be the enabling infrastructure for the modern economy (connected health, advanced manufacturing, screen and media, agri-food, etc). This aligns with the UK Government's own analysis.
- The use of challenge funding to encourage collaborative innovation. BRCD partners are developing new funding programmes (including the £20m Innovation for Societal Impact fund) to encourage collaboration between SMEs, enterprises, universities and government.

Steps that business can take to invest effectively in NI

- Prior to the pandemic, Belfast was on an impressive growth trajectory. The City witnessed record levels of office, hotel and student accommodation development. Investment transactions from 2015 to 2020 totalled £717 million.
- Further Private sector investment is required to continue to drive the delivery of key regeneration projects; and to bring forward housing developments across all tenures to help create a vibrant, functioning city centre. This is necessary to achieve the Belfast Agenda's ambition to attract 66,000 new residents and create 46,000 new jobs in the city by 2035. Additionally, investment in commercial developments will provide the office accommodation required to capitalise on Belfast's current position as one of the most attractive investment locations in Europe for tech start-ups and FDI.
- Belfast Region City Deal is expected to attract c.£150m by way of direct capital contributions from the private sector. However, it also includes opportunities and a requirement for a further £1bn of private sector investment in order to deliver the benefits through jobs and productivity set out within the business cases.

Steps the UK Government can take to encourage investment that addresses the skills gap and increases the employment opportunities for people with few or no qualifications.

There are a number of key areas that need to be focused on to address the skills gap and increase employment opportunities:

- Large scale investment in digital skills provision is required, to meet the needs of the new economy and growth sectors in NI. This should focus on level 2 and above.

- A commitment to targeted interventions. This should include paid work experience and extensive wrap-around support for those that don't have relevant academic qualifications.
- This will require the development of further innovative intervention, which should be based on competency and aptitude rather than academic qualifications.
- Addressing other known barriers to employment, which may not always be skills related. For example, childcare issues are a particularly noticeable barrier in Belfast.
- Enhanced incentives for investment in key sectors.
- Ensuring the application of social value considerations as part of investments and the condition of funding.

Steps the UK Government can take to support the decarbonisation of industry in NI and stimulate investment in a sustainable economy

- Manufacturing contributes over £1 billion to the local economy accounting for 11% of employment and over 15% of GVA, making it a key sector in the Northern Ireland economy. The city is a global leader in aerospace and defence, marine manufacturing (which supports the needs of the maritime, offshore and renewable energy sectors), materials handling, automotive, electronics, Onshore/ offshore wind Energy efficiency, Energy storage and intelligent systems, Waste and recycling Water and waste water. The low carbon sector employs more than 12,000 people in over 300 companies with an annual turnover in excess of £1.7bn.
- The Climate Change Committee's 6th carbon budget estimates that the UK must invest 1% of GDP every year for the next 30 years in order to decarbonise at the rate and scale required.
- The delivery of the green growth and net zero ambitions will need to be resourced effectively and efficiently to ensure that public sector funding catalyses the level of private investment that is required to deliver at scale and at pace if we are to meet the targets.
- Council are working closely with the Place Based Climate Action Network, the Just Transition Alliance and the UK Climate Investment Commission to explore a range of financing models that could unlock private capital and also have initiated work to develop a pipeline of net zero investments for Belfast.
- Financial institutions are seeking net-zero investment opportunities but complain of a lack of investable projects and programmes of the right scale and form, while businesses have good net zero ideas but struggle to make them investable and source finance on a project by project basis.
- What is required is the intermediary layer that can develop and consolidate projects and programmes and match them to different forms of finance. There is a clear need to bridge gaps between projects and investment by building capability, capacity and connections to match

projects with institutional investors. One of the steps that the UK Government could take is to establish a series of Place-based Climate Finance Platforms as a way of bridging the divide with the capability to:

- Identify, develop and de-risk pipelines of projects,
 - develop the business models needed to make these projects investable,
 - consolidate multiple projects into programmes that work at the scale needed to secure investment and;
 - connect them to different sources of finance.
- Strong evidence suggests that unlocking climate finance this way would both enable decarbonisation and deliver local environmental, economic and social benefits whilst generating effective financial returns. This would enable a green recovery and promote levelling up.
 - There is a strong case for these platforms to operate at the local/regional scales in a place-based way that understands both the specific opportunities and the capacities needed to address them in a suitably nuanced way. The case for such platforms is increasingly accepted.

Therefore, to decarbonise industry in NI, Council suggests the Government considers:

- Investment to develop a Place-based Climate Finance Platforms in Belfast.
- Developing a comprehensive strategy and support and investment for green tech, specific proposals and develop and fund education and employability programmes to ensure a skilled workforce is in place to fuel green growth.
- Investment to support a Housing retrofit programme to create a demand for industry solutions to decarbonise and modernise NI's aging housing stock, with support for the development of a retrofit delivery hub (UK Green Growth Index suggests switch from oil to heat pumps, Climate Investment Commission report refers to retrofit, Reset for Growth report recommends housing programme).
- Provide an update on revisions to the Building Control regulations to future-proof new buildings for thermal efficiency and low carbon heating (and avoid costly retrofits at a later date).
- Investment to support Public sector decarbonisation to stimulate the growth of green supply chains. NB Council have been unable to access UK funding to support public sector decarbonisation to date.
- Investment to support Transport Decarbonisation – measures to support decarbonisation including EV infrastructure and investment in active travel infrastructure such as cycling networks (UK Green Growth Index refers to CCC recommendations on EV).
- Investment to support industrial decarbonisation – advice, support, grants to support private sector decarbonisation.

- Investment to support Adaptation planning in Belfast to future proof investments in infrastructure and real estate, including additional investment into Belfast Living with Water programme. The programme (estimated to cost £1.4 billion) is needed to upgrade the drainage and wastewater infrastructure serving the greater Belfast area to be more resilient to climate change and to support economic growth. The programme promotes the use of blue/green infrastructure rather than a continued reliance on hard engineered measures such as bigger pipes and higher flood defences.
- Investment to support our Nature based solutions programme to build resilience to climate impacts (flooding and heat stress) – additional investment into tree planting, peatland restoration, blue carbon restoration (Climate Investment Commission report refers to costs we calculated for tree planting for example).
- We have already seen commitments from the UK Government. For example, the relevant UK Government Departments jointly published a statement setting out the approach to transposing the 2020 Circular Economy Package waste measures, the Business and Energy Secretary announced in March 2021 an ambitious blueprint to deliver the world's first low-carbon industrial sector and over £1 billion to cut emissions from industry, schools and hospitals. The new Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy sets out the government's vision for building a competitive, greener future for the manufacturing and construction sector. Part of the government's path to net zero by 2050 measures will create and support 80,000 UK jobs over the next 30 years whilst cutting emissions by two-thirds in just 15 years.

Relationships between schools and local Universities

Although the Council has no statutory responsibility for education, we have developed a close relationship with local universities and schools to address skills and employability issues within the city. In particular, we consider that the prevailing challenges around educational attainment, especially within disadvantaged communities, should be a focus for investment in the context of the Levelling Up ambitions and commitments.

In considering options for investment, the council recommends the following:

- Supporting the delivery of the Fair Start recommendations to enhance educational attainment levels, focusing on areas of most significant disadvantage.
- Supporting interventions that encourage progression pathways from vocational into higher education to expand the engagement mechanisms to support access through non-traditional routes.

- Successive research work, including work by CBI and Ulster University's Skills Barometer, indicates that the digital skills pipeline is struggling. Career pathways guidance and digital engagement must start at an early stage. Significantly more also needs to be done within schools to encourage the uptake of STEM subjects and to address diversity imbalances. This is necessary if we are to establish a long-term NI skills pipeline.
- The focus should be on not only improving linkages between schools and universities but also between schools and FE colleges, in recognition of the value of technical and vocational education in building our economy.

Assessment of the understanding of the importance of education

The Government should develop a comprehensive and long-term range of programmes and interventions to address systemic issues in STEM imbalance. It should invest in interventions to overcome barriers to inclusive participation in technology, particularly by young people, in order to inspire the next generation of scientists and entrepreneurs.

School engagement through careers provides a clear opportunity to instill excitement around this vision. We support investment in a sustained intervention of scale that:

- Incorporates a common message or brand supported by all partners and delivered via a sustained engagement campaign.
- Integrates role models who are relatable to young people connecting to industry.
- Establishes clear career pathways into the occupational areas identified, through which young people and their influencers can see the educational journey they need to embark on. These pathways need to cover both further and high education, and they need to be joined up and coherent.
- Engages young people across the education system in new and innovative ways.
- Integrates across the education system, instilling core innovation skills and ensuring that young people, even if they don't progress into a R&D specific role, have still developed a set of core transferrable skills.
- Secures the commitment of the education system and develops the skill base of the teaching community to ensure they are equipped with the skills and knowledge to inform young people.

Status of technical, vocational education and apprenticeships

- Belfast City Council's work with partners has identified that there is a need for significant additional investment in apprenticeships, particularly in new and growth sectors such as fintech, CDI, cyber, creative, advanced manufacturing, and tourism.
- Additionally, there needs to be radical change to the apprenticeship levy investment model. Currently employers see no benefit from this. Instead it

is seen as an additional cost that adversely affects their bottom line, which makes the apprenticeship model less appealing.

- To strengthen NI's skills pipeline there is a need for targeted interventions in key sectors, such as computer science where data indicates that many jobs cannot be filled due to shortages of graduates. Prioritising certain sectors and skills by introducing grant systems is one intervention that may help address supply side deficiencies. However, skills supply interventions are generally long-term in nature. Therefore, shorter-term approaches could focus on upskilling aspects of the existing workforce, especially those individuals adversely affected by COVID-19. To promote diversity across R&D roles, potential exists to look at alternative educational pathways beyond the traditional academic route usually associated with these roles. Vocational pathways such as apprenticeships and higher-level apprenticeships are examples of alternative routes into these roles.

Identifying sectors of investment and employment potential

- There is a need for better tools and data sources for identifying high potential growth clusters in Northern Ireland. The 10X Economy Ambition proposed that NI should be hyper-focused on those sectors that have the potential to greatly increase productivity and generate jobs. Investment proposals should align with those identified sectors. However, in keeping with the commitments around levelling up, government should ensure that investment is focused on inclusive economic growth.
- NI has struggled in the past to provide detailed quantitative analysis of these sectors (and for example their relationship to translational research strengths of our universities). Much of this was due to paucity of local data or the absence of common metrics. Work is now underway between the Council's City Innovation Team and Innovation City Belfast to exploit new technologies and techniques to better understand the landscape for cluster growth. We will work closely with Government to ensure that there is a place-based approach to investment that can maximise return for all partners.
- Talented people are the key ingredient to a successful innovation ecosystem. Hence a number of different initiatives are needed, particularly in light of Brexit and the implications for NI which faces a potential 'brain drain' outside of the region. This requires both a focus on creating a strong domestic skills pipeline and attracting talent, particularly within those key sectors.

The Committee approved the foregoing response for submission to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee.

Consultations and Responses

The City Solicitor undertook to submit to a future meeting a report setting out the current arrangements for dealing with consultations, in the context of an issue which had been raised by a Member around the need to ensure that Members were afforded the opportunity to view consultations and contribute to responses at an earlier stage in the process.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Assets Management

The Director of Physical Programmes submitted for Committee's consideration a report seeking approval in relation to the following asset related disposal, acquisition and estate matters:

i. Midland Boxing Club – Acquisition of land

The Committee granted approval to acquire approximately 202.35 m² of land from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to facilitate the extension of the existing Midland Boxing Club facility.

ii. Grosvenor Recreation Centre – Licence Agreement

The Committee granted approval to enter into a new two-year Licence Agreement with Bravo Outdoor Limited for the operation of the advertising hoardings at Grosvenor Recreation Centre.

iii. Waterworks Park Community Garden – Grow-NI Agreement

The Committee granted approval to extend the agreement with Grow-NI for a further three years, from 1st January 2022, to manage and use the community garden at the Waterworks Park.

Update on Area Working Groups

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of:

- the South Belfast Area Working Group of 22nd November;
- the North Belfast Area Working Group of 24th November;
- the West Belfast Area Working Group of 25th November; and
- the East Belfast Area Working Group of 2nd December.

The Committee also approved the participation in the Community Infrastructure Pilot initiative of the Ballynafeigh (including Annadale) and Finaghy areas, on the basis of discussions which had taken place since the meeting of the South Belfast Area Working Group on 22nd November with Members from the Balmoral and Botanic District Electoral Areas.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Update on Contracts

The Committee:

- approved the public advertisement of tenders, as per Standing Order 37a, as detailed in Table 1 below;
- approved the award of Single Tender Actions, in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Table 2 below;
- noted the award of retrospective Single Tender Actions, in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Table 3 below; and
- approved the modification of the contract, as per Standing Order 37a, 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
Hire of marquees and equipment for Council events	Up to 4 years	£380,000	R Cregan	The Council runs a number of planned and ad hoc events each year where marquees and equipment are required for delivery
Procurement of a web recruitment system to be integrated into the council's replacement HR/Payroll/Time & Attendance system, ResourceLink (RL)	Up to 4 years	£100,800	R Cregan	The web recruitment module within the RL system was unable to be implemented due to it not meeting current accessibility standards.
License support and maintenance for Plotbox booking system for cemeteries and crematorium	Up to 4 years	£104,640	R Cregan	Booking system for cemeteries and crematorium

Open Spaces and Street Scene vehicles/ plant	Up to 2 years	£301,000	C Matthews	New vehicles/ plant to support in house teams for operational needs.
Cleaning Services	Up to 5 years	£1,000,000	S Toland / R Black	Corporate wide contract for cleaning services that will be open to use by all departments that have a requirement for cleaning offices/premises outside of the service provided by the internal cleaning teams/ staff.
Provision of collection, storage, retrieval and destruction of office records.	Up to 10 years	£560,000	J Walsh	Ongoing requirement for retrieval and off-site storage of office records and destruction of confidential waste and stored documents as per Council Retention & Disposal Policy
Supply of topdressing, sand and soil for parks	Up to 3 years	£375,000	R Black	Materials required for sports surfaces and pitches.
Replacement of network hardware in the four main BCC sites: City Hall, 9 Adelaide, Cecil Ward Building and Duncrue	Up to 12 months	£343,745	R Cregan	The current hardware is reaching end of life. The new hardware allows BCC to control and monitor the devices and security profile of all devices connecting to the network
Replacement of server and storage hardware	Up to 12 months	£500,000	R Cregan	The current hardware is reaching end of life. The hardware is now 5 years old must be replaced to ensure continuity of service and support, reduce

				risk of failure, and to avoid escalating support costs from the hardware suppliers
Security awareness and phishing training system	Up to 3 years	£54,000	R Cregan	The procurement and commissioning of a security awareness and phishing training system
Provision of an occupational health service for staff	Up to 3 years	£562,380	J Tully	Occupational health service for staff
Provision of an employee counselling service for staff	Up to 3 years	£590,000	J Tully	Employee counselling service for staff

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Total Value	SRO	Supplier
Support and maintenance of E-Bravo tendering solution	£32,443	R Cregan	Bravosolutions UK Ltd
T629a - Removal, Storage and Retrieval of Office Records	£32,000	J Walsh	Morgan Document Security (previously, John Morgan & Son Ltd)
SAP annual licences	£48,000	R Cregan	SAP UK Limited

Table 3: Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Title of Contract	Duration	Value	SRO	Supplier
Environmental Health Officers required for 24hr shift rota cover for essential service delivery within the Port Health service (fully funded)	Up to 5 months	£80,000	S Toland / R Black	Hays Recruitment
Electrical services installation at Carrickhill Community Centre	Up to 6 weeks	£38,048	S Grimes	Methodology M&E
The build, construction and fabrication of the space and elements within at 2 Royal Avenue (fully funded)	Up to 8 months	£200,000	A Reid	Little Fox Events

The provision of bespoke festival style temporary toilets at 2 Royal Avenue (fully funded)	Up to 16 weeks	£48,301	A Reid	Balloo Ltd
--	----------------	---------	--------	------------

Table 4: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Duration	Modification	SRO	Supplier
T1857 - Peace IV Programme - Marking the Decade of Centenaries	Up to 3.5 years	Additional 4 months	S Toland / R Black	The Corrymeela Community
T1710 - Provision of a cleaning service at Belfast Castle, Malone House, The Stables and Lock Keepers Cottage	Up 5 years	Additional 4 months and £20,000	S Toland / R Black	Precision Industrial Services
T1858 Peace IV Connecting Communities (*Please note a 3 month extension has been approved by SP&R in October 2021)	3 years and 2 months	additional 6 months = 9 months total	S Toland / R Black	NI Alternatives Limited
T1990b Cinematography for PEACE IV Programme Services	Up to 1 year	Additional 10 months and £5,720	S Toland / R Black	Morrow Communications
T1925 - Peace IV On the Right Track; Good Relations through Sports	Up to 2 years and 10 months	Additional 9 months	S Toland / R Black	Active Communities Network
T1877 Supply, delivery, and application (as required) of top-dressing sand and the supply of bowling green top-dressing sand, topsoil, screened topsoil, and sand/soil mix	Up to 3 years	Additional 4 months and additional £40,000	S Toland / R Black	Clive Richardson Ltd
T1859a - PEACE IV Playing our Part in the City Programme	Up to 3 years and 3 months	Additional 3 months	S Toland / R Black	Active Communities Network
T1920 - Peace IV Personal Development Project for Young People at Risk	Up to 3 years	Additional 3 months	S Toland / R Black	Extern Northern Ireland

**Request for Funding - Belfast
Indoor Bowls Club**

(The Director of Finance and Resources declared an interest in this item, on the basis that he was a member of the Belfast Indoor Bowls Club, and left the meeting whilst it was being considered.)

The Head of Finance informed the Committee that a request had been received from the Belfast Indoor Bowls Club for financial assistance towards the hosting in Belfast of the British Isles Indoor Bowls International Series and Championships Series.

It had been pointed out that the event, which would be taking place in March, 2022, would attract 350 competitors and between 2,500 and 3,000 spectators and would create a positive impact for the City from a tourism perspective.

The Belfast Indoor Bowls Club had been successful in acquiring funding from the Council through the Support for Sport Grants Fund to host the event in 2017. However, as that Fund had not opened for 2021/22, it had been unable to secure grant funding for the forthcoming event.

The Head of Finance explained that, whilst the British Isles Indoor Bowls Council would be providing a grant of £3,000 to help offset the loss of green fees, the Belfast Indoor Bowls Club was still required to raise £9,490 to meet the cost of advertising and promotional material, the hire of tiered seating and first aiders and the payment of subsistence to volunteers/stewards. Should the Committee accede to the request, the funding would be met from existing budgets.

The Committee agreed to allocate £9,490 to the Belfast Indoor Bowls Club towards the hosting of the aforementioned event.

Equality and Good Relations

**Minutes of Meeting of
Shared City Partnership**

(Ms. N. Lane, Good Relations Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Shared City Partnership of 6th December, including the following recommendations:

PEACE IV

- i. to grant to CYP2 Playing our Part in the City and CYP3 Personal Change a three-month extension to 28th March, 2022 to enable project closure and wrap up; and
- ii. Shared Spaces and Services – to agree to extend the MDL contract to 31st January, 2022.

Building Positive Relations (BPR)

BPR 1 - NIHE

- i. to re-profile £25,000 within the NIHE budget to support residential trips and proposal for a two-night cross-border residential trip for West Belfast 1 participants;
- ii. to approve the use of SLAs with community groups participating in BPR1. (Previous requests for this approach are still awaiting SEUPB approval);
- iii. to deliver eight hours capacity building on an individual group basis for participants within West Belfast 2 network;

BPR5 LINCS

- to extend the delivery timeframe to 30th September, 2022 to increase capacity building and further develop the Inclusion Forum.

BPR5/Traveller

- to delegate authority to the PEACE IV Programme Board to agree the rescope of the Traveller Support Hub to a Capacity Building programme, subject to SEUPB approval.

Good Relations Plan

- i. to direct £10,000 of unspent funding from the Micro Grants budget into the St. Patrick's Day fund;
- ii. to reallocate the funding allocated to the St. Patrick's Day Grants programme, along with the £10,000 from Micro Grants underspend (as above), to the Civic Programme being led by the Tourism, Culture, Arts and Heritage Team, to assist with the delivery of the four large-scale events scheduled to be held in Belfast over the week of St. Patrick's Day;
- iii. to provide funding support of £15,000 towards four separate good relations related projects, proposed by the City and Neighbourhood Services' East Belfast Team, delivered by East Belfast Alternatives, East Belfast Sure Start, East Belfast Community Development Association and Youth Initiatives. (These proposals relate to BCC 10 Strategic Intervention Programme - East £15,000);
- iv. to agree, in principle, to provide funding of £5,000 to support The Four Corners Festival and to grant delegated authority to the Good Relations Manager to liaise with the group and award the funding, if appropriate; and

- v. to provide funding support of £8,000 towards the delivery of a number of good relations related activities to coincide with the African Nations Cup, to be delivered by the Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers, in partnership with other organisations. (These proposals relate to BCC10 Strategic Intervention Programme – South).

The Good Relations Manager informed the Committee that, following the meeting of the Shared City Partnership, she had been advised that, due to resource issues, the Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers did not have the capacity currently to manage the activities referred to in recommendation v. above.

Accordingly, she recommended that the Committee agree that the funding of £8,000 be awarded to a relevant organisation, to be agreed by the Director of Neighbourhood Services, which was already involved in this area of work, to deliver the activities in partnership with the Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Equality and Diversity: Equality Screening
and Rural Needs Outcome Report**

The Committee noted the contents of a report providing a summary of equality screenings and rural needs impact assessments for the period from July to September, 2021.

Operational Issues

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

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 9th December.

**Minutes of Meeting of Social Policy
Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Social Policy Working Group of 22nd November.

**Requests for use of the City Hall
and the Provision of Hospitality**

The Committee agreed to adopt the recommendations made in respect of those applications received up to 6th December, as set out below:

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Friday, 17th December, 2021

B
3871

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
2022 EVENTS						
Malaysia Students Society of Northern Ireland	13 March 2022	Malaysian Night 2022 – Annual cultural celebration and dinner for the Malaysian community in Belfast. Numbers attending – 200	C & D	No (Community)	No Hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
N I Tourist Guiding Organisation	6 April 2022	Graduation of Tourist Guides - ceremony to celebrate students have completed the first ever Green Badge Walking Tour Course for Belfast. Numbers attending – 50	B & C	No (Voluntary/ NFP)	No Hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
Saphara	11 April 2022	Saphara Be the Change Award ceremony will highlight and celebrate the work of 150 school students in local and global citizenship.	D	No (charity)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality

		Numbers attending – 50				
Belfast & District Beekeepers Association	19 May 2022	Launch of the BDBKA 80th Anniversary Publication – Launch event for their new publication. <i>(daytime event)</i> Numbers attending – 20	C & D	No (Voluntary/ NFP)	No Hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
Fleming Fulton School	19 May 2022	End of Year Celebration Ceremony will recognize the challenging times during the past 2 years and celebrate with our young people and their families the resilience shown. <i>(evening event)</i> Numbers attending – 220	D	No (charity)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
Swim Ireland	8 October 2022	LEN European Swimming Officials Seminar 2022 – Gala Dinner as	B & C	No (Voluntary/ NFP)	No Hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality

		part of the 3-day seminar and welcome to Belfast. Numbers attending – 75				
D'Sign Arts (NI)	10 December 2022	Recognition and celebratory event to thank and award committee members and volunteers for all of their hard work, commitment and contribution to the charity. Numbers attending – 30	D	No (charity)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality

Minutes of Meeting of Audit and Risk Panel

The Committee noted the key issues which had been discussed at the meeting of the Audit and Risk Panel on 7th December and approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting.

Minutes of Meeting of Active Belfast Limited Board

The Committee noted the minutes of the meeting of the Active Belfast Limited Board of 6th December.

Chairperson