

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held Remotely via Microsoft Teams on Thursday, 7th January, 2021
at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

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

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor Hanvey.

Declarations of Interest

The following Members declared an interest in item "Covid-19 - Community Support Funding", under the Strategic Policy and Resource minutes of 10th December, for the reasons outlined below, and did not take part in any discussion on the item:

- Councillor Verner, in that she was an employee of the Greater Shankill Partnership;
- Alderman Kingston, in that he was an employee of Forward South Partnership;
- Councillor Hutchinson, in that he worked for Mount Vernon Community Development Forum, who were the lead partner for LCAP and who were in receipt of funding;
- Councillor McCabe, in that her husband worked for the Upper Andersonstown Community Forum and had received funding;
- Councillor Gormley, in that he was a Board member of Lower Ormeau Resident's Action Group, which had been on the strategic community based partners in the past;

- Councillor Canavan, in that she was a Board member of the Greater Shankill Partnership;
- Councillor Maskey, in that he was employed by Intercomm;
- Councillor T. Kelly, in that she was on the Board of Forward South Partnership;
- Councillor Nicholl, in that she was on the Board of Forward South Partnership;
- Councillor McReynolds, in that he was on the Board of Forward South Partnership; and
- Councillor Bunting, in that she was on the Board of Forward South Partnership

Councillors M. Kelly, Long, McKeown and Smyth declared an interest in Item 7a, the Motion “Health and Social Care Workers: Thank You Payment” in that they were an employee of the Trust and they left the meeting for the duration of the discussion.

Alderman Copeland and Councillors Carson, Corr, Flynn, Garrett, Heading, Kyle, McMullan, McReynolds and Pankhurst declared an interest in Item 7a, the Motion “Health and Social Care Workers: Thank You Payment” in that they had a family member who was an employee of the Trust, and they left the meeting for the duration of the discussion.

Clarification

Alderman Kingston advised that the Declaration of Interest that he had made at the Council meeting of 1st December had been incorrectly recorded, in that he was a Board member of the Greater Shankill Partnership and was an employee of Forward South Partnership. The minutes would be updated accordingly.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Alderman McCoubrey),
Seconded by Councillor Magennis and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly meetings of the Council of 1st and 7th December 2020 be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

High Sheriff of Belfast

Several Members paid tribute to Councillor Verner, whose term as High Sheriff had ended in December, and congratulated her on carrying out her work during what had been a difficult year.

Councillor Verner expressed her appreciation for the support which she had received from the Civic Dignitaries, Members and officers over the course of the year and wished her successor, Councillor Long, well during his term as High Sheriff.

Brexit

Councillor Flynn, Chairperson of the Brexit Committee, wished to put on record his thanks to the Council staff who had done their utmost in having kept residents and workers in the City so well-informed about the changes which were happening as a result of the United Kingdom having left the European Union.

Congratulations

Councillor Magennis requested that the Lord Mayor would send a letter of congratulations to the Antrim Hurling team, who had recently beaten Kerry. The Lord Mayor acceded to the request.

He also requested that the City Hall be lit up in the Antrim colours by way of celebrating their success, and the officers agreed to consider that request through the usual process.

Councillor Brooks congratulated Mount Merrion Parish Church for having been named as the National Churches Trust's "Church of the Year 2020". He thanked the Reverend Adrian Green and the Community Association, which was led by Ms. Marlene Dodds, who worked tirelessly for the community throughout the year and had continued to provide for the community throughout the pandemic.

Councillor M. Kelly congratulated Mr. M. Briggs, Executive Director of the East Belfast Community Development Agency, on having been appointed as a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the New Year's Honours List. She paid tribute to his tireless work, particularly through the pandemic.

Alderman Kingston also congratulated Mr. W. Humphrey MLA on having been appointed as a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the New Year's Honours List.

Councillor Hutchinson congratulated Mrs. J. Totten, Manager of North Belfast Alternatives, on having been appointed as a Medallist of the Order of the British Empire (BEM) for her services to restorative justice and to community cohesion in Northern Ireland. He also paid tribute to the many volunteers who had quietly helped those who were in need during the pandemic. He paid special tribute to the work of the Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Paul McCusker, who was the co-ordinator of St. Patrick's Soup kitchen.

The Lord Mayor advised the Members that he would be sending a letter to all Belfast recipients who had received recognition in the New Year's Honours List.

Expressions of Sympathy

Councillor Donnelly expressed condolences to the family of Lucy McIlhatton, who was tragically died in a traffic accident in the west of the City.

Councillor Ferguson advised the Council that the mother of Noah Donohoe, Fiona, had led a cavalcade to Stormont that evening, as she sought answers over the death of her son, and paid tribute to Fiona and extended condolences to her.

Councillors de Faoite and Howard expressed their disgust and solidarity with residents in Nashville, Tennessee, on the terror attack which had occurred in the City on Christmas Day, 2020. The Lord Mayor agreed to send a letter to the Mayor of Nashville to pass on his sympathies.

Change of Membership on Committees and Outside Bodies

The Chief Executive reported that notification had been received from the following Political Party of a change to membership of Committees/Outside Bodies:

Alliance

- Councillor Mulholland to replace Councillor McAllister on the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

The Council approved the change.

Minutes

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Black,
Seconded by Councillor Beattie

That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 10th and 18th December, 2020, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

The information contained in the report associated with the following amendment is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act(Northern Ireland) 2014. However, it was not deemed necessary to exclude the press or public for the discussion on the item.

Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Long,
Seconded by Councillor Lyons,

That the item be referred back to Committee for further consideration, particularly with regard to:

1. the thematic areas;
2. the decision to have a separate Shankill area for funding; and
3. the funding allocation model.

On a recorded vote, eighteen Members voted for the amendment and forty against and it was declared lost.

<u>For 18</u>	<u>Against 40</u>
De Faoite, Flynn, Groogan, Heading, Howard, M. Kelly, Long, Lyons, McAllister, McDonough-Brown, McKeown, McMullan, McReynolds, Mulholland, Nicholl, O'Hara, Smyth and Whyte.	The Lord Mayor (Alderman McCoubrey); Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Haire, Kingston, Rodgers and Sandford; and Councillors Baker, Beattie, Black, Bradley, Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Matt Collins, Michael Collins, Corr, Donnelly, Ferguson, Garrett, Gormley, Hussey, Hutchinson, T. Kelly, Kyle, Magee, Magennis, Maskey, McAteer, McCabe, McCullough, McLaughlin, Murphy, Newton, Pankhurst, Spratt, Verner and Walsh.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Ferguson,
Seconded by Councillor Matt Collins,

That the funding should be allocation based on (%) population and (%) Multiple Deprivation Measure, as detailed in option 2 within the report, but that further discussions would take place at Committee regarding the rationale behind the ring-fenced budget for the Shankill area.

On a recorded vote, twenty-one Members voted for the amendment and thirty-seven against and it was declared lost.

<u>For 21</u>	<u>Against 37</u>
Matt Collins, Michael Collins, De Faoite, Ferguson, Flynn, Groogan, Heading, Howard, M. Kelly, Long, Lyons, McAllister, McDonough-Brown, McKeown, McMullan, McReynolds, Mulholland, Nicholl, O'Hara, Smyth and Whyte.	The Lord Mayor (Alderman McCoubrey); Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Haire, Kingston, Rodgers and Sandford; and Councillors Baker, Beattie, Black, Bradley, Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Corr, Donnelly, Garrett, Gormley, Hussey, Hutchinson, T. Kelly, Kyle, Magee, Magennis, Maskey, McAteer, McCabe, McCullough, McLaughlin, Murphy, Newton, Pankhurst, Spratt, Verner and Walsh.

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of 10th and 18th December were subsequently approved and adopted.

Extract of Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd October, 2020 – “Bilingual Street Signage”

Moved by Councillor Black,
Seconded by Councillor Walsh

That the extract of the Minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd October, 2020, be approved and adopted.

Request for Matter to be Taken Back for Further Consideration

Moved by Councillor Brooks,
Seconded by Councillor Kyle,

That the issue be referred back to the Committee for further consideration.

On a recorded vote, nineteen Members voted for the amendment and thirty-nine against and it was declared lost.

<u>For 19</u>	<u>Against 39</u>
The Lord Mayor (Alderman McCoubrey); Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Haire, Kingston, Rodgers and Sandford; and Councillors Brooks, Bunting, Cobain, Hussey, Hutchinson, T. Kelly, Kyle, McCullough, Newton, Pankhurst, Spratt and Verner.	Councillors Baker, Beattie, Black, Bradley, Canavan, Carson, Matt Collins, Michael Collins, Corr, De Faoite, Donnelly, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Groogan, Heading, Howard, M. Kelly, Long, Lyons, Magee, Magennis, Maskey, McAllister, McAteer, McCabe, McDonough-Brown, McKeown, McLaughlin, McMullan, McReynolds, Mulholland, Murphy, Nicholl, O’Hara, Smyth, Walsh and Whyte.

Adoption of Minute

The extract of the minutes of 23rd October, 2020, entitled “Bilingual Street Signage”, was thereupon approved and adopted.

People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Baker,
Seconded by Councillor Magee and

That the Minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 8th December, 2020 be approved and adopted.

Update Report “Wild Lights Show”

At the request of Councillor McLaughlin, the City Solicitor agreed that the briefing paper which was to be submitted to a future meeting in respect of the legislation that existed around bats and their habitats, would also include:

- a legal opinion outlining whether the Council, having asked one promotor to carry out an environmental assessment for the use of Botanic Gardens, had set a precedent to require all future promotors to do the same; and
- any relevant legal considerations which the Committee should be aware of in relation to the potential 24 hour opening of the Council’s Parks.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 8th December, were approved and adopted.

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Brooks,
Seconded by Councillor T. Kelly and

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 9th December, 2020, be approved and adopted.

Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor McAteer and

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 16th December, 2020, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor McKeown,
Seconded by Councillor Maskey and

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 15th December, 2020, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Brexit Committee

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite

That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Brexit Committee of 3rd December, 2020 be approved and adopted.

Update on Shared Prosperity Fund

Councillor de Faoite requested that the letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer be amended to convey the Committee's strong opposition to any attempt to undermine the principles of devolution in the creation and design of the Shared Prosperity Fund.

The Council agreed to the amendment.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of the Brexit Committee of 3rd December, were approved and adopted.

Motions

Health and Social Care Workers: Thank You Payment

(Councillors M. Kelly, Long, McKeown, Smyth declared an interest, in that they were an employee of the Trust, and Alderman Copeland and Councillors Carson, Corr, Flynn, Garrett, Heading, Kyle, McMullan, McReynolds and Pankhurst declared an interest, in that they had a family member who was an employee of the Trust, and they left the meeting for the duration of the discussion on this item.)

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Brooks proposed:

"This Council recognises the importance of our National Health Service and the heroic contribution of our Health and Social Care workers, and care home workers, throughout the pandemic; expresses our thanks for their commitment to and care for our community and will write to the Health Minister Robin Swann MLA asking him to administer a "thank you" payment of at least £500 as a practical demonstration of our gratitude."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Verner.

Amendment 1

Moved by Councillor Walsh
Seconded by Councillor Magee,

That the motion be amended as follows:

“In recent years through austerity where pressures on the system have grown significantly, and most recently throughout the pandemic; we recognise that the best way to value health and social care workers is through a fully funded fair and decent pay award negotiated through their health trade unions, and the provision of safe staffing levels underpinned with safe staffing legislation and to express our thanks for their commitment to the care for community during the pandemic we will write to the Health Minister Robin Swann MLA urging him to engage with trade unions on NHS pay and asking him to administer a “thank you” payment of at least £500 as a practical demonstration of our gratitude. This payment must not replace a fully funded 2021 pay award.”

The Proposer accepted the amendment.

Further Amendment

Moved by Councillor de Faoite
Seconded by Councillor Lyons,

- That the letter is sent to the Northern Ireland Executive, instead of solely to the Health Minister, Robin Swann MLA; and
- that recognition is also given to student doctors and nurses.

The Proposer accepted the amendment.

After discussion, the following motion, as amended, was put to the meeting and passed:

“In recent years through austerity where pressures on the system have grown significantly, and most recently throughout the pandemic; we recognise that the best way to value health and social care workers, including student doctors and nurses, is through a fully funded fair and decent pay award negotiated through their health trade unions, and the provision of safe staffing levels underpinned with safe staffing legislation and, to express our thanks for their commitment to the care for community during the pandemic, we will write to the Ministers of the NI Executive urging them to engage with trade unions on NHS pay and to administer a “thank you” payment of at least £500 as a practical demonstration of our gratitude. This payment must not replace a fully funded 2021 pay award.”

Uplift on Universal Credit

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Heading proposed:

“This Council recognises the positive impact of the £20 uplift on Universal Credit (UC) implemented in April 2020.

This Council also recognises that, since March 2020, the unemployment claimant count has doubled to at least 60,000 in Northern Ireland and with a recession expected in the Spring only to worsen the situation for many households. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has failed to provide certainty that the £20 uplift on UC will remain beyond March 2021 meaning many families are potentially facing a loss of £1,040 a year to their incomes overnight. Charity Action for Children has warned that more than one in 10 families in the north are already having to choose between paying bills and eating meals. This Council calls on the UK government to put a protective shield around struggling families by ensuring March's Budget makes clear that Universal Credit will not be cut by £20 a week in the spring. Finally, this Council agrees to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer requesting they maintain the £20 uplift on Universal Credit in April 2021 and extending the £20 uplift to all legacy benefits.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Lyons.

After discussion, the motion was put to the meeting and passed.

Black Lives Matters Demonstrations

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Matt Collins proposed:

“This Council notes the recent Ombudsman report into the policing of Black Lives Matter demonstrations in Belfast and Derry on 6 June 2020. The Council notes in particular the Ombudsman's conclusions that PSNI actions on the day were disproportionate, discriminatory and showed disregard to people's human rights in relation to freedom of expression and freedom of protest; further notes the inappropriate use of the Serious Crimes Act (2007) to caution organisers of the events. Accordingly, this Council calls for all penalty notices to be rescinded and prosecutions against Black Lives Matter activists relating to 6th June protests to be abandoned, as the first step toward redress. The Council reiterates its support for the Black Lives Matter movement and its call for a real and robust racial equality strategy to help tackle the systemic problem of institutional racism.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Ferguson.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Flynn
Seconded by Councillor Groogan,

That the following wording be added, after “redress”:

“Furthermore, the Council calls on the PSNI to exercise its discretion to withdraw or rescind the applications made to the courts for registration of the Fixed Penalty Notices.”

The Proposer accepted the amendment.

The motion, as amended, therefore read:

“This Council notes the recent Ombudsman report into the policing of Black Lives Matter demonstrations in Belfast and Derry on 6 June 2020. The Council notes in particular the Ombudsman’s conclusions that PSNI actions on the day were disproportionate, discriminatory and showed disregard to people’s human rights in relation to freedom of expression and freedom of protest; further notes the inappropriate use of the Serious Crimes Act (2007) to caution organisers of the events. Accordingly, this Council calls for all penalty notices to be rescinded and prosecutions against Black Lives Matter activists relating to 6th June protests to be abandoned, as the first step toward redress. Furthermore, the Council calls on the PSNI to exercise its discretion to withdraw or rescind the applications made to the courts for registration of the Fixed Penalty Notices. The Council reiterates its support for the Black Lives Matter movement and its call for a real and robust racial equality strategy to help tackle the systemic problem of institutional racism.”

On a recorded vote, thirty-nine Members voted for the proposal, as amended, and sixteen against, with two no votes, and it was declared carried.

<u>For 39</u>	<u>Against 16</u>	<u>No Vote 2</u>
Councillors Baker, Beattie, Black, Bradley, Canavan, Carson, Matt Collins, Michael Collins, Corr, De Faoite, Donnelly, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Groogan, Heading, Howard, M. Kelly, Long, Lyons, Magee, Magennis, Maskey, McAllister, McAteer, McCabe, McDonough-Brown, McKeown, McLaughlin, McMullan, McReynolds, Mulholland, Murphy, Nicholl, O’Hara, Smyth, Walsh and Whyte.	The Lord Mayor (Alderman McCoubrey); Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Haire, Kingston, Rodgers and Sandford; and Councillors Brooks, Bunting, Hussey, T. Kelly, McCullough, Newton, Pankhurst, Spratt and Verner.	Councillors Hutchinson and Kyle.

30 by 30 Biodiversity Campaign

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Smyth proposed:

“This Council recognises the positive steps made during this term to improve its environmental commitments. It is also aware of the 30 by 30 pledge made by 64 Nations at the UN Biodiversity Summit in September 2020, to return 30% of land and sea to nature by 2030, and signals an ambition to reverse biodiversity loss within the next 10 years. This Council also notes the increasing awareness of the citizens of this city to the climate crisis and their willingness to play their part, no matter how small and, in this context, welcomes progress on the Council working with others to assist residents in transforming their alleyways and open spaces”

Building on this, the Council will develop and put together a 30 by 30 biodiversity campaign in collaboration with its partners that will educate, inform and support our citizens and communities to maximise the green spaces they have around their homes to support urban biodiversity throughout the city.

We believe that a 30 by 30 Biodiversity campaign can deliver positive benefits and can help meet this Council’s legal obligations under ‘The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011’ to further and strengthen biodiversity in this city for the decades to come.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor M. Kelly.

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

Creating Better Access into the Hills

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Donnelly proposed:

“As a City, one of Belfast’s best natural attributes is its surrounding hills and landscape. The Cavehill and Divis mountains offer spectacular views of the city that visitors and Belfast residents flock to all year around to enjoy.

More so now than ever before, locations like Divis mountain offers space for outdoor recreation and essential health and well-being. As a city council we must work with partners to develop a plan which is respectful of the natural environment and surrounding area but also supports the increased demand for parking and user facilities at Divis Mountain.

Therefore, we call on this Council, working alongside partners in the Department of Infrastructure, The National Trust and the Belfast Hills Partnership, to develop and implement a resourced plan for enhanced

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user facilities, including parking at the Divis Mountain walk site on Divis Road, Hannahstown, as well as cyclist parking and to explore the creation of further access points into the hills from different locations across the city which in itself will take pressure of the car park and allow residents to access the hills on foot from their neighbouring communities.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Garrett.

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

Lord Mayor
Chairperson