

# Public Document Pack

## BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

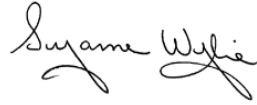
### **SUMMONS TO ATTEND THE MONTHLY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**TO: THE LORD MAYOR, ALDERMEN AND THE COUNCILLORS OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL**

Notice is hereby given that the monthly meeting of the Council will be held remotely, via Microsoft Teams, on Monday, 1st February, 2021 at 6.00 pm, for the transaction of the following business:

1. Summons
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes of the Council (Pages 1 - 14)
5. Official Announcements
6. Minutes
  - a) Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Pages 15 - 46)
  - b) People and Communities Committee (Pages 47 - 78)
  - c) City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Pages 79 - 104)
  - d) Licensing Committee (Pages 105 - 112)
  - e) Planning Committee (Pages 113 - 122)
  - f) Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee (Pages 123 - 128)
  - g) Brexit Committee (Pages 129 - 138)
7. Motions
  - a) Proposed Future Development - Writer's Square (Pages 139 - 140)
  - b) Child Poverty Task Force (Pages 141 - 142)
  - c) Student Support (Pages 143 - 144)
  - d) Takeover of private healthcare (Pages 145 - 146)
  - e) Urgent action to address invasive odour in Collin (Pages 147 - 148)

The Members of Belfast City Council are hereby summoned to attend.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Suzanne Wylie', with a stylized, cursive script.

Chief Executive

**Please note:**

This Council meeting is being organised to ensure it is in accordance with Public Health Agency guidance.

The meeting is being held remotely via Microsoft Teams, and can be viewed by the Public via the Council's website.

## **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;

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- 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.

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**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.

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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

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3. the funding allocation model.

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

<b><u>For 18</u></b>	<b><u>Against 40</u></b>
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.

<b><u>For 21</u></b>	<b><u>Against 37</u></b>
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.

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**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.

<b><u>For 19</u></b>	<b><u>Against 39</u></b>
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.



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**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 promoters 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

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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.

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**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.”

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**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.

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**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.

<b><u>For 39</u></b>	<b><u>Against 16</u></b>	<b><u>No Vote 2</u></b>
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.

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**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 user facilities, including parking at the Divis Mountain walk site on Divis Road,

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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

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## Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 22nd January, 2021

### MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

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

Also attended: Alderman Copeland.

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. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer;  
and  
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer

### **Apologies**

No apologies were reported.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 10th and 18th December, omitting those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee, were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 7th January.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Alderman Kingston declared an interest in respect of item 4b – Update on Covid-19 Community Response, in that he worked on a part-time basis for the Forward South Partnership, which had received funding under the response initiative, and left the meeting whilst the item was being considered.

The Chairperson (Councillor Black) declared an interest in relation to item 5a – Update on Physical Programme, on the basis that she managed the Grosvenor Community Centre, which had secured match funding for pitch and playground

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improvements. As the report was presented for noting only, she was not, therefore, required to leave the meeting.

Councillor McDonough-Brown declared an interest in respect of item 5b – Asset Management, on the basis that his mother was on the Board of the Local Government Staff Commission, which was seeking to lease Commission House from the Council, and left the meeting whilst the item was being considered.

Councillors Beattie and Lyons declared an interest in relation to item 5b – Asset Management, in that they were members of the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners. However, as the matter related to a licence agreement and did not conflict with their role on the Board, they were not required to leave the meeting whilst the report was being considered.

**Restricted Items**

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

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

**Restricted Items**

**Medium Term Financial Plan and  
Efficiency Programme**

The Director of Finance and Resources reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 18th December, it had been provided with an update on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan. The Committee had, after due consideration of business-as-usual cost pressures, growth proposals and efficiencies, agreed, in principle, to a District Rate increase of 1.98% for 2021/22. That increase had been based upon the assumption that there would be no change to the 2020/21 Estimated Penny Product and that the Government would guarantee rates income based on 2020/21 levels and provide funding for Covid-19 related additional expenditure and income losses.

The Director reported that the final Estimated Penny Product, which had now been received from Land and Property Services, had seen an increase of 0.02% on the 2020/21 position, giving a revised Estimated Penny Product of £6,253,110. That meant that the required increase in the District Rate had been reduced to 1.92%. However, that did not take into consideration the potential impact of Covid-19 upon the Council's district rates income for 2021/22.

With that in mind, the University of Ulster's Economic Policy Centre had been commissioned to develop a rates impact economic model. He confirmed that that work, which had entailed a detailed analysis of key economic factors across all non-domestic property

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types against the level of rates debt and vacant rate losses, had now been completed. He provided an overview of the Centre's findings and confirmed that they had since been forwarded to the Department of Finance. The Northern Ireland Local Government Association and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives had written to the Ministers for Finance and Communities requesting that the Northern Ireland Executive guarantee rates incomes at 2021/22 levels. As yet, there was no indication as to whether the request would or would not be met.

The Director explained that, in order to set the District Rate within the legal timeframe, which had now been extended till 1st March, the Committee was required to agree a course of action in the event that rates support from the Government was not forthcoming. He presented the Members with two options, the first of which was based on the worst case scenario presented within the Economic Policy Centre's model and would leave a budget deficit of £4.65m. The second option, which he recommended for approval, would base the Estimated Penny Product on the Land and Property Services calculation, that is, a rates increase of 1.92% and would require the establishment of a specified reserve of £4.65m to cover rates losses, in the event that Government support was not forthcoming. That reserve would be financed through a combination of 2020/21 year-end savings, in-year savings for 2021/22 and general reserves, if required.

He informed the Committee that, as part of the 2021/22 revenue estimates process, officers had assessed the levels of income which the Council was likely to receive in the context of the ongoing pandemic. The loss of income had been forecast to be in the region of £3.9m and Covid-19 costs of £1.3m were anticipated. Since there was no indication at this stage if further support would be provided by the Department for Communities, it would, he pointed out, be prudent to have contingency plans in place. Therefore, he recommended that the Committee grant approval to establish a specified reserve of up to £5.2m for that purpose, which again would be financed through a combination of 2020/21 year-end savings, in-year savings for 2021/22 and general reserves, if required.

The Director went on to remind the Committee that it was responsible for setting the annual cash limit for each of the Council's Standing Committees and recommended that it approve the limits for 2021/22, as set out within the report. He confirmed that those would, in February, be presented to each Committee for consideration and that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee would, at its meeting on 19th February, be requested to agree the cash limits and the District Rate.

He concluded by pointing out that the recommended increase in the District Rate would enable the Council to continue to deliver its business as usual activities and priorities, such as the City Deal and the Leisure Transformation Programme. Based on the economic outlook presented by the University of Ulster's Economic Policy Centre and the impact on rates income, the Council was likely to find itself in a similar position in 2022/23. Once the District Rate for 2021/22 was set, a review of the Council's overall financial strategy would need to be undertaken, to ensure that current resources were maximised and new sources of income were found.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. approved a 1.92% increase in the District Rate for 2021/22, based on the Estimated Penny Product provided by Land and Property Services;

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- ii. agreed to establish a specified reserve of £4.65m for funding of potential loss of rate income in 2021/22, in the event that the Northern Ireland Executive does not guarantee rates income;
- iii. agreed to establish a specified reserve of £5.2m for funding Covid-19 related costs and losses of income for 2021/22, in the event that Department for Communities funding is not forthcoming;
- iv. agreed to recommend the following cash limits for 2021/22:
  - a. a cash limit of £45,309,102 for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, including £3,270,000 for Belfast Investment Fund and £2,500,000 for City Deal.
  - b. a cash limit of £83,949,408 for the People and Communities Committee;
  - c. a cash limit of £18,237,846 for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee;
  - d. a cash limit of £1,362,893 for the Planning Committee; and
  - e. a Capital Financing Budget of £21,774,022 for 2021/22;
- v. noted the next steps in the district rate setting process;
- vi. agreed to consider at its meeting in March a report on the Council's future financial strategy; and
- vii. agreed that the aforementioned decisions should not be subject to call-in, as it would cause an unreasonable delay in striking the rate by the legislative deadline of 1st March 2021, which would be prejudicial to the Council's and the public's interest.

**Finance Update**

The Director of Finance drew the Members' attention to a report which provided an update on the revised financial position which had been presented to the Committee on 18th December. The report indicated that the Council had since moved from a forecast deficit to a surplus of £3,656,516, due to a forecast capital financing budget underspend.

He outlined the factors which had contributed to that underspend and reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 18th September, it had requested that consideration be given during the rate setting process to allocating £500k to Phase 5 of the alleygating scheme as a priority growth proposal. Should the Committee still be of a mind to support that proposal, there would, he pointed out, be an opportunity to fund the scheme from the current underspend.

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He reminded the Committee that it had, earlier in the meeting, agreed to establish two specified reserves of £4.65m and £5.2m, in the event that the Government did not provide funding to cover potential losses in rates income and Covid-19 related income losses and additional expenditure. For that reason, he recommended that no further allocations of the current underspend be made at this time.

The Director then highlighted the high degree of uncertainty around the Quarter 4 financial position and confirmed that Council Departments were working currently on the Quarter 3 year-end forecast, which would include the impact of the most recent restrictions announced by the Northern Ireland Executive. He outlined the extent of the financial support which had been provided by the Executive to date and stressed that the Council's cash flow continued to be reviewed on a daily basis.

After discussion, the Committee agreed:

- i. that £500k of the reported capital financing budget underspend be allocated to a specified reserve in order to support the delivery of Phase 5 of the Council's alleygating scheme; and
- ii. that no further allocations of the surplus be made at this stage, as that may be required to support the financing of specified reserves to support potential rates and income losses in 2021/22.

**Update on Managing Organisational  
Capacity and Covid-19**

The Committee noted the contents of a report which highlighted the ongoing need to monitor the Council's critical and vital services, confirmed that appropriate measures had been put in place to ensure that the most critical services could be delivered, outlined the activities associated with the ongoing management of Covid-19 and, finally, the response to changing restrictions and the resulting impact across the Council.

**Rent Relief Fund – Criteria**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 10th December, it had agreed to set aside up to a maximum of £100,000, in the form of rent relief, to support any business across the Council estate which, in line with criteria drawn up by officers, could demonstrate that it required financial assistance as a direct result of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Director of Physical Programmes drew the Members' attention to the following criteria which would govern the funding process. Applicants seeking support:

- i. must have been a Council business tenant on or before 23rd March 2020, with no sub-tenants or licensees;
- ii. must have been required to close due to the COVID-19 lock down requirements or must be able to demonstrate a significant decline in their trading position due to the impact of COVID-19;

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- iii. must be able to demonstrate that they have exhausted other means of emergency financial support that is currently available; and
- iv. must not have been in breach of their lease terms as at 23rd March 2020 e.g. must have paid all rent etc. due to the Council at that date.

She reported that further work was being undertaken around the process for dealing with applications received, in terms of assessment/due diligence, and that officers from the Physical Programmes Department and the Corporate Communications Unit were working to formulate a communications plan in advance of the Fund opening potentially in February. The Committee would, she confirmed, be provided with regular updates on the uptake of the Fund.

The Director reported further that, since the Committee meeting on 10th December, officers had been requested to examine the potential for extending the Fund to include other businesses, such as street traders. She explained that street traders operated differently, in that they did not have a lease with the Council but applied for a Street Trading Licence, which was approved by the Licensing Committee and managed through the Building Control Service. The Council also administered a range of other licences for, for example, amusement arcades, cinemas and entertainment venues. She highlighted the fact that a number of requests for financial support had been received from various licence holders and confirmed that the implications of those were being examined by Council officers and would be presented to the Committee in February.

In response to a number of issues which had been raised by Members, the Director pointed out that applicants would, in line with the criteria, be required to provide evidence that any financial difficulties, such as rent arrears, were related directly to the impact of Covid-19. She added that applications would be assessed on a case-by-case basis and that every effort would be made to simplify the application process.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Recruitment of Operational Director**

The Committee:

- i. approved the creation and recruitment of a post of Operational Director - City and Neighbourhood Services Department; and
- ii. agreed that the selection panel comprise the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Committee (or their nominees), an Elected Member from the SDLP, the Chief Executive (or her nominee) and a Director.

**Update on City Events Programme and Cultural Funding**

(Mr. J. Greer, Director of Development attended in connection with this item.)

The Director of Development informed the Members that the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions had necessitated a review of the options which had, in December, been presented to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee around the delivery of events in the first half

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of 2021. Accordingly, he submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which set out revised proposals for delivering events in 2021, together with details of a phased approach for the funding of the cultural sector in the 2021/22 financial year.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. agreed to suspend the delivery of live events from January to August 2021 and noted that a quality and higher impact programme of events was being planned for September 2021 till March 2022, to mark the beginning of City recovery;
- ii. agreed, in relation to St. Patrick's Day, to adopt option 4 within the report, that is, to commission new creative ideas for the future delivery of the event, through an expression of interest and assessment process, and to produce a 2021 digital online showcase, in partnership with organisations, artists and producers;
- iii. agreed not to proceed with the Spring Continental Market, which was due to be held in the grounds of the City Hall between 27th and 31st May, 2021;
- iv. agreed that an alternative option be developed to deliver an appropriate event or exhibition in the first half of 2021 to mark the Centenary of Northern Ireland, to include the use of online platforms, and noted that other more public events were being planned for the second half of the year, Covid-19 restrictions permitting;
- v. agreed, in order to ensure the ongoing survival of the cultural sector and the viability of core organisations, that, for 2021/22, levels of funding for these organisations should be maintained, as set out within their multi-annual agreements and be included in Departmental budgets; and
- vi. noted the ongoing strategic work to support the re-opening and recovery of the City and the need to progress with plans for the delivery of a Cultural Strategy, including 2023.

**Waste Strategy and Inner City Recycling**

(Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services, attended in connection with this item.)

The Director of City Services submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which set out the findings to date of the options appraisal which had been undertaken by the Association for Public Service Excellence on arrangements for future kerbside sort collections in inner City areas. Those arrangements would be implemented in the context of the Council's overall Waste Framework Strategy and the wider challenges which the organisation was likely to encounter around waste collection and waste management in the period leading up to 2035.

Accordingly, she recommended that the Committee:

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- i. note that the Council had agreed, in principle, to move to a city-wide recycling collection scheme, involving wheeled stacker boxes, to improve recycling rates and the quality of material to support the circular economy, and to reduce residual black bins to 180l and collect food waste separately;
- ii. note that a very long lead-in period would be required to enable the above changes to be made alongside an appropriate phasing strategy;
- iii. agree to commission a full economic appraisal on the two key strategic options set out within the report, namely:
  - a. the insourcing of the collection and processing of recycling activities, to include a full cost appraisal of the construction of a suitable processing facility; and
  - b. the continued outsourcing of recycling waste collections and processing for the inner city;
- iv. agree an extension of up to 24 months on the current inner city recycling contract delivered by Bryson Recycling, to allow for the economic appraisal to be conducted and, thereafter, allow for a proper procurement exercise to be carried out on any future contract which results from the economic appraisal; and
- v. agree that, as a first phase, officers scope up proposals for the roll-out of the Wheelie-box scheme, plus food waste and 180l residual bin, for the inner city collections, with the intention of submitting a funding request to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to support this scheme. This was in line with the Waste Framework and would be the direction of travel, irrespective of the model used to deliver the service.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations, subject to point iii. being amended to the effect that the economic appraisal examine also the insourcing of waste collection and the outsourcing of the processing of that waste.

**Matters referred back from Council/Motions**

**Motion: Implementation of Care Partner Arrangements in  
Nursing and Care Homes - Response from Minister of Health**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 2nd November, had passed the following motion on the Implementation of Care Partner Arrangements in Nursing and Care Homes, which had been proposed by Councillor McAteer and seconded by Councillor Groves:

“This Council recognises the distress, confusion, physical and cognitive deterioration experienced by residents with dementia living in nursing homes, due to the lockdown in Spring 2020 and the subsequent curtailment of visits with relatives to one visit per week.



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The Council also recognises the pain experienced by relatives of nursing home residents with dementia, many of whom, pre-Covid-19, cared daily for their loved ones in nursing homes, assisting them with washing, dressing, eating, drinking and exercise and provided them with love and cognitive stimulation.

Whilst the Council acknowledges the spread of the Covid-19 virus and adheres to the Executive guidelines on Council on public health, it also supports the “Regional Principles for Nursing and Residential Care homes in N Ireland” (published by the Department of Health on 23rd September, 2020), which establishes the designation of relatives or close friends as “Care Partners” and stipulates that care and nursing homes should facilitate Care Partner arrangements to enable relatives to assist with the communication, physical and emotional needs of their loved ones in care and nursing homes.

The Council calls upon the Minister of Health to provide the necessary human, financial and technical resources to nursing and care homes to ensure the immediate practical implementation of safe and secure Care Partner arrangements which will underpin the rights of dementia patients in nursing homes and deliver improved health and wellbeing outcomes for them and their families.”

The City Solicitor informed the Committee that a response had now been received from the Minister of Health.

The Minister had begun by pointing out that the most recent visiting guidance relating to care homes, including information on the care partner concept, could be accessed [here](#).

He explained that, in November, the Department of Health had published on its website additional guidance on the Care Partner concept, including a Frequently Asked Questions document [here](#) and an Information Leaflet for Care Home Residents and their Families [here](#).

In addition, the Chief Nursing Officer and the Chief Social Work Officer had issued the following joint letter to residential and nursing care home providers regarding the implementation of care partners in care homes in Northern Ireland [here](#).

The Minister had gone on to explain that care homes were actively encouraged to adhere to all aspects of the revised visiting guidelines, including the introduction of care partners. The expectation was that care homes would continue to work to facilitate a range of visiting options, in accordance with the detail of the visiting guidance aligned with the Alert Level relevant at the particular time and the care home's individual circumstances. All decisions would be based on a risk assessment of the environment and would rely on the ability to ensure social distancing and the safety of residents, staff and the visitor.

He stated that he had, on 22nd October, announced an additional allocation of £27.3m to the care home sector, which had included financial support for a number of measures which required additional management time in order to respond to the impacts of Covid-19. Of that, £9m had been allocated directly to care homes to reflect the cost of i.) the rolling programme of testing for both residents and staff; ii.) overseeing safe visiting and

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setting up care arrangements; and iii). the increased management time needed to oversee homes.

Following that announcement, the Director of Mental Health, Disability and Older People had written to care homes and Chief Executives of the Health and Social Care Trust to outline how organisations could apply for additional funding and how it would be allocated to homes.

The Minister had concluded by stressing that his Department recognised that the role of the care partner was of critical importance to the health and safety of care home residents. Whilst it was acknowledged that the concept may be challenging for care homes to implement whilst mitigating against the transmission of Covid-19, where there were difficulties in progressing the role, Health and Social Care Trusts had been asked to support care homes to seek a solution as a matter of urgency.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**

**Employment Academies Procurement Framework**

(Mr. J. Greer, Director of Development attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report**

**1.1 At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 18th December, it was agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting outlining the legal and other implications associated with restructuring the current Employment Academy framework. The framework opened for applications in November 2020 and closed on 15th January, 2021.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- i. note the update on the current procurement exercise to appoint delivery agents for the council’s Employment Academies; and**
- ii. agree to continue with awarding the contracts as planned, with a review of impacts to be carried out and reported back to the Committee within 6 months, so that any adjustments to future plans can be made.**

**3.0 Main Report**

**3.1** Members will be familiar with the increasing importance of the Council's engagement in employability and skills activity. In the last financial year, engagement in council-supported employability activity included:

- around 2,400 participants on ESF match-funded programmes, with around 580 moving into employment (average 24% into-employment rate)
- 530 participating in Employment Academies with 398 finding a job at the end of the programme (75% into-employment rate);
- over 1,500 young people supported through youth initiatives including 200 receiving additional revision support at GCSE, 90 young people undertaking work placements, and 100 accessing 1-2-1 mentor support through our Youth Support Programme; and
- almost 7500 participants engaged through career events and job fairs.

**3.2** Whilst the current financial year has been particularly challenging operationally, officers have maintained a focus on working with employers that continue to have employment opportunities. This includes the health and social care sector and transport and logistics sector. There has also been significant development work undertaken with public sector employers – including Belfast City Council – to create ring-fenced employment opportunities for those from specific target groups (those identified through the Inclusive Growth Framework). The other major area of development work has been to establish new pathways into digital and tech roles – given that these sectors have remained relatively resilient in the current climate and are likely to see further growth in the future. The investment in City Deal and initiatives such as the Innovation District present significant opportunities for long-term employment growth. However, it is clear that many individuals either don't have the required technical skills or don't have the confidence to pursue employment opportunities in this sector. It is essential that we develop these supported pathways to ensure that these developments move forward in a way that supports our commitments to inclusive growth.

**3.3** As outlined above, Employment Academies are just one mechanism through which the Council is investing to support employability and skills development. However, they have, arguably, been the most successful, not only in terms of

employment outcomes but also in terms of providing a mechanism for engaging with the key government departments to demonstrate the added-value role that councils can provide in this space. Employment Academies are generally short interventions. Typically, they last around two weeks and comprise a series of activities including employability skills training, technical/vocational training relating to the specific role and work insight sessions/work tasters as well as in-work support for those who get a job at the end of the Academy session. ESF and other community-based training support provides a critical pipeline to the Academy support and officers have built up very good working relationships with these organisations to create a planned approach to the Academy programme, ensuring that they have sight of the timetable for emerging opportunities and are able to provide the necessary development and support to potential candidates.

- 3.4 As the Council's role in delivery of Employment Academies has evolved over time, we have had to evolve our procurement approach. Initially, we started out with quotations (value under £30k). These were useful when we were testing new approaches but they were limited in scope and could not be extended. The administrative burden of managing a large number of small interventions was also disproportionate to the impact that these were able to have on the ground. It also meant that we were unable to be agile in responding to emerging employer opportunities. We then set up a number of tenders by sectoral area. These had a larger value and have enabled us to grow the interventions, particularly over the last number of years. However, we have found that a number of these tenders have now been coming to the end of their lifespan, so we recognised the need to put in place a procurement approach that would give us flexibility to respond to employer needs, creating sustainable employment opportunities for individuals. This flexibility is all the more important given the massive changes that have taken place in the labour market over the last year and the need to react and flex to areas of demand in line with opportunity.
- 3.5 Finally, we recognised that there were a number of sectors that were likely to create new employment opportunities but which we had no delivery partners in place to service them. Of critical importance were the emerging opportunities in green construction and green technology as well as financial and professional services and digital and tech sectors.

#### Current Position

- 3.6 The current delivery of our Employment Academy interventions is as follows:

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Employment Academy Contract	Max. Value	Contractor	Start Date	End Date
Hospitality	£210,000	Workforce	Jan-18	Dec-20 Expired
Construction	£65,000	Workforce	Jan-18	Dec-20 Expired
Logistics & Transport	£115,000	ACT	Mar-18	Mar-20 Expired
Care Sectors - Childcare and Playwork - Social Care - Health	£600,000	People 1st	Mar-19	Mar-21
Logistics and Transport	£30,000	People 1st	Sep-20	Mar-21
Leisure	£200,000	GLL	Aug-19	Aug-21
Digital	No contractor in place			
Financial Services	No contractor in place			
Green Economy	No contractor in place			

- 3.7 Without access to the delivery agents appointed through the procurement exercise, the ability of the Council to deliver Employment Academies across all sectors will be severely curtailed.**

**Overview of Procurement Framework**

- 3.8 Given the pending conclusion of a number of tenders last year, the Employability and Skills team engaged with our Corporate Procurement Service to explore opportunities for developing a procurement framework that would allow us to future-proof our employability support provision in keeping with the ambitions set out by the council. We wanted to find a solution that would deliver on a number of objectives, namely:**
- is tailored to address the specific needs and circumstances of each training market**

- leverages market capacity and capability to plan, manage and deliver interventions
- provides opportunities for local SMEs, SEs and NfPs (i.e. helps to build capacity in those markets, rather than reducing opportunities)
- will optimise outcomes for participants (in terms of both training and aftercare) and for employers in terms of demand and effective matching and
- will deliver value for money for the council(s) and for employers / buyers.

**3.9** Officers sought technical assistance from KPMG in developing the scope of the procurement approach. In recognition of the need to seek feedback from the market, we undertook extensive pre-market engagement. This included:

- an initial engagement session in August 2020 with a comprehensive range of local Employability & Skills providers in Belfast where ideas for the structure, content and delivery model within the framework were presented and feedback sought from local suppliers (in excess of 30 organisations in attendance)
- officers then followed up with individual E&S providers who wished to discuss in more detail and/or did not attend the initial engagement session
- a pre-market engagement questionnaire was then sent to these local providers and their responses helped form the structure of the framework.

**3.10** Following the engagement, the following structure was established for the framework:

- Four 'lots' created
  1. Care Sector Academies
  2. Customer Service Academies
  3. Practical/Vocational Sectors Academies
  4. Office-based Academies
- Establishment of one preferred supplier for each 'lot'
- No supplier can be awarded more than two of the four lots.

**3.11** Given the commitment to support inclusive growth in our approach to programme delivery, we took a number of decisions

to support access by local companies, social enterprises and not for profit organisations. These included:

- removing any reference to a 'financial assessment', including any requirement for a minimum turnover threshold by the delivery agent
- removing any specific stipulations around the need to have experience in a certain volume of delivery
- reinforcing our commitment to target those inclusive growth cohorts (as identified in the Inclusive Growth Framework) – including a requirement for the delivery agent to have knowledge of local employers and community conduits to access local employment opportunities and participants, in an environment where mobility is often a challenge
- while we have pulled together a number of sectors under each of the lots, we have only asked that applicants demonstrate experience of delivery in half of the sectors – recognising that some providers will need time after award to begin working in sectors that are new to them or bring in partners who have experience within those areas.

3.12 These tenders were issued in late November, with a closing date of 15th January, 2021. Responses are currently being assessed and, given that many of the existing contracts have expired, there is a risk that the ability of the council to respond to the economic recovery challenges in the field of employability support will be significantly inhibited if we are not able to have providers in place for February 2021. There is also a risk of significant reputational damage with bidders if we are not able to proceed with the process as initially proposed, given that we have been involved in pre-market engagement discussions for more than six months.

3.13 The tenders issued in November 2020 represent just one tier of a two tier approach. The second tier involves the establishment of a 'Dynamic Purchasing System'. This will go live in April 2021. The Dynamic Purchasing System is a structure that remains open to new bidders throughout the entire lifetime of the procurement framework. The intention of having this system is to allow the council to respond to opportunities arising in a flexible way:

- where the Preferred Supplier does not have capacity to deliver
- where there is a specialist need identified, for example provision of an Employment Academy to meet the needs

of a specific target group such as those with low level of vocationally-specific English

- for the delivery of wider Employability and Skills interventions around issues that emerge and where gaps exist within existing provision.

- 3.14 The DPS will provide opportunities, in particular, for those working in niche areas or providing specialist input. The system also enables us to issue these opportunities in a totally transparent manner, making the opportunity available to all potential bidders on a merit-based approach. Finally, given that the DPS remains open for new companies to join at any stage during the lifespan of this programme, it means that new start and early stage companies don't become 'locked out' of the opportunity to join at any point over the next four years.

#### **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.15 Officers have been working on the basis of an indicative allocation of up to £500k per financial year across the four lots. This has been factored into the Employability and Skills budgets, as part of the estimates process. We have named a number of other councils on the procurement exercise but they will be responsible for their own budget allocations and will only be able to access the contract where there is delivery capacity within the appointed contractor.

#### **Equality implications/Rural Needs Analysis**

- 3.16 The Employment Academies are predominantly focused on those furthest from the labour market. With support from QUB's GIS insights team, we are able to track the impact on local areas and enhance the effectiveness of programme delivery in targeting specific groups."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

#### **Update on Covid -19 Community Response**

(Mr. R. Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services, attended in connection with this item.)

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 update Members further on the continuing planning, partner engagement, support mechanisms and services in place to support vulnerable people during the COVID-19 pandemic.



**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1** The Committee is requested to note the report and to also note that this approach is based on extensive partner engagement (including ongoing engagement with strategic community partners).

**3.0 Main Report**

**Background**

- 3.1** Members will be aware of the extensive work by community and voluntary sector partners, Council and other statutory partners as part of the initial COVID-19 emergency response and that this support has continued and developed in response to emerging need.

- 3.2** Members will also recall that an update was provided to People and Communities Committee in November 2020 and, from this, will aware the continuing support to vulnerable people has been designed throughout taking community/voluntary (local as well as thematic) partner feedback in to account and in the majority of circumstances, the community/voluntary sector are delivering services.

- 3.3** Members will also be aware that Officers previously engaged with partners, following the initial COVID emergency response, and captured a significant amount of learning. This learning has shaped how we have collectively developed the city wide approach to:

- Better align services at a statutory and community/voluntary level and
- Ensure we were collectively getting to those who most needed the support and recognising and utilising the community/voluntary sector networks.

**3.4 Financial Investment**

Additionally, Members will be aware Council (supported in part with central government funding) has invested significantly in community/voluntary sector service delivery since the pandemic began in March 2020. This continues to be the most effective method of reaching vulnerable people at present, particularly those people who may not meet the threshold for existing statutory services (and are therefore not known to statutory services at present) and those people who have never had need of support services before, but who need them now perhaps as a

result of redundancy, reduced hours or the emotional and physical impacts of the ongoing restrictions.

- 3.5** A summary of the financial investment in community/voluntary sector delivery has been circulated to Members.
- 3.6** Members should also be aware the expected additional financial investment from DfC has been confirmed as £764,000 which needs to be spent before the end of March 21.
- 3.7** As requested by Members at the SP and R meeting on 10th December, representation (including a formal letter) is being issued to the DfC Permanent Secretary (along with other central government funders) as given the ongoing impact of restrictions, many organisations have not been able to deliver planned activities. Additionally, the significant additional financial investment from DfC of £764,000 to be spent by community/voluntary partners before the end of March 2021 is putting them under more unnecessary pressure when they are already struggling.
- 3.8** Members should be aware at SP and R on 10th December, Members agreed in advance how that £764,000 should be allocated with the decision being:
- that any increase in demand beyond available budget to date for the micro/medium grant programme already underway be met firstly from the additional funding from DfC
  - Given the tight timescales involved in delivery, that is, by the end of March 2021, approximately 50% of the funding remaining should be distributed to the nine strategic community partners using the same allocation as used to date
  - The remaining approximately 50% be allocated to those thematic community/voluntary organisations who it was agreed on 10 December 2020 would receive financial support.
- 3.9** The winter tranche of micro-grants (max £1,500) received 146 applicants and letter of offer for those have been issued.
- 3.10** The new medium grand (max £5,000) received 136 applications well in excess of the planned budget from central government funding received to date. The assessment process for the medium grants is currently underway and Officers will update Committee again in due course when the final outcome is known.

**Ongoing Planning**

3.11 Taking all of this in to account, officers continue to work hand in hand with community/voluntary and statutory partners to ensure services/support systems meet the needs of vulnerable people and that we speak collectively as a city in influencing central government. Indeed, it is the community/voluntary partners from Belfast who we bring to co-design sessions with central government who are making policy and service delivery decisions.

3.12 The Council continues to meet with these core partners on a regular basis (minimum weekly) to understand any pressures on the system, what is causing those pressures and what collectively needs to be done to ensure the appropriate supports/services are in place, particularly during the current period where demand for support was expected to be higher. Partners involved are:

3.13 **Strategic Community Partners**

- **North Belfast** – Intercomm, North Belfast Advice Partnership, Loughside Community Action Partnership (LCAP)
- **South Belfast** – Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group (LORAG), Forward South, South City Resource Centre
- **East Belfast** – East Belfast Community Development Agency
- **West Belfast** – Upper Andersonstown Community Forum
- **Shankill** – Greater Shankill Partnership

3.14 **City Wide Partners**

- **Advice NI** (Funded by DfC to run the Regional Helpline)
- **Volunteer Now** (supporting the volunteer eco system across the city should it be needed)
- **Fareshare** (Strategic food supply chain partners regionally and funded by DfC to enhance this, provides food supply to community/voluntary organisations working with vulnerable people, rather than individuals)
- **Red Cross** (Welfare, Hardship and Food support regionally as well as logistics support in the form of volunteers/vehicles if needed. On contract to BCC & Trust)

- Trussell Trust (Citywide Network supporting majority of existing foodbanks in Belfast, also with strategic food supply chain partners)
- Belfast Trust (supporting clinically vulnerable individuals, also with a contract with Red Cross in similar areas as Council)

3.15 We also continue to regularly engage with our thematic partners through existing city structures.

Current Status of Services/Support Systems

3.16 The current status of services/support systems based on continuous engagement and work with our community/voluntary partners is summarised below:

3.17 Food

- Community/Voluntary Partners (strategic area and thematic) are currently delivering on the food element of their Christmas/New Year funding and are not reporting any issues with supply or capacity
- All foodbanks are well stocked for the next few months due to the generosity of the people of Belfast. Some foodbanks are reporting higher than usual levels of clients for January compared to previous years and some foodbanks aren't reporting higher than usual levels. This may be down to the provision of food support through strategic community/voluntary partners adding additional capacity to the system
- Fareshare (food redistribution organisation) continues to see new community/voluntary members coming on board to receive food from them. They also have significant supplies of food in place due to additional financial investment from DfC and due to pre-planning on their part with local suppliers their supply chain has not been disrupted by Brexit
- DfC is currently in the process of implementing a food pallet scheme directly to community/voluntary partners to supplement their food and personal care/household items supply on an area basis (with a small number of distribution hubs at a community level in place). Officers are supporting this to ensure it doesn't place any additional burden on community/voluntary partners but that they benefit from access to additional products. The

DfC budget for Belfast is £235k and it is to be broken down further using the same allocation model used by Belfast for North, South, East, West and Shankill

- The Belfast City Council Red Cross Contract remains in place to provide emergency food support across the city is support cannot be accessed elsewhere. However, requests to use this contract have been extremely low (less than 5 in the last 6 months). This is largely due to the extensive network of community/voluntary partners working tirelessly across the city supporting vulnerable people directly.

### 3.18 Fuel/Utilities

- All community/voluntary partners are reporting increased demand for support in relation to fuel/utilities and this has been recognised regionally with additional support as follows:
- DfC has put in place a one-off heating payment for those people are in receipt of pension credit, or are in receipt of certain disability benefits at the higher rate. The payment is £200 and has been put in place by the Minister in the last few weeks in recognition of increased pressure in this area
- The COVID-19 Discretionary Support Scheme is intended to provide emergency help or support with living expenses
- DfC launched the 'Warm, Well and Connected' Fund, with the 'Warm' element of this being managed by Bryson/Advice NI. This fund aims to provide help and support to those whose wellbeing has been impacted by cold conditions and those in the most extreme need. In some cases help with essential white goods may be available, but help under this fund is only for those who have been unable to access support elsewhere and whose financial situation has been directly impacted by COVID-19. The support from the scheme is not monetary in nature and vouchers are not provided, instead the necessary help is provided directly to the client.
- DfC also has in place its routine cold weather payment which is paid automatically to those who are in receipt of a qualifying benefit and live in a postcode area where the temperature is, or forecast to be, zero degrees or below for seven consecutive days.
- The annual DfC Winter Fuel Payment made to those over the age of 65 have been and continue to be issued in the normal way

- Many community/voluntary partners (strategic area/thematic) in receipt of funding from Belfast City Council are also using their funding to support clients in need with emergency fuel payments and/or vouchers
- The Belfast Warm and Well Scheme (established under Community Planning) continues to be in operation should individuals find themselves not able to source support elsewhere. This scheme is co-ordinated for Belfast by National Energy Action and is aimed at supporting vulnerable people experiencing fuel poverty and difficult keeping their homes warm.
- The Belfast City Council Red Cross Contract remains in place to provide emergency fuel/utility support across the city if support cannot be accessed elsewhere. However, there have been no requests for fuel/utility support to date. This is due to the extensive network of community/voluntary partners across the city working tirelessly supporting vulnerable people directly.

**3.19 Advice/Financial Hardship**

- The Advice NI Regional COVID-19 helpline continues to operate to assist and signpost people who need support as a result of COVID-19
- The helpline has had an increase in calls in the last couple of weeks but 95% of those increased calls are specifically from individuals seeking support under the DfC 'Warm, Well and Connected' Scheme (Bryson). This is largely down to the extensive advertising of the scheme DfC undertook and Advice NI are supporting clients to use the full spectrum of available support as detailed above to alleviate their fuel/utility concerns
- Community/voluntary partners (strategic area/thematic) are offering assistance with general financial hardship for vulnerable people as part of the services they are running funded by Belfast City Council and are working closely with the local advice partners to support that with increased access to benefits and working to reduce the debt burden on those individuals.
- Local advice providers are reporting increased demand for their services as a result of the impact of COVID-19 on employment but are currently managing that demand
- As a result of the SP and R decision of 10th December 2020, local advice providers will be given an additional financial allocation to enable them to increase their capacity to meet these pressures.

**3.20 Welfare/Emotional Wellbeing**

- Community/voluntary partners (strategic area/thematic) are reporting significant impacts on individual and family welfare/emotional wellbeing as a result of COVID-19 and the ongoing restrictions
- An expected increase in calls was expected as the letter re how clinically extremely vulnerable individuals should keep themselves safe was issued from 4 January 2021, however this has not materialised
- A significant proportion of community/voluntary partners in receipt of funding from Belfast City Council (including micro/medium grants) are using some funding in this area.
- In person activity is limited given the restrictions but groups are trying their best to deliver services either online or by phone and are also supporting individuals/families with activity packs
- Groups are also using funding to provide support to vulnerable individuals/families with additional digital devices and associated Wi-Fi/data to reduce isolation and increase ability to access services online
- Good Morning Schemes and Befriending Services are reporting increased demand but due to the additional support of volunteers they are still open for new referrals
- The Belfast Trust community based health services continue to operate without significant disruption supporting vulnerable people and are also not reporting any significantly increased concerns coming through from those who may be clinically extremely vulnerable in terms of the welfare/emotional wellbeing

**3.21 Conclusion**

As detailed above, the overall eco system in the areas of food, fuel/utilities, advice/financial hardship and welfare/emotional wellbeing is experiencing significant increases in demand, including from individuals and families not previously known to services.

Staff/volunteers are very tired but their commitment and passion in supporting vulnerable people is what is keeping services going. Additionally, the learning gathered from the emergency COVID-19 response in spring 2020, the subsequent detailed planning between community/voluntary and statutory partners, the significant additional financial investment from BCC and central government, the regional investments in services and the

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ongoing partnership working has created an environment of genuine and meaningful mutual support.

Challenges/issues are identified early, directly from community/voluntary partners working on the ground and possible solutions are brought forward taking in to account their expert knowledge, experience and capacity to deliver. No one who needs support is left without an option for support.

**Financial implications**

**3.22 As detailed in the appendix below.**

**Equality or Good Relations Implications**

**3.23 None identified at this stage but will be kept under continuous review.”**

**Appendix**

**Strategic Area and Thematic Community/  
Voluntary Partners Funding Summary**

**Strategic Area Community Partners**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Amount Allocated</b>	<b>Note</b>
N. Belfast Alternatives	£10,000	Emergency Response Only March/April
Crusaders	£52,468	April to July 20 Only
Intercomm	£163,351	March/April to Present
North Belfast Advice Partnership	£153,351	April to Present
Loughside Community Action Partnership	£100,883	July to Present
Forward South	£117,021	March/April to Present
Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group	£117,021	March/April to Present
South City Resource Centre	£117,021	March/April to Present
EBCDA	£475,153	Lead Partner for grass roots organisations in East Belfast – March/April to Present
Upper Andersonstown Community Forum	£527,062	Lead Partner for 5 Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships across West Belfast – March/April to Present
Greater Shankill Partnership	£142,589	March/April to Present
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,975,920</b>	



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**Thematic Partners**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Amount Allocated</b>	<b>Note</b>
Bytes	£32,173	Summer Thematic Funding
Embrace/Nicras	£25,000	Summer Thematic Funding
Forward South	£8,000	Summer Thematic Funding
Solas	£5,000	Summer Thematic Funding
Store House	£18,000	Summer Thematic Funding
Boring Wells - Food Larder	£14,910	Summer Thematic Funding
West Belfast Foodbank	£17,131	Summer Thematic Funding
St Vincent De Paul	£75,000	Christmas/New Year Food/ Financial Hardship
Salvation Army	£75,000	Christmas/New Year Food/ Financial Hardship
Red Cross	£50,000	Summer & Winter Thematic Funding
HereNI	£10,550	Summer & Winter Thematic Funding
Transgender NI	£9,500	Summer & Winter Thematic Funding
Belfast & Lisburn Woman's Aid	£48,000	Summer & Winter Thematic Funding
Heart Project (Citywide Community Counselling)	£62,500	Summer & Winter Thematic Funding
Community Food Providers (£2k x 45 groups)	£90,000	Winter Thematic Funding
Children Young People Locality Group (N/S/E/W/Colin)	£120,000	Winter Thematic Funding
Age Friendly Partnership	£20,000	Winter Thematic Funding
Mens Advisory Partnership	£5,000	Winter Thematic Funding
Belfast Migrant Forum	£15,000	Winter Thematic Funding
CaraFriend	£7,500	Winter Thematic Funding
We Are Pangs	£16,000	Winter Thematic Funding
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£724,264</b>	

**Note: An update on spend against these allocations will be brought forward to Committee in February 21 for consideration (as agreed at Committee in December 20). Additionally, these allocations do not include the following (both agreed at Committee in December 20):**

- **£100K to the nine strategic community partners, using the allocation method of 50% population and 50% need, with multiple deprivation as a proxy to plan volunteer recognition programmes before the end of the financial year for their areas; and**
- **£764K just confirmed by DfC using the allocation model agreed at point 3.8**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Physical Programme and Asset Management**

**Update on Physical Programme**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues**

- 1.1** The Council's Physical Programme covers over 180 capital projects under a range of internal and external funding streams together with the projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Council's Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves the existing Council facilities or provides new Council facilities. This report provides an update on requested movements on the Capital Programme.

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1** The Committee is asked to:

- i. *Proposed Movements - Capital Programme* – agree that *Alleygating Phase 5* project is added as a Stage 1 – Emerging Project on to the Capital Programme and
- ii. *DfC Joint Projects* – note the update is relation to match funding secured from DfC for existing projects in this financial year across a range of programmes

**3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 Proposed Movements - Capital Programme**

The Committee has previously agreed that all capital projects must go through a 3 Stage process where decisions on which projects progress are taken by SP and R. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project. Members are asked to agree to the following movement on the Capital Programme:

Project	Overview	Stage
Alleygating Phase 5	Next phase of the alleygates programme	Add as an Emerging Stage 1 project

At the SP and R meeting on 18th September 2020, Members asked that a further phase of alleygating be considered. Members have been advised in the Finance Update Committee Report which is

also on the agenda for discussion today that the monies secured from DfC (see below) has contributed to a forecast capital financing budget underspend and resultant surplus and that it is proposed through this that a proportion of this (£500k) is ring-fenced for a further phase of alleygating. It is anticipated that this will be agreed by Committee and Members are therefore asked to agree that this is added as a *Stage 1- Emerging* project onto the Capital Programme in order to allow the project to be developed. Members are asked to note that further detail will be brought back to Committee in due course in line with the agreed three stage approvals process.

**3.2 Update on DfC/BCC Match funded projects 2020-21**

Following proactive engagement with the Department for Communities to identify opportunities for joint working in 2020-21, a total of £1,124,000 has been secured to support existing projects within the overall Physical Programme, a proportion of which is match funding for projects under the Capital Programme. Contracts for Funding are in place and work continues in order to achieve delivery this financial year. The funding is for 14 projects in total including –

- Upgrades to Vere Foster, Falls Park and Ohio Street playgrounds.
- Replacement of the 3G pitch surface and upgrade of the playground at Grosvenor Community Centre.
- Improvements to St James Community Forum's urban farm and community garden, including new buildings for the animals and new community and educational facilities.
- A new safe play area and community garden on waste ground adjacent to the Lagan Village Youth and Community Centre.
- A new changing pavilion for Berlin Swifts Football Club.
- New modular changing facilities at the Willowbank Multi-Sports Centre.
- Additional contributions to The Urban Villages Initiative-funded project to upgrade a section of Ballymacarrett Walkway.
- Partial replacement of the damaged roof at The Hanwood Centre
- Extra funding towards the construction of Grace Family Centre, which is nearing completion.

- **Additional contributions to Marrowbone Community Hub Teach Eilís, with support from The Urban Villages Initiative.**
- **An upgrade to the pathways and additional planting at the park at Old Golf Course Road.**
- **Improved lighting at the recently relocated Navigation Buoys in Titanic Quarter.**

**3.5 Financial and Resource Implications**

**Financial – £500k to be ringfenced for Phase 5 of the Alleygating Programme**

**Resources – Officer time as required.**

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

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

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Asset Management**

The Committee:

- i. Whitla Street Car Park – Disposal of part to Translink**
  - approved the disposal of a 0.36 acre portion of Whitla Street Car Park to Translink to facilitate the redevelopment of Yorkgate Train Station.
- ii. Corporation Square and Corporation Street Car Parks – Licences to Belfast Harbour Commissioners for the Installation of Barriers**
  - approved the entering into licence agreements with BHC to allow the installation of barriers to prevent access to both car parks from 19.00 till 06.00 each night.
- iii. Lease to The Local Government Staff Commission, Commission House, 18-22 Gordon Street**
  - agreed to the short term letting of Commission House from 1st April 2021 to its current occupier The Local Government Staff Commission at a rent of £55,500 per annum.

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**iv. Licence renewal regarding the use of lands at Bloomfield Walkway for multi-use games area and playground facility**

- approved the renewal of the licence agreement between the Council and DFI for use of lands at Bloomfield Walkway for multi-use games area and playground facility.

**v. Licence to Belfast Metropolitan College - Girdwood**

- approved the renewal of a licence agreement to Belfast Metropolitan College for classrooms and ancillary office accommodation at Girdwood Community Hub

**Update on Area Working Groups**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meetings of each of the four Area Working Groups which had been convened during the month of January to receive a presentation on Living With Water's Integrated Plan for Drainage and Wastewater Management consultation document.

**Finance, Resources and Procurement**

**Update on Contracts**

The Committee:

- approved the public advertisement of tenders, as per Standing Order 37a, detailed in Table 1 below; and
- approved the award of Single Tender Actions, in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Table 2 below.

**Table 1 – Competitive Tenders**

<b>Title of Tender</b>	<b>Proposed Contract Duration</b>	<b>Estimated Total Contract Value</b>	<b>SRO</b>	<b>Short description of goods/ services</b>
Provision of animal feed	Up to 3 years	£45,000	S Toland R Black	Supply of dry animal feed for Belfast Zoo
Provision of travel services	Up to 4 years	£475,000	R Cregan	Travel services contract for all types of travel and accommodation within NI, UK, EU and internationally
Replacement of the corporate finance system	Up to 10 years	£2 million (£650,000 Capital upfront cost ;	R Cregan	Replacement of the current SAP financial system and support

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		£150,000 revenue PA)		services which are nearing end of life.
Commercial sponsorship for the Belfast Public Bike Share Scheme	Up to 3 years	£300,000 income	A Reid	Commercial sponsorship opportunity to secure income to help support the maintenance, operation and planned expansion of the current Bike Scheme.
Support contract for HPE servers, storage & network equipment	Up to 1 year	£45,891	R Cregan	To ensure current servers, storage and networking equipment are maintained and kept under warranty.

**Table 2 - Retrospective Single Tender Actions**

<b>Title of Contract</b>	<b>Supplier</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>SRO</b>
Animation/ activity to replace the traditional Christmas Market (Retrospective STA)	Cinimod NVS Ltd	£28,700	A Reid
Use of eyebolts/lamp posts for erection of festive lighting (Retrospective STA)	BCCM	£25,000	A Reid
Emergency work to investigate and repair leak at Duncrue (Retrospective STA)	Morrow's Contracts Ltd	£6,450	S Grimes
Replacement of pool cover at Falls Leisure Centre Retrospective STA)	Forge Leisure Ltd	£6,063	S Grimes
Delivery of 'Take Five at School' to three local primary schools within the Shankill/Falls locality (funded)	Each Amazing Breath	£15,240	S Toland / R Black

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**Equality and Good Relations**

**Minutes of Meeting of  
Shared City Partnership**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Shared City Partnership held on 11th January, including the recommendations:

**PEACE IV**

**BPR3 – Transformational Leadership Project**

- i. to agree, in principle, to pool the £4,000 resource allocation for community projects, in the event where Clusters have merged, and to delegate authority to the Good Relations Manager and the PEACE IV Programme Manager to consider the Resource Allocation requests on a case by case basis; and
- ii. to invite NICVA to present at the Shared City Partnership meeting in March an update on the Leadership Transformation Programme (PEACE IV).

**Good Relations**

- i. that the Council develops an action plan to frame delivery around the proposed actions set out within the minute relating to “Notice of Motion – Racism Free Zone”;
- ii. that officers follow up with the Executive Office on the issues raised in relation to the Minority Ethnic Development Fund; and
- iii. that an update report on sectarianism in the City be submitted to a future meeting to enable further discussion and consideration.

**Operational Issues**

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

With the permission of the Chairperson, Alderman Copeland drew the Committee's attention to the minute of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum relating to Covid-19 Implications. The minute had highlighted the significant impact which the pandemic was having upon the Council's organisational capacity, due to the increasing number of staff who were having to self-isolate, and had stressed that sustaining and maintaining critical services remained the primary focus at present and for the immediate future.

Alderman Copeland referred to the increasing number of motions which had been placed before the Council in recent years and reminded the Members that, on occasions, an additional meeting had been required to process them. Many of those motions had, she

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pointed out, fallen under the remit of the Northern Ireland Executive. Accordingly, she urged any Member who might be planning to submit a motion to the Council at this time to be mindful of the significant pressures which the organisation was facing currently in terms of service delivery and recovery.

After discussion, the Committee noted Alderman Copeland's comments and approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 14th January.

**Minutes of Meeting of  
Active Belfast Limited Board**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Active Belfast Limited Board of 11th January.

**Minutes of Meeting of  
Climate Crisis Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Climate Crisis Working Group of 18th January.

Chairperson



## People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 12th January, 2021

### MEETING OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Baker (In the Chair);  
Alderman Rodgers; and  
Councillors Black, Bunting, Michael Collins, Corr,  
de Faoite, Flynn, Garrett, M. Kelly, Magee, McAteer,  
McCusker, McReynolds, Mulholland, Newton,  
Pankhurst, Smyth and Verner.

In attendance: Mr. R. Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services;  
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;  
Ms. J. Wilson, Business Manager;  
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer; and  
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Also In attendance: Councillors Beattie, Kyle and O'Hara.

#### **Apologies**

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

#### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 8th December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 7th January with the following addition - "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 promoters 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."

#### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor McAteer declared an interest in relation to item 2(b) on the agenda, Partnerships in Parks and Open Spaces. – Belfast MELA 2021, in that a family member was an employee of ArtsEkta. Councillor Newton declared an interest in relation to item 4(d), Response to the Food Standards Agency Consultation, as he was an employee of an organisation which provided support to the Food Standards Agency.

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**Restricted**

**The information contained in the reports associated with the following 2 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 Committee meeting during discussion on the following 3 items as, due to their nature, 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.

**Finance Update**

The Committee was reminded that the Strategic Policy and Resources, at its meeting on 31st July, had received an update on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council's financial position and a strategy to address the forecast deficit and the mitigation measures, which had and would be taken as the situation evolved. It had agreed to continue to provide Members with a monthly update on the financial position and that the same report would be presented to the subsequent standing Committees for noting and to provide further information on ongoing work.

The Director of City Services provided a verbal update to the Committee to highlight the ongoing difficulties that staff within the City and Neighbourhood Services Department were experiencing due to the impacts of Covid on capacity and resilience to try to ensure the continued delivery of essential services.

The Members discussed the ongoing response to the tightened restrictions, including recent announcements in respect of working from home, the closure of schools, shielding advice and increased infection rates and the impact that this was having on the continuity of services. The Members were asked to note that the main focus for the organisation at present and in the immediate future was sustaining and maintaining operations for critical and vital services.

The Director also highlighted that some of the Motions and Issues Raised and being brought forward might take more time to progress and asked that the Members note the increasing pressure on staff and the organisation at this time.

Several Members commended the officers for their ongoing work and commitment during the pandemic and asked that their thanks be conveyed to all the staff for their continued dedication to ensure the delivery of vital Council services. The Members unanimously agreed with the proposed more balanced approach in regard to Motions and Issues being raised to try and help alleviate some of the pressure on staff.

The Committee noted the December 2020 financial update and verbal update from the Director.

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**Partnerships in Parks and Open Spaces – Belfast MELA 2021**

The Committee considered a report which sought permission from ArtsEkta seeking to use Botanic Gardens to deliver the Belfast Mela in Botanic Gardens on 28th and 29th August 2021 and also seeking financial support for the event.

The Committee approved the use of Botanic Gardens for the above event and to provide £20,000 financial support, subject to the following:

- that Officers consider how the financial investment strands for this event could be streamlined and aligned under the Cultural Strategy, via the Economic Development Unit and the Core Multi Annual Grant (CMAG).
- that the appropriate legal agreements for the events, including bond arrangements be prepared to the satisfaction of the City Solicitor;
- that the Event Organisers meet all statutory requirements and responsibilities, including Public Liability Insurance cover, Health and Safety, Food Safety and licensing and adhere to any Covid 19 regulations;
- the timely payment of the bond as required in the legal agreements; and
- that Event Organisers consult with public bodies and local communities as necessary.

**Matters referred back from the Council/Motions**

**Motion – Creating Better Access into the Hills**

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 7th January, the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Donnelly and seconded by Councillor Garrett, had, in accordance with Standing Order 13(f), been referred to the Committee for consideration:

*“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 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*

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*itself will take pressure of the car park and allow residents to access the hills on foot from their neighbouring communities.”*

Councillor Garrett addressed the Committee and outlined the context of the motion. He stated that, whilst he was keen to see the initiative progressed, he was aware of the ongoing pressures that the Council officers were currently experiencing as a result of the ongoing pandemic. He highlighted that he was keen that the Council remained involved in discussions around the further opening up of the hills and whilst he did not wish to Council to take the lead in progressing the initiative, he was keen for it to continue to link in and engage with the various other stakeholders.

The Committee:

- adopted the motion seeking for the Council to continue to be involved with the work to create better access to the Belfast Hills and agreed that an update report on the progress of the various stakeholders be submitted to a future meeting; and
- noted the pressure that officers were experiencing to ensure the continued delivery of services during the ongoing pandemic and that, as liaison would have to take place with external stakeholders, there was likely be a delay in the report coming back.

**Motion – 30 by 30 Biodiversity Campaign**

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 7th January, the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Smyth and seconded by Councillor M. Kelly, had, in accordance with Standing Order 13(f), been referred to the Committee for consideration:

*“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.”*

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Councillors Smyth and M. Kelly addressed the Committee and outlined the context of the motion. Both acknowledged that they whilst they were keen and excited to see the creation of a biodiversity campaign being progressed and for liaison to take place with other stakeholders they were mindful of the current pressures.

A Member highlighted his concern at the recent announcement that a neonicotinoid pesticide for use on crops that was believed to kill bees had recently been re-authorised for use in England, despite an EU-wide ban on its use outdoors two years ago and a government pledge to keep the restrictions.

A number of Members also spoke in support of the motion and stated that they were keen to see the rewilding and further enhancement of existing green spaces throughout the City.

The Committee:

- adopted the motion for the Council to develop and put together a 30 by 30 biodiversity campaign in collaboration with partners and agreed that a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed be submitted to future meeting; and
- noted that, as liaison would have to take place with external stakeholders, there was likely be a delay in the report coming back due to current departmental pressures.

**Committee/Strategic Issues**

**Multi-Agency Support Hubs - Belfast Pilot**

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 provide Members with details of the Multi-Agency Support Hub concept and to seek a decision on Council’s participation.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to**

- **Agree to Council’s participation as outlined in the report below and to support Botanic DEA as the pilot area.**

**3.0 Main report**

**Background**

- 3.1 The Multi Agency Support Hub concept brings key professionals together to facilitate early, better quality**

information sharing and decision making to work together to improve a vulnerable person's situation. Support hubs are designed to help vulnerable people get access to the right support, at the right time, from the right organisation in their local area in keeping with the following principles:

**3.2**

- Accurately assessing and meeting need. (Information sharing)
- Enabling agencies to cooperate in order to prevent 'persons of concern' from suffering significant harm. (Coordinated intervention)
- Promoting sound decision making. (Collaborative decision making)
- Ensuring the provision of appropriate services – and the integration of these into a coherent plan.
- Avoiding duplication of assessments and service provision.
- Ensuring compliance with statutory duties.
- Preventing 'persons of concern' from having to repeat their 'stories'.
- Reducing the impact of harm and promoting good outcomes for 'persons of concern'.
- Preventing or managing risk with respect to 'persons of concern',

**3.3**

All partners are equal within the Multi-Agency Support Hub with a chairing organisation/individual identified from within the group. Administrative support is normally provided by the Community Safety Team within each local authority but this has yet to be discussed for Belfast (with a small amount of additional financial support available from Department of Justice to cover costs).

**3.4**

The Support Hubs can help people who may be experiencing a range of problems. This can include being a victim of ongoing antisocial behaviour or crime. Other people may need support in order to avoid being drawn into behaviour which may lead to offending. Others may find themselves in difficult situations which can affect their personal safety, physical or mental health. The person seeking help will be asked for their consent to be supported by the hub as the individual's opinions and welfare are at the centre of any decision and action taken. Support Hubs firmly focus on reducing the vulnerability for individuals.

**3.5**

With specific focus on early intervention, the work of those in the support hub also includes identifying concerns about individuals who as yet may not have been referred to the hub.

In these cases, agencies will work together to provide early intervention with individuals in order to reduce vulnerability and improve wellbeing.

- 3.6 To date, Belfast is the only local authority area in Northern Ireland without an operating Multi-Agency Support Hub.

**Belfast Support Hub Proposal**

- 3.7 The proposal for the Belfast Support Hub was discussed with partner agencies (detailed below) at a collective meeting on 17/01/2020.

- 3.8 **Proposed Partners:**

- PSNI
- Health and Social Care Trust
- Local Council
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- Youth Justice Agency
- Probation Board for NI
- Education Authority
- Northern Ireland Ambulance Service
- Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

- 3.9 Representatives from these agencies participating in other Support Hubs were present and were all very positive in relation to the benefits it brings, specifically acknowledging the following:

- Having health partners around the table ensures that where there may be an underlying mental health issue contributing to the wider vulnerability, it can be properly identified and the person appropriately supported.
- It creates streamlined information sharing arrangements. There is no need for ISA or GDPR considerations as this is all done with the persons consent.
- Opportunity to refresh existing collaborative structures and focus service on the most vulnerable
- Co-ordinated support and cutting down on duplication of work by different services
- Improving the life of vulnerable people in society whilst at the same time easing the pressure on front line services.
- Focuses on the underlying causes of problems, facilitates information exchange and contributes to early intervention.

- 3.10 It was acknowledged however, that in Belfast there are a range of existing multi-agency working arrangements e.g. Family Support Hubs, Anti-Social Behaviour Forums. Whilst this is the case, there remain a significant number of individuals who are not meeting the threshold for the more specialist services in these multi-agency groups but may still require additional help and support from more than one agency. These individuals often do not know who to turn to for help and will contact multiple organisations or engage in the wrong services because their needs are not being looked at holistically.
- 3.11 It is for this reason partners agreed that because Belfast was a much larger area than other local authority areas and also had higher degrees of vulnerability, it would be extremely complex to establish Support Hub arrangements across the city and that a pilot area should be taken forward to test the concept in Belfast. A Support Hub pilot area will allow for appropriate evaluation and 'ironing out' of any implementation challenges in a Belfast context before consideration is given to whether a wider roll out is appropriate and it should not automatically be assumed it will work effectively in Belfast, just because it works in other local authorities in Northern Ireland.
- 3.12 Following discussion on possible pilot areas, Botanic DEA was suggested as a suitable area for a pilot within Belfast. The reasons for this were that it is a diverse community with a range of complex needs, there are high levels of crime and ASB and there is a mixture of settled and transient communities co-existing within the area.
- 3.13 Partners present at the meeting agreed that Botanic DEA should be the pilot area within Belfast, however, Council Officers present reminded those at the meeting that a formal Council position could only be taken on this after Committee decision and ratification at Full Council.
- 3.14 The Support Hub concept aligns well to the Belfast Agenda, Belfast: Our Recovery and our Inclusive Growth agenda ensuring all partners in the city work to make life better for residents, support vulnerable people more effectively by addressing any barriers they face, supporting early intervention/prevention and ensuring Belfast's success can reach every citizen.
- 3.15 For Members information, the proposal for a Multi-Agency Support Hub Pilot to be established in the Botanic DEA has been endorsed by Belfast PCSP and the Living Here Board of the Belfast Community Planning Partnership.



- 3.16 Members are asked to consider if they will endorse this and Council's participation in the pilot.

**Next Steps:**

- 3.17 If Council endorses the recommendation that there should be a Support Hub Pilot established in Botanic DEA, a small project team of Officers from each partner agency will be pulled together to plan implementation.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.18 There are not expected to be any financial implications beyond staff time. In other local authorities, administrative support is usually provided by the Community Safety Team within the Council. This is yet to be agreed for Belfast and will need to be considered carefully considering the high demands on Council Officers at present. Department of Justice will provide a small grant to cover administrative costs for up to 3 years.

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

- 3.19 None at present, but will be kept under continuous review."

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Committee Update on Local Air  
Quality Management Matters**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

- 1.1 The Committee will be aware that a number of ambient air quality initiatives and projects have been progressed by officers within the City and Neighbourhood Services Department during 2020. Including the development of new Air Quality Action Plan for the city, procurement of consultancy services to deliver a detailed assessment for nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) and the provision of local site operator and technical project support to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to enable research into the chemical composition of particulate matter within the city, to include the role of ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>) in formation of local particulate matter. An update report on these initiatives and projects was provided to the Committee at its meeting of 8th September 2020.

- 1.2 This report serves to provide a further 'year-end' update to Committee and to provide an overview of the how these projects are to be progressed during 2021.

2.0 Recommendations.

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to

- Note contents of this report.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues.

3.1 Air Quality Action Plan

Committee Members will be aware that the current Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan is scheduled to conclude at the end of 2020. Accordingly, officers have already engaged with a range of government Departments, the Public Health Agency, local public transport providers, the Port of Belfast and sustainable environment and transport organisations in order to develop a new Air Quality Action Plan for the city. In accordance with government policy guidance, a Steering Group, comprising representatives from the above-mentioned organisations, has been convened in order to oversee development, implementation and delivery of the new Air Quality Action Plan.

- 3.2 Organisations represented on the Steering Group have recently provided the transport and related actions that each organisation proposes to implement throughout the anticipated 5-year duration of the Air Quality Action Plan in order to address any remaining nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) hot spots and to improve ambient air quality generally across the city. In addition, it is anticipated that the new Action Plan will also reflect actions to address fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) once the detailed assessment for nitrogen dioxide and fine particulate matter has been concluded and reported by December 2022.

- 3.3 The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has provided a standardised Action Plan template for local authorities and Steering Group partners to populate with their actions, under the headings of public health, planning and policy context, source apportionment, the required reduction in emissions, key priorities and action plan measures. It is for council officers, working alongside their Steering Group counterparts to now populate this Defra template in order to create a draft Air Quality Action Plan for the city. It is anticipated that the key components of the draft Action Plan will be

presented to the People and Communities Committee for consideration at its meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

- 3.4 In addition, and by way of a limited internal consultation, ahead of any formal engagement process that might be required in March and April 2021, it is proposed that the draft Action Plan will also be presented to the council's 'Living Here' Board in February 2021 in order to ensure consistency with the Belfast Agenda Community Plan. An overview of the draft Plan will similarly be presented to the Climate Plan Programme Board in order to ensure consistency with the council's Resilience Strategy and its associated actions on climate change. Subject to any comments received through both internal and other engagement processes being addressed within the Plan, it is anticipated that the Air Quality Action Plan will be presented to the 11th May 2021 meeting of the People and Communities Committee and to the June 2021 Council meeting for formal consideration and adoption.
- 3.5 The Air Quality Action Plan must then be uploaded to the Defra Local Air Quality Management Report Submission Website so that an appraisal of the technical aspects of the Plan can be completed. The outcome of this appraisal process is normally known within 4 to 6 weeks of the submission date. Where necessary, technical aspects of the Air Quality Action Plan will be amended to take account of the appraisers' comments and it is anticipated that the Action Plan can then be implemented from August or September 2021.
- 3.6 Detailed assessment for nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>)
- Members were previously advised that officers had completed development of a detailed technical specification for the appointment of a suitably qualified and experienced environmental consultancy to deliver a detailed assessment for nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) for the city. This specification has since been issued by way of local and European tenders, with the council's Air Quality and Procurement staff currently engaged in the evaluation process, with a view to appointing a contractor from early 2021.
- 3.7 The detailed assessment project will comprise additional ambient monitoring for nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) across the city through the deployment of a number of small sensor air quality monitoring equipment; the development of an up to date local emissions inventory for the city for nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) sources; and atmospheric dispersion

modelling employing the local emissions inventory data in order to generate spatial and temporal predictions for nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) concentrations across the city. The dispersion modelling will also identify the locations and extents of any exceedences of national, European or WHO air quality standards for nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>).

- 3.8 The detailed assessment for nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) project is being supported via the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) local air quality management grant process and the project is scheduled to be concluded and reported by December 2022.

3.9 Installation of an Ion Chromatogram analyser  
at the Belfast Centre Lombard Street monitoring site

In the previous update report of 8th September 2020, Members were advised that as an addendum to the detailed assessment for nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>), council officers were liaising with their DAERA counterparts and the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology regarding a project to identify and quantify the water-soluble gases and aerosols in air containing different sizes of particulate matter. The aim of this project was to aid in the better understanding of some of the chemical mechanisms involved in the formation of particulate matter in Belfast and across Northern Ireland. It was therefore proposed that council officers would undertake a local site operator role for the Monitor for AeRosols and Gases (MARGA) ion chromatogram equipment that was to be installed at the Belfast Centre Lombard Street monitoring site. Council air quality staff already provide local site operator functions for some of the analysers located at this Environment Agency operated monitoring station.

- 3.10 However, as a consequence of detailed discussions with DAERA and the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology staff regarding the technical and operational requirements of the Marga equipment, it was concluded that the project could not be reasonably and safely undertaken at the Lombard Street site at the current time due to various national, regional, travel and workplace Covid 19 restrictions. Accordingly, it has been proposed that delivery of this project will be revisited whenever Covid 19 restrictions and working practices safely permit.

**3.11 Financial and Resource Implications**

Permission for the public advertisement of Tender T2044 for ambient air quality assessment within the Council boundary for PM<sub>2.5</sub> and NO<sub>2</sub> ambient pollutants was obtained at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting of Friday 24th January 2020. Funding of up to £125,000 to support delivery of the detailed assessment project has been secured from the DAERA Local Air Quality Management grant scheme for the 2020-2021 grant year.

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

**None.”**

Following a query, the Director advised that the consultants would determine, using data and evidence, where the monitors would be located throughout the City but added that this would be further down the line in the assessment process.

The Committee noted the update provided and also that a report in respect of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Discussion Document regarding the development of the first Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland would be submitted to the February meeting for consideration.

**'Amazing Spaces Smart Places'**  
**Small Business Research Initiative**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services provided the Committee with an update in regard to the progress of the 'Amazing Spaces Smart Places', Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) challenge.

He reminded the Members that funding had previously been secured from the Department of Economy (via the Department of Justice) to facilitate fully funded innovation contracts with a small number of SMEs to support the following objectives:

- to ensure that open spaces were more welcoming environments to be enjoyed by everyone;
- to increase the positive usage and animation of open spaces;
- to empower and involve communities;
- to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in open spaces in the City; and
- to reduce maintenance and security costs.

The Committee noted that the SBRI process was a 'pre-procurement' exercise, designed to enable SMEs with funding for research/design and prototyping to stimulate innovative solutions, services and products to meet public sector needs, it was used widely across both the UK and Ireland. Belfast City Council had previous experience leading on

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a successful SBIR project - the Rates Maximisation challenge in conjunction with Land and Property Services (LPS).

The Director advised that the Council had been successful in securing funding at both Phase 1 (£120K) and Phase 2 (£225K) to support the work and there was no cost to the Council. He reminded the Members that the Committee had previously identified the implementation of Phase 2 as a priority action in the 20/21 Committee Plan. The number of organisations in receipt of funding had reduced as the feasibility (technical and operational) and commercial viability (condition of the DfE funding) of proposed solutions had been worked through at each stage and Council was now working with two SMEs as part of Phase 2.

The Director then drew the Members' attention to two technological solutions that remained as potentially feasible and commercially viable, SparoWatch and Civic Dollar. He advised that both solutions had been fully developed and tested in a lab/office environment and on site testing was required for the prototypes in Quarter 4 2020/21 to determine effectiveness against the programme objectives and the technical robustness of the solutions.

SparroWatch was developing a range of technology to be used in Belfast's parks and open spaces. They were developing a combination of hardware and software that would be used to improve safety and park management and also designing battery-powered cameras that would provide a simple and low cost installation option to monitor parks. The cameras would be located at Ormeau, Falls Park/City Cemetery and Dunville Park. It was anticipated that the prototype would help to address the ongoing issues of vandalism and antisocial behaviour problems at these locations. SparroWatch would send a weekly statistical report to the Council (this would not contain any information that would enable the identification of individuals) but would analyse park usage in Belfast through insights generated by Google Maps.

The Civic Dollar prototype platform would be a unique product which would use a mixture of technology, psychology and gamification to encourage greater use of the parks and open spaces. It was anticipated that, if properly utilized, it would have the desired effect of encouraging people to visit parks, open spaces and attractions as well as affecting behavioral change and driving footfall to local businesses.

The Director explained that it was hoped that the prototype would encourage users to visit tourist areas across Belfast and Northern Ireland by creating geo-fences and earning CivicDollars whilst they visited which could then be traded with local hotels, restaurants and businesses. It would expand the functionality of the platform to allow more business to drive footfall back by trading CivicDollars for a greater range of goods and services and also allow businesses to trade CivicDollars with the government (central/local and with businesses) to encourage the use of the system (the viability of this was being tested as part of Phase 2).

The Committee noted that on site testing was initially planned for the parks/open spaces along the Connswater Community Greenway before a role out to a small number of other parks/open spaces across the North, South, East and West of the City.

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The Director advised that concerns about any privacy/data protection issues in relation to the proposed projects had been identified at the initiation stages and a full privacy/data protection screening exercise had been undertaken. He further advised that the Council's Information Governance Unit (within Legal Services) had been actively engaged in providing support to officers and the successful SME's in ensuring ongoing and full compliance with legislation and Information Commissioner Officer Guidance. Additionally, based on political and community feedback, proactive community engagement had been undertaken both by Officers and by the SME's themselves to provide reassurance that no data that would identify any individual would be used.

The Committee noted the update provided.

**Response to the Food Standards Agency consultation  
on the review of the Food Law Code of Practice,  
Food Law Practice Guidance and implementation of  
the competency framework**

The Committee considered the undernoted report and draft response available [here](#) to the Food Standards Agency consultation on the review of the Food Law Code of Practice, Food Law Practice Guidance and implementation of the competency framework.

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**1.1 The Food Standards Agency (FSA) as the central competent authority for food and feed regulation in the UK, is responsible in overseeing the official (food law) controls undertaken by district councils. As part of this role the FSA provide a Food Law Code of Practice (FLCOP) and Practice Guidance (FLPG) for all district councils. The Food Law Code of Practice is statutory and gives instructions that district councils must consider when enforcing food law. Local authorities need to follow and implement the relevant sections of the Code that apply. The Practice Guidance is non-statutory and is offered as a complement to the statutory Code of Practice. The Practice Guidance gives general advice on the approach to enforcement of the law.**

**1.2 The most significant change to the FLCOP is the removal of the baseline qualifications previously required by Environmental Health Officers (EHO's) to work in the Food Safety and Port Health functions of a district council. This will instead be replaced with a Competency Framework to be assessed by the Lead Food Officers within the food safety and port health units of each district council.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- **Note the consultation and the draft consultation response.**

- Note the draft response was submitted in line with December deadline, subject to final response being submitted following committee consideration.

**3.0 Main report**

**Key Issues**

- 3.1** Under the current Food Law Code of Practice (Northern Ireland), officers authorised to carry out Food Safety official controls and other interventions to verify compliance with food law are required to have a baseline qualification issued by the Environmental Health Registration Board (EHRB) / Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH). This baseline qualification requires a period of practical training to have been completed prior to the officers' certification, and authorities are not permitted to authorise officers to carry out food safety official controls without that EHRB certification.
- 3.2** The proposed changes to the Food Law Code of Practice remove the necessity for the full certification from EHRB/CIEH. This change has been introduced as a result of the CIEH ceasing the provision of the baseline qualification assessment and the need to urgently recruit EHO's and Technical Officers (TO's) to the port health function ahead of EU exit.
- 3.3** Belfast City Council have already had to avail of this proposed change in the qualifications in order to recruit staff to the Port Health section, in preparation for EU exit. A derogation from the FSA was given to Belfast City Council in advance of the FLCOP consultation. In the consultation response the Lead Food Officer in Port Health has asked that the FSA give consideration to the implementation of the NI Protocol and the need for significant sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) checks on GB-NI trade. A review of the qualifications and competencies required to complete the checks on the documents that must accompany imported foods has been suggested. BCC suggest only EHRB qualified officers should be authorised to refuse entry to a food import if it fails by virtue of unsuitable accompanying documents, reject a consignment or take enforcement action.
- 3.4** The proposed Competency Framework will apply to all EHO's and TO's working in the Food Safety and Port Health functions, including those who already have the appropriate baseline qualifications issued by the CIEH and undergone the current FLCOP competency assessment. These EHO's and TO's are currently deemed authorised and competent to carry out official food safety controls appropriate to their role/unit. This proposal



will cause a time burden on district councils, both on EHO's and TO's completing the Competency Framework and on the Lead Food Officers assessing. The consultation response recognises the need for a replacement to the baseline qualification for new officers, however it presents the case for reducing the prescriptiveness and complexity of the proposed Competency Framework and that it should not be required for those who have the appropriate qualifications and competency.

#### **Finance and Resource Implications**

##### **Financial**

- 3.5 The FSA are not offering any financial assistance to compensate for the officer time that will be required to complete the proposed Competency Framework, which is currently estimated at 10 working days per officer and 4 days per officer for the Lead Food Officer to assess. The impact on the ability of the Food Safety team to absorb this will be kept under review.

##### **Human Resources**

- 3.6 There are no human resource implications.

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

- 3.7 There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this report. A rural needs assessment is not required."

The Committee endorsed the draft response to the Food Standards Agency's consultation which had been submitted by the 10th December deadline and agreed that this be forwarded as the Council's final response.

#### **Belfast City Council response to the new substance use strategy for Northern Ireland - "Making Life Better - Preventing Harm and Empowering Recovery: A Strategic Framework to Tackle the Harm from Substance Use"**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 10th September, 2019, it had agreed the Council's response to the pre-consultation exercise for the development of the new substance use strategy for Northern Ireland. Following the pre-consultation exercise, the Department of Health had now developed its draft strategy which it was consulting on. The consultation had opened on 30th October, 2020 and was scheduled to close on 5th February, 2021 at 5.00 p.m.

Several Members of the Committee welcomed the draft Council response that had been prepared by Council officers, available [here](#). They referred to the importance of

addressing substance misuse and mental health issues and noted that the pressures of the ongoing pandemic had further exasperated many of these problems.

The Director concurred and advised that, as with the pre-consultation response, the Council had made the case within its response that the new strategy, and the structures associated with it, needed to integrate and align with community planning structures to ensure that both regional and local impact could be maximised.

A Member requested a specific addendum in relation to question 2 (d) and it was subsequently agreed that the Committee approved the draft consultation response and for it to be submitted to the Department of Health by the deadline of 5th February, 2021, subject to the following addition: at question 2 (d) 'that a citizens assembly is commissioned for NI to explore radical harm reduction'.

**Belfast City Airport Request - Rookery at Victoria Park:**  
**Implications to Air Safety**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is for Members to consider a request from Belfast City Airport (BCA) to gain access to Victoria Park to carry out works to mitigate against perceived risk of bird strike from rooks. The request is as a result of the BCA reporting an increased frequency of rook occurrence around the airport and their plan to manage any associated risk, in line with their Wildlife Hazzard Assessment and the Civil Aviation Authority licensing requirements.**

**The requests seeks permission from the Council, via an agreement, to carry out works such as;**

- 1. The removal of old rook nests by Mid-January 2021;**
- 2. Thinning of sheltering pines, structural pruning of preferred nesting trees, and reducing shelter from high level ivy;**
- 3. Potential removal of nest foundations in late February/ March, should nest building resume.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members views are sought on the request from Belfast City Airport to grant them access under licence to Victoria Park to facilitate;**

- 1. The removal of old rook nests by Mid-January 2021;**
- 2. Any necessary thinning of sheltering pines, structural pruning of preferred nesting trees, and reducing shelter from high level ivy;**

3. Potential removal of rook nest foundations in late February / March 2021, should nest building resume.

Members are advised that any agreement would be developed by the Councils Legal Services Department and will include a requirement to ensure that any works are permissible, the required licences are in place, an effective communication plan is agreed and the needs of the park users are taken into consideration.

Any licence would be progressed under the Directors delegated authority, taking into consideration Members views.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

- 3.1 In line with Belfast City Airport's national aerodrome license requirements and associated guidance material presented in CAP772: Wildlife Hazard Management at Aerodromes, the airport have a concern regarding the recent establishment of a rookery at Victoria Park.
- 3.2 In spring 2020, rooks formed a small colony containing 20 nests in the northern corner of the park - 300 metres from the airport's southern approach. As the habitat currently selected for nesting is prevalent throughout the park, the airport is concerned of the potential for this rookery to expand unless some level of intervention can be explored.
- 3.3 In response to officer request for more detailed supporting information, BCA submitted a report. The report outlines George Best City Airport's Wildlife Hazard Assessment. The assessment identifies the source of the risk, assesses the relative severity of the risk, and outlines the recommended action in order to reduce and maintain the risk to an acceptable level in compliance with the Civil Aviation Authority licensing requirements.
- 3.4 In the interest of public safety and to meet their obligations to act with due diligence, the airport have identified the potential threat presented by the small rookery (circa. 20 nests) which became established at the northern corner of Victoria Park in spring 2020, 300 metres from the Airport's southern landing approach.
- 3.5 BCA are seeking to carry out initial remedial actions in the first instance which would involve the removal of old nests – outside of the breeding season - to prevent them advertising

the suitability of the site to new prospecting pairs. In order to mitigate against the associated risk, the old rook nests should be removed from trees by mid-January in advance of the 2021 nesting season in an attempt to reduce the area's attractiveness to prospecting rooks

- 3.6 As site fidelity after only one year might still be strong, any signs of rebuilding would need to be discouraged until the habitat can be modified to the extent that rooks no longer find it attractive. Such management prescriptions would include thinning of sheltering pines, strategic structural pruning of preferred nesting trees, and reducing shelter from high level ivy.
- 3.7 The concern is that rooks will start to rebuild nests this coming Spring. The intention is that the requested access to Victoria Park to support an early removal of nest foundations will decrease the probability of nesting at this site. The report suggests that, given there is similar habitat contiguous to the present rookery, it would be prudent to assume that after any breeding success the colony will likely expand further into the park.
- 3.8 The BCA report notes that if the proposed measures have limited success and nest building resumes, the issue of active discouragement by regular removal of nest foundations in late February/March becomes a more delicate necessity. They recognise this will require an active stakeholder communications plan in order to manage any negative feedback. They note that habitat modification should be explored as a longer-term solution going forwards from Autumn 2021.
- 3.9 Belfast City Airport have confirm that any necessary activity to mitigate against any risk would be exercised under a general wildlife licence. They note that habitat modification should be explored as a longer-term solution going forwards from Autumn 2021.
- 3.10 If members are minded to support the request, BCA will appoint a suitable contractor with previous experience to undertake the work.
- 3.11 If members are content, officers will review the submitted risk assessment and insurance certificates in line with procedure and work with Legal Services to issue the requested licence. The licence will include relevant conditions to ensure that Belfast City Airport confirm that all works is permissible and any required licences are in place to allow work to take place

within the required timescales. The licence will also place an onus on Belfast City Airport to ensure that health and safety measures are implemented, essential signage is assembled, one-way systems are established where necessary, and any COVID specific mitigations are in place.

**Financial & Resource Implications**

- 3.12 BCA will be responsible for any costs associated with the request.**

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

- 3.13 None.”**

The Committee considered the request. A Member stated that he was content with the proposed preventative measures but asked that the Committee's concern be highlighted to Belfast City Airport in regard to the potential removal of rook nest foundations in late February/March should nest building resume.

Following discussion, the Committee:

- Noted that any licence would be progressed under the Director's delegated authority; and
- requested that the Director update the February meeting of the Committee in relation to the airports progress.

**Operational Issues**

**Proposal for naming a new street**

The Committee approved the application for naming a new street in the City as set out below:

<b>Proposed Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
Gardenmore Green	Off Summerhill Road, BT17	Radius Homes

**Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

**CCTV equipment CS Lewis Square and to  
Consider the CCTV needs for the remainder  
of the Greenway - Councillor Newton**

Councillor Newton addressed the Committee and requested that a report be submitted to a future meeting which would further consider the erection of CCTV equipment at CS Lewis Square and along the Greenway.

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A Member raised concern in regard to ongoing antisocial behaviour in Council parks and open spaces. Discussion ensued in regard to role of CCTV, lighting and the animation of parks and open spaces and a request was made for an update report in respect of recent vandalism to parks and the associated remedial costs.

A further Member raised concern at the lack of gritting of the Greenways which were dangerous as people were falling and injuring themselves. The Members also discussed the lack of gritting of minor roads.

The Committee agreed:

- that reports in respect the erection of CCTV equipment at CS Lewis Square and along the Greenway, along with a update report in regard to the vandalism and the associated remedial costs to Council's parks, be submitted to a future meeting;
- Members noted that there was likely to be a delay in the reports coming back due to current departmental pressures; and
- agreed to write to the DfI Minister and the Chief Executive of Transport NI seeking the gritting of Greenways and more minor roads in the network.

**Colaiste Feirste and Divis Back Path - Councillor Beattie**

Councillor Beattie addressed the Committee and requested that a report be submitted to a future meeting which would try and progress the use of the school's sports facilities by the community when not being used by the school.

The Director of Neighborhood Services advised that a Service Level Agreement had been developed some time ago which had included arrangements for community use of the facilities. Officers were currently reviewing the agreement, in conjunction with Colaiste Feirste, and a further update report would be submitted in due course.

Chairperson

# People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 26th January, 2021

## SPECIAL MEETING OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Baker (In the Chair);  
Alderman Rodgers; and  
Councillors Black, Bunting, Corr, de Faoite, Flynn, Garrett,  
M. Kelly, Magee, Mulholland, Pankhurst, Smyth and Verner.

Also attended: Councillor O'Hara.

In attendance: Mrs. C. Taggart, Neighbourhood Services Manager;  
Mrs. G. O'Hare, Community Development Officer;  
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer; and  
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

### **External attendance:**

Belfast Youth Forum: Shántana Mc Cullough (Chair);  
John Joe McGrady (Vice Chair);  
Maria Aaroy (Secretary);  
David Shields; and  
Carter Wickham.

NI Youth Forum: Phil Glennon  
Catriona Clifford  
Natalie Corbett  
Niamh Mallaghan

Common Youth: Michael McCartan

Public Health Agency: Olive McLead, Interim Chief Executive;  
David Tumilty, Health and Social Well Being  
Improvement Manager; and  
Marie Roulston, Director of Social Care HSCB.

Department of Education: Richard Irwin, Director, Inclusion and Wellbeing  
Directorate;  
Angela Kane, Head of Pupil Support Team; and  
Sam Dempster, Head of Curriculum and  
Assessment Team.

QUB Centre for Children's Rights: Dr. Michelle Templeton

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**Apologies**

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Cobain and Newton.

**Declarations of Interest**

No Declarations of Interest were recorded.

**Introduction and Purpose of Meeting**

The Committee was advised that representatives from the Belfast Youth Forum were in attendance to provide an update in relation to the work of the Belfast Youth Forum.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, welcomed the representatives to the meeting.

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 20th October, it had agreed that representatives from the Department of Health (DoH), Department of Education (DoE) and the Public Health Agency would be invited to the next meeting to discuss both the 'Any Use?' Relationship and Sexual Education Campaign and report and the 'Elephant in the Room' mental Health Campaign and report and accordingly their representatives were welcomed to the meeting.

The Committee noted correspondence received from the Permanent Secretary of the DoH Mr. Richard Pengelly who unfortunately was unable to attend the meeting.

They noted that a brief update would also be given on the current BYF recruitment drive and on the National Children's Bureau (NCB) Mental Health Charter for Children and Young People.

Noted.

**Restricted Items**

At the request of an external contributor that their submission to the meeting was not recorded, the live feed and recording of the meeting was paused for the next two agenda items.

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the Press and public from the meeting during these presentations.

**'Any Use' Relationship & Sexuality Education**  
**(RSE) campaign – Shantana McCullough and David Shield**

At the previous joint meetings held in January and October 2020, the BYF had presented its piece of research to the Elected Members of the People and Communities Committee on Relationship and Sexual Education (RSE). This was entitled 'Any Use?'



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The Youth Forum representatives advised that the aim of the report was to find out young people's opinions on RSE in Belfast; how useful young people found their current RSE; and if young people understood their rights in relation to RSE.

The research had been undertaken in conjunction with the QUB Centre for Children's Rights and Common Youth (a representative was in attendance at the meeting) who had helped develop an online survey, designed survey questions, collected surveys from young people and analysed the findings. 771 young people had taken part in the survey and some of the main findings included the following:

With regard to the right to receive RSE:

- 72% of young people said they knew they had a right to receive RSE in school;
- 52% of young people said they felt their right to RSE was not being met;
- Only 23% felt that adults trusted young people to make their own choices about relationships and sex;
- The proportion of 14 – 16 year olds saying their right was met (56%) was significantly higher than the proportion of those 17 or over saying this (43%); and
- 58% felt that adults did not trust them and one in five (20%) said they did not know if adults trusted them in this regard.

The report then highlighted how young people described their RSE and, overall, negative word associations dominated those answers with the four most common being basic, unhelpful, useless and bias.

With regard to learning about sexual relationships, the three most popular sources from which young people said they learned about relationships and sex were through friends and peers (62%); social media (55%); and lessons in school (54%).

The survey had then asked a range of questions about RSE in schools and how useful it was. The vast majority of young people (86%) felt that school was the best place to receive RSE, yet only 60% of respondents said that this actually occurred. In relation to how useful their RSE in school was, 66% of young people felt that the information they received was either "not very useful" or "not useful at all", with only 10% saying that they thought the information they received was "very useful". It highlighted through which subjects RSE was taught in schools and questioned how the young people felt RSE should be delivered in schools and who should deliver it, with the most commonly given response being a qualified RSE teacher. The survey also sought views on what should be taught to young people in RSE, with the most popular subject young people wanted to learn about was personal relationships. Over half of the respondents had felt that young people should start to be taught about personal relationships when they were between 11 and 13 years of age.

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The representatives of the forum then presented its recommendations for government and policy makers which were:

1. To adopt a rights-based and proactive approach to relationship and sexual education;
2. Work with young people to co-produce a RSE curricular programme for schools; and
3. For such a curricular programme to be taught by specialised, qualified and trained staff.

The Committee was advised of the work to date, as follows:

- August 2020 – BYF representative had met with Health Development Specialist (Sexual Health and Disability) within SEHSCT, with a view to replicating the research outside of Belfast. They were currently exploring ways that this work could be progressed;
- December 2020 – BYF representative had met with Joe Harris from BHCT who was responsible for the training of teachers to deliver RSE in schools across NI;
- December 2020 – Correspondence was sent to CCMS seeking a meeting to present the RSE the report. They were currently awaiting a response;
- Representatives from the BYF now sit on the 'Gillen Education and Awareness Working group' set up by DoJ. The aim of the Working Group was to try and progress a number of recommendations made by Sir John Gillen in his review into the handling of serious sexual offences. Part of these recommendations included the need for an extensive public awareness and school education campaign and some of this included RSE in school. The working group was aware of and had read the Any Use report and its recommendations and were keen to use it for reference; and
- January 2021 - BYF members informally presented the 'Any Use?' report to the Stormont Education Committee.

Discussion ensued in regard to how the RSE programme could potentially be progressed within the school curriculum and for the need for it to be taught by specialised, qualified and trained staff. The huge variances in the way RSE was taught throughout schools was highlighted and there was a general consensus that it would be better to have a more aligned approach. The Department of Education (DoE) referred to the RSE Hub information which it had available for educators and which provided relevant and credible information. The representative from QUB advised that, whilst there was useful information available on the hub, there was no actual statutory requirement for schools to access the resource, which resulted in very different approaches being adopted.

A DoE representative referred to the New Decade, New Approach Agreement and the fact that an independent review of Education had been commissioned as part of this document and stated that it might be possible, with lobbying, for this to be considered as part of this review. He did, however, caution that any change to the teaching of RSE would require legislative change through the Assembly, which would take time.

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A number of Elected Members commended the Youth Forum for their excellent research and concurred with the need for sexual education to be taught by trained individuals, they highlighted the importance of all relationships and the need for different sexualities to be discussed from an early age to help remove any stigmas that existed.

Detailed discussion ensued with the representatives during which it was noted that a multiagency approach to progress the RSE initiative was required, it also noted the impact that proper RSE training could have on young people's emotional health and wellbeing (which would be further discussed as part of the next agenda item).

Given the length of discussion and volume of information presented by the various organisations, it was agreed that the DoE, PHA and the QUB Centre for Children's Rights would each forward a summary of their current procedures and a synopsis of the points raised for circulation to the Elected Members and the Belfast Youth Forum Members.

**'Elephant in the Room' (EITR) Mental Health Campaign –**  
**Niamh Mallaghan and Johnjo McGrady**

Members of the Youth Forum presented their "Elephant in the Room Campaign", a report which explored young people's awareness of mental health in Northern Ireland.

The Committee was advised that, in July 2016, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child had recommended that the Northern Ireland Government invest heavily in children and young people's mental health services. Consequently, in October 2016, the Belfast Youth Forum, alongside members from Northern Ireland Youth Forum and the Children's Law Centre, had organised an event where over 100 young people had expressed their frustrations at the lack of mental health education and support services available in NI and called for the UN's recommendation to be fully implemented by the NI Government.

In 2017 between members of Belfast Youth Forum and Northern Ireland Youth Forum a Youth Mental Health Committee had been established. The aim of the Mental Health Committee had been to explore issues connected to mental health and young people and to ensure that as many young people as possible had a meaningful say in shaping the future of mental health education and support services. This research would eventually take the form of the 'Elephant in the Room' report.

The Members noted that the aim was to establish what young people in NI thought and knew about mental health, in particular:

- Where young people got their information about mental health and how they rated it;
- Where young people liked to go to receive mental health information and support;
- How young people viewed mental health and how it impacted on their ability to speak about it;
- What actions they felt that the government should take to promote positive mental health and well-being in society.

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The representative advised that a survey had been developed and 1,117 young people had responded, as well as responses from four focus groups across Northern Ireland. The focus groups had a total of 151 young people who had participated.

He reported that the findings of the research had then been broken down in to three broad themes, as follows:

- Stigma – young people indicated that there was a huge negative stigma attached to mental health which in turn led to a “culture of silence”, where young people were afraid to talk about mental health issues;
- Safe Spaces – 76% of survey respondents stated that young people were afraid to talk about mental health and there was a lack of safe spaces available to talk about it. The overall view from young people was that on-line was a good place to access mental health information, but there was issues with being able to separate fact from fiction. In addition, the young people had identified social media as having a negative impact; and
- Schools and Information – according to young people, the three most common places they would source information about mental health were on-line (59%), a family member (48%) and friends (45%). However, young people said the problem was that the quality of the information was inconsistent and it wasn’t always useful, for example, it was usually framed in a negative way.

As a result of the findings of the Elephant in the Room report, a number of recommendations had been made, these included:

- To support the creation of a youth-led, government backed mental health campaign, challenging the culture of silence and negative stigma;
- To work with young people to develop a new and positive language around mental health by creating an age appropriate ‘mental health dictionary’ which could be used as part of a mental health curriculum programme;
- To engage with young people to create and fund safe digital solutions to receive mental health information and support. These digital solutions should be designed by young people for young people;
- To create a compulsory curriculum programme for all schools and colleges on mental health and wellbeing that would help to raise awareness and challenge stigma and allows young people to access consistent mental health information. This curriculum programme should be long term and embedded in schools – as it was felt that one off workshops would not be effective; and
- Mental health and wellbeing training for all teachers, school support workers and youth workers to enable effective delivery of the programme.

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The representative then provided the Committee with an up-to-date breakdown of the current work stream:

- July 2020 – representative from the BYF had met with Executive working group on Mental Wellbeing, Resilience and Suicide prevention to present the EITR report;
- September 2020 – representative from BYF had met with Minister Carál Ní Chuilín from DfC to discuss how the DfC could support the implementation of the recommendations in the EITR. A reply was received in October 2020, stating that the DfC were supportive of the requirement of an app for young people to access accurate and meaningful advice on mental health as part of a Mental Health Strategy which was agreed in the New Decade, New Approach agreement. They advised that they were currently scheduling a follow up meeting to explore how this could be progressed;
- November 2020 – following a question from Mr. Chris Lyttle MLA to the Minister of Education the officials had responded by acknowledging that there were many other areas to be addressed, including the Elephant in the Room recommendations, and that these would be considered in subsequent Framework implementation plans;
- The EITR group had been working to raise its publicity and its work had been referenced in a variety of pieces of similar work; and
- Creation of 'Heads Up' mental health advocacy toolkit.

The proposed next steps were then detailed, as follows:

- The EITR group planned to invite the current Mental Health Champion to the Executive, Professor Siobhan O'Neill, to meet. They advised that Professor O'Neill had attended the presentation to the Executive Working Group on Mental Wellbeing, Resilience and Suicide Prevention in July and was keen to discuss the EITR report further;
- To source potential funding streams to further the work of EITR;
- To Launch 'Heads Up' toolkit;
- To convene a follow up meeting with the DfC regarding the development of an app to be designed specifically for young people in relation to mental health issues;
- To continue to raise the voices of young people in relation to their mental health and to campaign for mental health services that would benefit young people; and
- To build relationships with agencies and organisations who could help advocate for better mental health services for young people.

The Chairperson thanked the Youth Forum representatives for their informative presentation.

Discussion ensued in regard to how capacity could be built to support children and young people and to ensure that they could easily access the services. The importance of the various agencies adopting a multi-agency, joined up approach was discussed at length and it was noted that, whilst this approach had already been adopted,

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it needed to be further developed to ensure that long-term strategies were brought forward which would have meaningful outcomes and affect change at a local level.

The representatives also referred to the New Decade, New Approach Agreement and the subsequent commitment to deliver the Mental Health Action Plan. It was noted that this Plan contained a number of commitments to review and develop services and to put measures in place to ensure long term strategic change that would be brought about by the development and implementation of the 10 year Mental Health Strategy.

Both the DoE and PHA highlighted that additional funding was available and multi-agency work was already progressing. They specifically referred to the CAMHS teams (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) and the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) Approach.

A Member highlighted the emphasis that many schools placed on academic achievement and stated that it was important that schools started to focus less on this and more on children and young people's physical and mental health. He also called for an expansion in the mental health services available to primary school students and for the services currently available at post-primary level to be made available to younger pupils.

Following a query, the Neighbourhood Services Manager confirmed that the Council's Community Plan – the Belfast Agenda - linked in with the desired outcomes of the mental health action plan and 10 year strategy and that the Council was committed to working together with communities and other statutory agencies to review and help deliver the required services at a local level.

Several of the members of the Youth Forum reflected on their own experiences in relation to mental health issues, particularly over the lockdown period, which had exacerbated mental health problems for many young people.

An external representative from the DoE reiterated that funding was available and that much work had already commenced to prepare an initial implemental plan to progress the actions outlined in the Mental Health Action Plan. The representative noted that the EITR Research was very beneficial and stated that the DoE was keen to use the research and to link with the other statutory agencies to progress the delivery of this vital work.

As with the RSE Campaign, given the length of discussion and volume of information presented by the various organisations, it was agreed that the representatives from the statutory organisations would each forward a summary of their current procedures and a synopsis of the points raised for circulation to the Elected Members and the Belfast Youth Forum Members.

Noted.

**Mental Health Toolkit – Ciara McBratney**

The representative advised the Members of the creation and imminent online launch of the 'Heads Up' mental health advocacy toolkit which had been designed in partnership between BYF, NIYF and Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and

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Young People (NICCY). She explained that the toolkit had been designed to help and support young people to take action and campaign on local mental health issues. It was predominantly for young people and youth groups who wanted to start their own mental health campaign and projects in their community and would give young people the skills and information to take action around mental health in the community.

The Committee noted that the Heads Up -Toolkit was due to be launched online on Thursday, 18th February.

**Belfast Youth Forum - Recruitment Update**

The Committee was reminded that, at the August 2020 meeting of the People and Communities meeting, it had been agreed, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the limitations that the environment had presented for positive active engagement with young people, schools and service providers that the term of the existing BYF members be extended for another year.

Previously, at the January 2020 Special People and Communities Committee meeting, it had been agreed to amend the BYF recruitment process. It would now begin in September and end in October in line with the academic year, as the previous recruitment timeframe had been during April and May, which had conflicted with the exam season for the BYF members.

Following discussion at the August 2020 People and Communities Committee, it had been agreed that any current vacant places within the BYF would be filled with the intention of using targeted recruitment to address any gaps in relation to communities which were currently underrepresented in the Forum. In response to this, a limited recruitment drive was currently ongoing throughout December 2020 and January 2021 to fill the 10 vacant places within the Youth Forum. Applications were open to everyone, however the recruitment drive was being promoted in specific areas of Belfast and with specific groups which were under represented through various means such as social media, engagement with Elected Member, engagement with Education Authority Youth Service, promotion through existing area BCC Area Support staff and engagement with existing community contacts.

Noted.

**NCB Mental Health Charter for Children and Young People**

The Committee was advised that the National Children's Bureau had been working on the development of a children and young person's mental health charter. The Members were asked to note that Belfast City Council had been involved in this as part of a project stakeholder group and that the Belfast Youth Forum had been referenced within it alongside NI Youth Forum, in relation to the Elephant in the Room report.

The Charter was due to be launched on 4th February and further updates on it would be presented at the next Joint Committee.

Noted.

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**Date of next Meeting**

The Committee noted that the next Special Joint meeting was scheduled to be held on Tuesday, 22nd June at 5.15 p.m.

Chairperson



## City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 13th January, 2021

### REMOTE MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Brooks (Chairperson);  
Aldermen Dorrian and Kingston; and  
Councillors Beattie, Donnelly, Ferguson,  
Gormley, Hanvey, Heading, Howard, T. Kelly,  
Lyons, Maskey, McLaughlin, Murphy, Mulholland,  
O'Hara, Spratt and Whyte.

In attendance: Mr. A. Reid, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;  
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;  
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration  
and Development;  
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and  
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

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

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 9th December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 7th January.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Beattie, Hanvey, Lyons and O'Hara declared an interest in relation to item 4.b) Covid-19 Health and Safety Adjustments to Cruise Belfast Welcome Hub, in that they were Members of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners.

### **Additional Item - Condolences to Norman Houston**

The Chairperson extended his condolences to the family of Norman Houston, Northern Ireland's former representative in Washington DC, following his recent death and paid tribute to his work as Head of the Northern Ireland Bureau and contribution to promoting Northern Ireland in the United States and beyond. Members of the Committee also expressed their sympathy.

The Committee agreed to request that the Lord Mayor writes a letter to Norman Houston's family expressing condolences and deepest sympathy, together with thanks for his many years of service to Northern Ireland that benefitted the city, in particular its civil and business relationships in the United States.

**Restricted Items**

**The information contained in the report associated with the following 2 items were 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 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.

**Finance Update**

The Committee noted the contents of the report which had been presented to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in December.

**DfC Revitalisation Fund Update**

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided an update on the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme, which included:

- An overview of Tranche 1 & Tranche 2 - Signage and Dressing, Physical Improvements and Streetscape Improvements;
- Business Grants Updates - Covid-19 Business Grant Scheme, Business Cluster and Community Grant Scheme, Additional funding of Business Grant Support; and
- DfI Active and Sustainable Travel Measures.

During discussion, Members raised queries in relation to the funds available for sustainable transport and the feasibility of expanding the network. The Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that she would pass on comments to the relevant Team and that this could be looked at as part of the wider Cycling Strategy. The Director of Economic Development pointed out that the open call for charities, social enterprises and co-operative's to apply to receive the old bike stock had been issued and an update would be provided on who receives the bikes, would be provided in due course.

During further discussion, the Director of City Regeneration and Development explained that 8 applications had been received for the Cluster Scheme Fund and it was anticipated that more applications were forthcoming. In response to Members questions in relation to the flexibility and demand of the grants which had been ring-fenced, she highlighted that the Council had been liaising with the Department for Communities in this regard. She advised that the Committee would be kept up to date on both these issues.

The Committee noted:

- that £3.585m had been received through the DfC Covid-19 Programme to date, with work packages in place to roll out the

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Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 work streams as per Committee approvals received to date and updated within the report;

- that a further Letter of Offer for £454k for business grant support had been received on 8th December and agreed through the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 18th December, bringing the total funding allocation for this programme to £4.039m; and
- that further updates would be provided in relation to the Business Grants outlined in the report, and the reallocation of the existing Belfast Bikes.

**Request to Present**

**Request for Presentation - BID One**

The Committee was reminded that the Businesses located within the BID area had agreed a five year business plan and to pay a mandatory annual contribution to the delivery of the business plan, based on the NAV of their property. The Director of Economic Development explained that the BID services must demonstrate that they were additional to core services that were being delivered by other statutory partners (such as the Council, Department for Communities, and Department for Infrastructure etc.). Belfast One was the first BID to be established in Belfast in April 2016 and, in line with the legislation governing BIDs, it must now go to a re-ballot if it was to be extended for another five years.

The Director of Economic Development advised that Belfast One BID was managed by a small core team and was supported by a Board which had representation across all business sectors in the Belfast One area. The Council had an advisor role on the Board through staff from the Place and Economy Department. He pointed out that officers from other departments – particularly City and Neighbourhoods – also worked very closely with the BID on issues such as street cleansing, addressing anti-social behaviour and city promotion.

He highlighted that Belfast One had now produced a draft business plan for the coming five year period and it was using this business plan as the basis of a consultation and engagement process with levy payers, with a view to securing its re-election for a further five year period.

He explained that the ballot would open on 21st January, closing on 25th March 2021 and all levy payers would be entitled to vote in the ballot. He pointed out that, as the Council had a number of properties in the BID One area, it would be entitled to a vote for each of the properties.

The Director of Economic Development advised that, in order to raise awareness of the work of the BID and its plans for the new five year period from April 2021, it was proposed that a presentation on the draft business plan was made at the February meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

The Committee agreed to receive a presentation from the BID Team at the February meeting of the Committee and noted the upcoming ballot for BID and the change to the closing date to 25th March, 2021.

**Growing Business and the Economy**

**Sunday Opening Hours for Retailers**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

- 1.1** The purpose of the report is to update members on the uptake of extended Sunday trading in the run-up to Christmas and to advise the committee of requests to extend Sunday opening hours for large retailers in order to support the management of shopper numbers as part of ongoing social distancing measures.

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1** The Committee is asked to:

- Note the uptake of extended Sunday opening hours in the run-up to Christmas
- Consider the request from large retailers to support extended Sunday opening hours (in line with Northern Ireland Executive guidance) on a temporary basis, to be reviewed by 5 April 2021, as part of the efforts to manage shopper volume and support social distancing.
- Agree, in accordance with Standing Order 47 (a) (2) (c), that the aforementioned decisions would not be subject to call-in, on the basis that an unreasonable delay could be prejudicial to the Council's or the public's interest.

**3.0 Main report**

- 3.1** Members will be aware that, during the initial period of lockdown from late March 2020, Belfast City Council agreed not to take enforcement action against those essential retailers that opened earlier than the current permitted opening time of 1pm on a Sunday (for large stores as smaller stores are already permitted to open). This measure was put in place to support healthcare staff and vulnerable individuals in particular, and there was no end date to retain flexibility throughout the uncertain period.

- 3.2 From end June 2020, the retail sector was permitted to re-open in line with the various measures set out in the Northern Ireland Executive's Pathway to Recovery. However, since then, the Executive has also announced a number of shorter and more focused closures for certain sectors including close contact services and hospitality.
- 3.3 The current Northern Ireland Executive guidance – which became operational on 26 December 2020 – confirms that only those retailers deemed as 'essential' retail are permitted to remain open at this time. This decision is to be reviewed after four weeks but the Executive has suggested that it expects that these restrictions will remain in place for six weeks (i.e. until 6 February 2021 at least).
- 3.4 Taking account of the specific challenges faced by the retail sector, and as a means of managing numbers wishing to access retail premises in the run-up to Christmas, the council advised businesses that it would not carry out enforcement action for all types of large retail shops (essential and non-essential) should they open or deliver from 10am onwards on a Sunday (up to 6pm). This was a temporary arrangement, running from 22 November 2020 to 10 January 2021.
- 3.5 In the context of the current NI Executive guidance, business organisations and individual retailers have been engaging with the council to feed back on the impact of the temporary non-enforcement approach in the run-up to Christmas and to request that the council considers extending this approach to support retail stores in managing shopper volume at peaks times to ensure social distancing.
- 3.6 Feedback from retailers on the extended opening hours in the run-up to Christmas was universally supportive of the provisions made by the council. Broadly, those retailers reported an increase in sales from previous levels, and all considered that trade was spread better across the day. This meant that they were able to manage social distancing measures more effectively and provide a positive experience for those visiting the stores. The supermarkets, in particular, noted that it had allowed them to better manage their numbers over the longer hours, instead of the shorter five hour window during which they noted that there was a much more 'intense' volume of shoppers. The supermarkets also noted that the extended hours enabled them to expand their delivery service and that these slots were very popular with customers. Some smaller retailers and those operating on an appointment-only basis felt that the extended hours gave them an opportunity to drive new customers with the additional flexibility.

**3.7** Given the positive experience in the run-up to Christmas, and taking account of the ongoing need to support social distancing measures until the vaccine roll-out makes significant progress, a number of the large retailers and business support organisations have asked that the council continues with the current approach to enforcement after the proposed end date on 10 January 2021. Officers have been engaging with colleagues in other council areas and we know that an extension of this approach to being considered across other council areas – and has already been agreed for the Lisburn and Castlereagh City, Derry City and Strabane District Council and Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council areas.

**3.8** Given the degree of uncertainty in the short-term, with even the most optimistic of scenarios indicating that a significant vaccine roll-out will take until Spring at the earliest, it is proposed that the current approach to enforcement remains in place until 5 April 2021, subject to review and in keeping with Northern Ireland Executive decisions relating to retail opening.

**3.9 Financial & Resource Implications**

No specific financial or resource implications for council.

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

No specific equality implications.”

During discussion, Members raised concerns of the demands being placed on retail workers. The Director of Place and Economy explained further how the request had been received and the consultation which had taken place.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Covid-19 Health and Safety Adjustments  
to Cruise Belfast Welcome Hub**

The Committee was provided with an update on the Council's work plans, in partnership with Tourism NI and Visit Belfast, to facilitate necessary health and safety adjustments to the Cruise Belfast Welcome Hub and neighbouring berths at Belfast Harbour, in advance of the cruise season which was due to commence in March 2021.

The Committee was reminded that, in 2019, a partnership between Tourism NI, Visit Belfast and Belfast Harbour saw the opening of a dedicated cruise terminal in Belfast. It was reported that the cruise terminal facilities currently included:

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- Cruise visitor information centre;
- Shore excursion coach parking;
- Dedicated shuttle bus space;
- Taxi rank;
- Free Wifi;
- Destination showcase video wall;
- Gift shop;
- Washroom facilities including disabled access WC;
- Security desks; and
- Seating.

The Director of Economic Development advised that Belfast's visitor economy had been severely challenged by Covid-19 and it was anticipated that many of the challenges that the pandemic had brought to the tourism and hospitality industry might be with us for some time in the future.

He explained that, in order to ensure that Belfast was ready to allow the first cruise ship of the season to dock in the city on 7th March, 2021, Tourism NI had agreed to allocate up to £110,000 of capital investment for the Council to administer to Visit Belfast and Belfast Harbour to allow for specific Covid-19 health and safety adjustments to be made to the terminal and surrounding passenger docking areas. The adjustments would be made in the terminal itself and at the 3 berths in Belfast Harbour where a ship might dock (D1, Stormont Dock and Pollock Dock).

The Director of Economic Development explained that examples of adjustments included, but were not limited to, protective screens, internal and external directional signage, temperature check stations and hand sanitizing stands. He advised that these adjustments would give assurance to visitors that Belfast was a safe place to visit as well as being necessary to reduce the potential spread of the virus.

He highlighted that, in order to ensure good corporate governance, it was proposed that an agreement was set up by the Council to facilitate the transfer of funds from Tourism NI to Visit Belfast.

During discussion, one Member highlighted the work of the International Team, the stakeholder group meetings and the International Relations Framework. The Director of Economic Development pointed out that, although work on the International Framework had currently been suspended, work was still being undertaken to maintain international relationships.

After discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed that the Council works in partnership with Tourism NI and Visit Belfast to facilitate necessary Covid-19 health and safety upgrades using appropriate contractual mechanisms as advised by Legal Services.

The Committee also noted that a report would be submitted to a future meeting in relation to the International Framework Review, once staff resources became available.

**Call for Evidence - Union Connectivity Review**

The Committee considered the following report and associated appendix:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

- 1.1 This report seeks the Committee’s approval to submit a response to the independent review for the UK Government (Department for Transport) led by Sir Peter Hendy on how the quality and availability of transport infrastructure connections across the UK can support economic growth and quality of life, with a specific focus on NI connections.

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 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 14 January 2021.

**3.0 Main report**

- 3.1 Belfast City Council senior officers were invited to participate in a discussion with Sir Peter Hendy and other NI local government officers on 16th December 2020 in relation to transport infrastructure connections across the UK. Arising from this, it was felt that the Committee may wish that a formal response be submitted to the Call for Evidence.

- 3.2 The terms of reference for the independent review are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/union-connectivity-review-terms-of-reference/union-connectivity-review-terms-of-reference>. An extension to the deadline of 30 December 2020 has been secured to 14 January 2021, to enable the Committee to consider the draft response, attached at Appendix 1.

**Key Issues**

- 3.3 The independent review covers transport connectivity between England, Scotland, Wales and NI via road, rail and air, and sea. It asks for details across three broad areas:
- the current strategy for growing the economy and improving the quality of life
  - information on the volume of current travel journeys and the need for/impact of improved transport connectivity



- information on improvements and restrictions to NI connectivity links with England, Scotland and Wales
- 3.4** It will provide independent advice to the UK government on how connectivity can help support economic growth and quality of life post-COVID-19. The timeframe is for an interim report will be published at the end of January 2021, with recommendations due in the summer 2021.
- 3.5** The draft response, in Appendix 1, follows on from the 16th December discussions, providing additional detail and focusing on NI connectivity. It draws on the agreed Council position in relation to:
- The Council's response to the South West Scotland Transport Study, agreed by Strategic Policy & Resources Committee in 2019. This recognises the importance of sea connectivity between Belfast and Cairnryan, along with the A77 road improvements to enhance connectivity links between Cairnryan and the rest of Scotland, which the Scottish government has approved.
  - The importance of regional air routes for businesses and connectivity to other core cities; including the impact of the loss of Flybe from George Best Belfast City Airport, in line with the Council motion in March 2020.
  - The opportunity presented by the Belfast-Dublin Economic Corridor and high-speed rail service to improve connectivity between the core cities on the island of Ireland.
  - The Council's response to the DfI Call for Evidence on the Ministerial Advisory Panel for Infrastructure, considered by this Committee in November 2020.
  - The importance of building in environmental considerations to support the transition to a zero carbon, sustainable and inclusive economy.
- 3.6** The responsibility for transport lies with the devolved Assembly. The draft response notes Belfast's role as the regional economic driver and transport hub with a reliance on sea and air connections to England, Scotland and Wales. It therefore highlights the importance of air connectivity for business and tourism, with the need to stabilise and sustain tourism and the criticality of transport connectivity for businesses in response to the impact of COVID. However, it also stresses the need for air travel to be delivered in a sustainable manner, which both secures long-term economic competitiveness and addresses adverse impacts upon the

environment including issues such as air quality and climate change.

- 3.7 The specific transport links detailed in the draft response are the sea route between Belfast and Cairnryan; the road links along the A77 from Cairnryan to Glasgow/central Scotland; air connectivity between Belfast and London; and rail connectivity between Belfast and Dublin.
- 3.8 It highlights that a review of connectivity should consider NI's unique position with a land border with the EU, including the need to consider the Belfast - Dublin high speed rail link and noting that feasibility studies are underway.
- 3.9 In addition, the response notes that the role of local government in shaping transport and connectivity provision. As demonstrated through the Bolder Vision for Belfast, local government, working with central NI government, can influence the city's connectivity across economic, social and sustainable transport provision. This will also serve to increase and improve sustainable connectivity and infrastructure within Belfast and for the region as a whole.
- 3.10 Further information and updates on the review will be made available on the website:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/union-connectivity-review-call-for-evidence>  
Members will be informed of any further engagement with local government on the review.

**Financial & Resource Implications**

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

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

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

**Appendix 1**

Union Connectivity Review Sir Peter Hendy  
Call for Evidence  
Draft Response

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Belfast City Council welcomes the opportunity to engage in this call for evidence on the review of union connectivity. The following response is set firmly within the context of transport policy being a devolved power for the NI Executive.

The response below reflects the Council's agreed position relating to the key themes highlighted in the call for evidence, with a focus on the relevant issues and the questions directly relating to NI connectivity.

As an island economy with a land border with ROI, NI is in a unique geographic position, and is therefore more solely reliant on air and maritime connections than are Scotland, England and Wales.

Given the current economic and social challenges of COVID-19 and the outworking's of the UK-EU Trade Deal and the associated Northern Ireland Protocol this provides a timely opportunity to highlight the issues and opportunities of particular relevance to Belfast.

**The response below is based on agreed Council position on the issues. The response may change, subject to Council ratification on 1st February.**

**Assessing the need for cross-border connectivity**

**1. If you represent a place, what is your current strategy for growing the economy and improving the quality of life there? Please provide a summary, but you are welcome to append or link to published strategies.**

Belfast City Council leads on the community plan for the city, this first shared strategy for growing the economy and improving quality of life, places inclusive growth at the centre of its ambitions. A number of supporting strategic documents outline the plans for the growth and development of the city for the next 15 years. As the regional capital in a devolved administration, the strategies and plans for growth are aligned to the delivery of the NI Executive's Programme for Government.

Belfast's long-term strategy to grow a sustainable and inclusive economy and improve quality of life remains the "**Belfast Agenda**", the city's community plan<sup>1</sup>. With inclusive growth as the central goal, the Belfast Agenda sets out five outcomes, which our city partners are committed to work towards by 2035. Delivery towards these five outcomes will now be shaped through a lens of rebuilding and recovering in the COVID-climate:

- Everyone in Belfast benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy
- Belfast is a welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive city for all
- Everyone in Belfast fulfils their potential
- Everyone in Belfast experiences good health and wellbeing
- Belfast is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city

Aligned to NI regional policy and the Programme for Government, the Belfast Agenda highlights the importance of appropriate sustainable and inclusive development and the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://minutes.belfastcity.gov.uk/documents/s67530/Appendix%201%20-%20The%20Belfast%20Agenda.pdf>

importance of connectivity locally, nationally and internationally, to make the city competitive and to connect people to opportunities. The **Belfast Resilience Strategy**, agreed by Council in December 2020, further supports this with a commitment to transition Belfast to an inclusive zero-emissions, climate resilient economy in a generation.

Connected to the Belfast Agenda is the city's emerging "**Local Development Plan**", which sets out the spatial plan for the development of the city in order to deliver on the inclusive growth ambitions for the city. A significant evidence base supports this plan and a range of technical reports are available on the Council's website, including the growth ambitions and transportation<sup>2</sup>.

### Other relevant strategies

Belfast's recovery from the impact of COVID-19 is the current over-riding priority for the city through "Belfast: **Our Framework for Recovery**"<sup>3</sup>. This maintains our focus on inclusive economic growth - responding to the structural shifts in the economy and ensuring residents can benefit from, and contribute to, city recovery and growth as well as being able to access jobs of the future. Building sustainability and resilience into our approaches also means accelerating our transition to a net-zero carbon economy and enabling residents to benefit from the economic and quality of life improvements this can deliver. The "**Belfast: Our Framework for Recovery**" sets out the areas we need to focus on in the short term to drive immediate city recovery. It also sets out our priorities for building the foundations for sustained recovery to support our longer-term city outcomes in the Belfast Agenda.

The Council's Innovation & Inclusive Growth Commission, an independent panel of experts comprising the city's anchor institutions and chaired by Belfast Harbour, produced a stimulus paper to inform the Council's approach to city recovery (2020). This identifies city-to-city connectivity, connecting people to jobs, improving skills, place-making and energy transition (green) as critical growth levers for Belfast and recommends a renewed urgency to deliver on these, given the effects of the pandemic.

The Council has specifically identified enhancing connectivity as a priority to support the economic and community recovery. With an agreed and shared "**Bolder Vision for Belfast**" the Council, Department for Infrastructure, and Department for Communities are working to identify and accelerate opportunities to create healthy, shared, vibrant and sustainable environments. These will promote wellbeing and enhance access to jobs, by connecting the city centre and surrounding communities. A copy of the shared Bolder Vision for Belfast is available at: <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Documents/A-Bolder-Vision-for-Belfast>

Given the shared responsibility for several key functions (e.g. regeneration) across local and central government in NI, and the devolved powers of the NI, it is vital that effective collaborative and shared commitments, plans and resources are in place in order to

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/ldp>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/news/belfast-city-council-prioritises-covid-19-city-rec>

deliver integrated place-making functions, which can deliver the benefits associated with improved connectivity.

NI is in a unique position having a land border with an EU member. Recognising the potential opportunities from this, Belfast City Council has been working with council's and university partners to develop a Belfast-Dublin economic corridor and feasibility studies are underway into a Belfast-Dublin-Cork high speed rail option. Belfast is also working with neighbouring Belfast region councils to deliver the **Belfast Region City Deal**. The region has a population of around 1 million people and is recognised as NI's key economic engine, generating total GVA of approximately £24,320m while providing critical access and transport links for trade and tourism<sup>4</sup>.

**2. Please provide any information you hold about current multi-nation journeys within the United Kingdom.**

*Please provide information relating to current journey volumes, assessments of future demand, journey reliability and locations/corridors of particular strategic importance. In particular, please provide information about current journey levels, assessments of future demand, locations of important strategic transport corridors and the reasons for importance*

**Air connectivity**

Air routes are vital for island economies and a strategic priority for economic development and tourism. NI is more reliant on air transit than other parts of the UK (where city-to-city linkages may be serviced by train or bus connections).

The Belfast International Airport (BIA) and George Best Belfast City Airport (GBBCA) can both be accessed from Belfast city centre within 30 minutes and over 8.65m business and leisure passengers travelled through the two airports in 2019. Through the work of the Innovation & Inclusive Growth Commission, connections between Belfast and London were highlighted as a critical lever and key attractor for business. This must be supported by investment in physical infrastructure and digital connectivity in order to maximise business-to-business connectivity and support the overall accessibility and economic potential of the region.

Several research studies commissioned by Belfast City Council have identified the importance of the city's connectivity and access to other markets. Oxford Economics (2012) suggested that one in ten of all jobs created in FDI businesses need access to an airport to sustain their business. Having access to a city airport is a critical success factor for Belfast. Around 65% of the airport users are business travellers who tend to value short airport transfer times. Therefore, the location of GBBCA in close proximity to the city and a flight time of under 90minutes from Belfast to London enables them to draw maximum advantage from their working day. The changing nature of the economic landscape in Belfast and the growth of finance, business services and IT sectors have

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[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/789253/HoT- City Deals- Final - with signatures\\_1\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/789253/HoT- City Deals- Final - with signatures_1_.pdf)

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contributed to new routes and emphasise the importance of the Belfast City to London City route. It is essential that these routes are developed as the service sector FDI growth is projected to continue (despite the global slowdown).

Air routes are critical for **tourism and connectivity** with the European market, GB and ROI being key to compensate the reduced demand from the US in the medium-term. Union connectivity is highlighted by the significance of the GB tourism market in Belfast and NI - from 2017-2019; over two fifths of the overnight stays in Belfast were from GB.

With 1.9million visitors to Belfast last year (overnight stays) tourism has been a key economic sector in terms of the spend generated and it supports over 21,000 jobs<sup>5</sup>, approx. 9% of the total number of jobs in Belfast.

A recent report by Ernst & Young (2020) highlights the importance of tourism for the Belfast economy and the potential impact of COVID-19. In terms of the tourism market in Belfast it states that:

- Spending by tourists in Belfast has outpaced the NI average, growing by 20% year on year compared to 4.5% regionally.
- Belfast has grown at a faster rate than the rest of NI mainly because of its attractiveness in two high value markets – city breaks and business tourism.

The report concludes that COVID-19 could have a stronger impact on the tourism and hospitality sectors in Belfast due to three main factors.

- 1) the greater reliance on overseas markets rather than staycations;
- 2) the adverse impact of COVID on the cruise tourism market (2017-2019 saw a 60% increase in cruise ships docking in Belfast. In 2019, 146 cruise ships visited Belfast bringing over 270,000 passengers and cruise staff<sup>2</sup>) and;
- 3) the reduction in business tourism which is likely to take significant time to recover.

The report puts forward several scenarios for the impact of COVID on tourism and in all scenarios, it is projected that Belfast will rely heavily on the ROI and GB market in the coming years in order to sustain and rebuild the tourism market. A summary of the key findings from this report was presented to the Council's City Growth & Regeneration Committee<sup>6</sup> in August 2020. Air (and sea) connectivity to GB routes are therefore vital to support the stabilisation and recovery of the tourism sector and the longer term inclusive economic growth ambitions for the city.

Despite UK government rescue efforts, in March 2020, just before the first UK COVID lockdown period, the major regional airline Flybe ceased operations. This has been one of the leading carriers at Belfast as well as Manchester, Birmingham and Southampton. This has been a significant loss for Belfast, with George Best Belfast City Airport losing

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/local-government-district-tourism-statistics-publications>

<sup>6</sup> <https://minutes.belfastcity.gov.uk/documents/s85507/August%20CGR%20-%20Tourism%20Update.pdf>

14 routes. Loganair will now operate the Aberdeen and Inverness services. However 12 other routes are no longer operating, significantly reducing Belfast's connections to core cities such as Birmingham and Manchester.

The Council supported a motion to declare a Climate Emergency and has stressed the urgent need to maximise carbon reduction to limit global warming. It is vital that environmental considerations are factored into any review of connectivity to support the transition to a low carbon, inclusive economy. Whilst this may initially seem at odds with highlighting the importance of air travel, we believe that government can do more to encourage the aviation industry to reduce its carbon and noise footprints through improved/new technologies and practices.

While the full impact of COVID continues to unfold, it is clear that the tourism sector will be severely impacted and opportunities to provide new investment into the sector to create new employment opportunities is expected to be a vital component for economic recovery. The ongoing commitment to the Belfast Region City Deal which provides for £850m co-investment in infrastructure and regeneration opportunities to deliver inclusive economic growth in the region is a prime example of how programmes are being channelled to deliver maximum benefits.

### **Rail connectivity**

To take account of the needs and unique circumstances of NI, it is relevant to consider the benefits that can be gained by enhancing all-island connectivity within the Union connectivity review.

Belfast City Council and five other local authorities on the Belfast-Dublin corridor have worked with Arup to produce a feasibility study for an enhanced Belfast-Dublin rail link (2019). **(see Question 8)**

### **Maritime Connectivity**

Belfast Harbour is the second largest port on the island of Ireland. Around 70% of NI's seaborne trade is handled by Belfast Port and 20% of that of the entire island of Ireland.

In 2019, more than 24m tonnes of goods and 1.6m passengers passed through Belfast Harbour. Most of the trade passing through Belfast Port is bound for GB – in 2019, around 72% of the overall tonnage levels, 10% trade with the EU and 18% with the rest of the world. There is a large amount of freight traffic between GB and NI, totalling 850,000 freight movements per year, almost two thirds of those movements were through Belfast Harbour, making it one of the busiest ports in the UK.

Ferry routes operate on a daily basis from Belfast to Cairnryan, Heysham and Birkenhead. With six crossings per day (return) and a two hour crossing time, the Belfast-Cairnryan route is the busiest and fastest between GB and NI directly into the city. The town of Larne, a 45 minute drive from Belfast, also offers a sea crossing to Cairnryan on a daily basis.

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With improved transport links between Dublin and Belfast, Dublin Port provides an option to connect to Holyhead in Wales in under four hours, (plus 2 hours travel by car to reach Dublin Port). Again, the unique location of NI/Belfast means that it is important to factor in Belfast's relationship and connectivity to Dublin in the review.

**3. In general terms, is there a need for new or improved transport links between the nations of the United Kingdom?**

*If so, please explain why and provide evidence to support your view. Please ensure that your response relates specifically to multi-nation transport links and not to improvements in connectivity in general.*

**Please refer to the answer to Q2.**

In addition, there is a need for improved connectivity within NI and the NI Executive's New Decade, New Approach commitments highlight investment in infrastructure. Along with the better connections between Belfast and Dublin, it identifies several key projects that require additional investment to improve connectivity in NI –

- A5/A6 roads to enhance east/west connectivity; and
- York Street Interchange, led by the Department for Infrastructure to improve the flow of traffic in the city and improve key connections for traffic from Belfast Port.

It is also worth noting the plans to develop the Rail/Bus Transport Hub within Belfast city centre. This has been identified in the Belfast Agenda as a key element to improving sustainable transport and connectivity in the city as part of the city development and growth agenda. As a multi-modal transport hub in the city centre, this will significantly improve the gateway into the city centre as well as enhancing the convenience and connectivity of the regional rail network and sustainable transport links, enabling onward connecting journeys.

**4. What are the main obstacles and challenges in improving transport connectivity between the nations of the United Kingdom?**

*Please provide evidence relating to any specific challenges that prevent or hinder the development of additional or improved transport links. Please consider socio-economic, political, organisational and practical issues.*

As discussed in Q2, NI is in a unique position, as the only city with no road or rail connection to GB and the only part of the UK with a land link to the EU. Within NI, Belfast is the only major city, with a population of 343,500 and over 1 million in the Belfast Region. For comparison, Derry City & Strabane council area, which is home to Derry City Airport, has a population of 151,300. On the island of Ireland, Dublin is Belfast's neighbouring major city, with a population of almost 555,000 and over 1.2m in the Greater Dublin area.

The specific challenge for NI is that transport links to GB are wholly dependent on the private sector. Therefore connectivity depends on the profitability and good-will of those air and sea transport providers. As shown by the recent collapse of Flybe, NI's connectivity cannot be taken for granted. The added impact of COVID therefore leaves



NI's connectivity in a precarious position. In GB, the public sector can intervene to an extent through investment in road infrastructure.

**5. What evidence exists to demonstrate the potential impacts of improved transport connectivity between the nations of the United Kingdom?**

*Please ensure that your answer relates directly to transport connectivity between the nations of the United Kingdom and not to transport connectivity in general. Please consider economic, social and cultural impacts and provide documents or links. Please also highlight specific potential growth areas such as housing or wages.*

**See response to Q2**

**6. When making transport investment decisions which aim to improve connectivity between the different nations of the United Kingdom, does the current appraisal framework capture all the potential impacts?**

*Please provide evidence such as links to existing reviews or analysis that may have already considered this.*

Transport remains a devolved matter for the NI Assembly and the Council would welcome collaborative opportunities on transport and infrastructure issues to support the sustainable development of the city, particularly in managing ongoing recovery from the impacts of COVID.

It is considered that environmental considerations should also be fully factored into the appraisal frameworks. In light of the UK government's levelling up agenda, the Council would also reinforce the opportunity to progress a sustainable and inclusive economic and social growth agenda when making transport investment decisions.

**Opportunities for Improved Transport Connectivity between the nations of the United Kingdom**

**7. Which specific journeys would benefit from new or improved transport links?**

*Please identify two or more specific points within the United Kingdom for each journey and provide details as to why each journey has been identified. Please list these journeys in order of priority. Please ensure that these journeys traverse two or more nations. If none then please go to Question 8.*

As previously highlighted there are several links between NI and GB; including London, Edinburgh, Cardiff and other core cities such as Glasgow, Manchester, Newcastle, Birmingham, Bristol. However, due to the reliance on sea and air connectivity, NI is reliant on private transport operators. Given the distinct issues that NI and Belfast have, we have combined the response to Q7 and Q8 to focus on NI connectivity.

**See response to Q8 for information on specific journeys that would benefit from improved transport links between NI and GB.**

#### **Connections to Northern Ireland**

**8. With reference to the unique geographical position of Northern Ireland please set out how best to improve cross-border transport connectivity with other nations**

*Please consider all possible transport options including maritime, air and rail or road via a fixed link and provide evidence as to the cost, benefits and environmental impact of these options.*

Given the geographical position of NI, air and sea connectivity is vital to sustain connections between the NI and GB markets. High-speed rail is not an option to connect NI to GB markets. The Council has stressed the importance of environmental considerations; we would therefore welcome further government efforts and research to improve aircraft and travel performance in these areas.

Given the unique position of NI and particularly in the context of the NI Protocol, it is equally important to consider connectivity between Belfast and Dublin by maximising the rail connections. The recommendations from the Belfast Innovation & Inclusive Growth Commission to the Council emphasised city-to-city connectivity to help shore up and lever the city's COVID-19 response and recovery plans.

#### **Maritime Connectivity**

In August 2019, Belfast City Council submitted a response to the South West Scotland Transport Study consultation 'Support for Investment in Transport Infrastructure in South West Scotland' and included the following comments: That the Council:-

- *recognises the long-standing cultural and economic ties between Northern Ireland and Scotland and that fundamental to increasing the benefit to Belfast from this connection is the need to improve transport connections between Scotland and NI*
- *welcomes the fact that the ferry services between Cairnryan and Belfast, by Stena Line, 6 times per day, and between Cairnryan and Larne, by P&O, 7 times per day, are among the busiest services in the UK and represent a strong opportunity for economic and tourism growth. However, the inadequate transport infrastructure beyond the ferry terminals at Cairnryan is inhibiting that growth and require investment to bring them up to standard; and*
- *supports the campaign in Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway for investment in the roads infrastructure - along the A77 towards Glasgow/central Scotland and along the A75 towards the Scotland/England border, which are both predominantly single carriageway routes and pass through a number of small towns and villages – and in the rail infrastructure along the same routes, and agrees to write to the Scottish*

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*Government in support of calls for a long-term programme of investment in the transport infrastructure of South West Scotland.*

The ports at Cairnryan provide:

- the only non-air trade route between Scotland and NI / Ireland;
- the only ferry routes to enable personal travel directly between Scotland and NI, two regions with historic and cultural ties;
- a short 2 hour sea crossing route to NI for traffic from across England;
- local employment on the ferries and at the ports. During the engagement exercise for the study it was noted by the ferry operators that over 300 people are employed at the ports and on the ships, with a considerable proportion of employees living locally. In addition, while local benefits of through-traffic to the ports which does not stop (such as driver spend) is likely to be limited, many freight business ferry users employ HGV drivers (and other support staff) from the local area. Any reduction in port usage could therefore reduce locally available employment opportunities.

Any major loss of customers to other routes could lead to a diminution of the current service with associated negative impacts. These include a drop in commercial trade and visitor numbers from GB to Belfast as alternative routes (Liverpool) might be less attractive due to ferry times rising from approximately 2 to 8 hours, or that traveller numbers might be lost to Dublin if customers use the Holyhead crossing instead. There were also cultural implications, as mentioned previously, with the strong historic ties between NI and Scotland. A baseline review was therefore undertaken to understand existing trends associated with traffic through the ports at Cairnryan.

Data indicates that between the two operators (P&O and Stena Line), 1.75 million passengers, 413,000 cars, and over 400,000 goods vehicles were moved in 2017. These figures underline the freight-focussed nature of the Irish Sea routes with the total number of commercial vehicles carried almost matching the number of cars carried. Averaged across the year, around 1,100 commercial vehicles per day are therefore using the ports at Cairnryan.

Analysis of origin-destination surveys showed that freight traffic travels from across the UK to access the ports, owing to the relatively shorter sailing time compared to competitor ports. However, analysis of Specialised Goods Vehicles confirmed the strategic importance of the A75 and A77 to the freight industry in terms of providing access to the short sea crossings from the ports at Cairnryan. Despite this, journey time analysis suggests that travel times to the ports at Cairnryan are considerably longer for the last 100 miles of their journey, relative to competitor ports at Heysham, Liverpool and Holyhead. Concerns have therefore been raised by stakeholders in the South West of Scotland about a potential loss of ferry market share to competitor ports owing to relatively poorer surface access arrangements

### **Rail connectivity**

To take account of the needs and circumstances of NI, it is essential to consider the benefits that can be gained by enhancing all-island connectivity within this review. In May

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2018, the Council passed the following motion highlighting the opportunities from Belfast-Dublin collaboration and connectivity:

*“This Council acknowledges the ever growing importance of relations between Belfast City and Dublin City as the main economic drivers within each jurisdiction. Furthermore, regardless of the outcome of negotiations around Brexit, it is imperative that relations continue to flourish between both cities, to the mutual benefit of all along this increasingly significant economic corridor. Accordingly, this Council agrees to establish a joint plan around co-operation regarding working relationships within the economic corridor. Going forward, this Council commits to ensuring key areas of progress and collaboration focusing on:*

- a complementary approach to inward investment and job growth;*
- achieving Inclusive growth; and*
- developing Infrastructure and connectivity.”*

Belfast City Council and five other local authorities on the Belfast-Dublin corridor have worked with Arup to produce a feasibility study for an enhanced Belfast-Dublin rail link (2019). A copy can be made available to the review team on request. This is supported through research carried out by the Ulster University & Economic Policy Centre and Dublin City University<sup>7</sup> which considers the economic potential and opportunities of a Belfast-Dublin Corridor.

The current transport conditions are:

- Journey times of 2h / 2h15min don't offer advantage over car / coach.
- Low frequency of trains (eight per day) for a major inter-urban route (compared with hourly coaches from Belfast-Dublin). Further comparisons with core city connections in England emphasise the low frequency, with over 30 trains per week-day running between Manchester and Birmingham.
- Low attractiveness to business users e.g. first northbound train does not reach Belfast until 9.45 am.
- Airport connections not offered by Enterprise service.
- The Dublin train terminus, Belfast Lanyon Place, is 1km from city centre with limited onward travel options.

This study indicates that improved inter-city connectivity offers the chance to tackle a range of strategic objectives:

- I. Enhance inclusive, sustainable economic growth along the whole Corridor.
- II. Increase access to skilled workforce and job opportunities along the Corridor.
- III. Allow all towns and cities in the Corridor to specialise, capitalising on their strengths.
- IV. Support increased housing and commercial development.
- V. Collaboration to support international competitiveness and capitalise on connections for all island.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://minutes.belfastcity.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=163&MID=9843#AI55901>

VI. Reduce long-term car dependence and address environmental challenges.

The study outlines that the six objectives (*above*) could be met by a rail service that can:

- Achieve a 60-min journey time Dublin-Belfast.
- Provide at least two trains per hour: one fast + one semi-fast.
- Provide a connection to Dublin Airport.
- Integrate seamlessly with public transport networks along the Corridor.

### **Air connectivity**

The NI Executive has devolved powers relating to airports in terms of land use planning and airport surface access issues; aviation policy remains a reserved matter for the UK Government. Unlike other regional cities in Scotland, Wales or England, Belfast's largest neighbouring airport at Dublin operates within a separate tax regime with different operating targets linked to the development of the ROI national economy.

Research shows that there are positive economic impacts in the vicinity of airports with good quality regional air connectivity. This tends to increase service sector related employment. Air connectivity routes that support business connectivity supports regional economic activity<sup>8</sup>.

There are particular flights times relating to the Belfast- London connections which are of strategic importance to the economic well-being of the city and the wider region. It is vital that these are maintained and secured; primarily to early morning departures and late evening return flights (within permitted timetables) from the key hub airports of London Heathrow and London Gatwick. Indeed the Council has previously called for the Belfast to London service to be considered as a Public Service Obligation Route.

Due to its geography, NI is disproportionately dependent on air transportation for connectivity with England, Scotland and Wales. This emphasises the importance of considering the rail connectivity between Belfast and Dublin to support economic and social recovery and longer term growth.

Regional and international connectivity provided by air transport is of vital importance to Belfast and the NI economy and its population. However, it is essential that air travel is delivered in a sustainable manner, which both secures long-term economic competitiveness and addresses adverse impacts upon the environment including issues such as air quality and climate change.

### **9. Other than geographic, are there any other specific restrictions to improving connectivity between Northern Ireland and other nations in the United Kingdom?**

*Please consider legal, policy and practical restrictions. Please set these out and provide evidence as to how they may limit opportunities for improved transport connectivity. Please also consider this in the context of the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union.*

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[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/767231/wider-economic-impacts-of-regional-connectivity.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/767231/wider-economic-impacts-of-regional-connectivity.pdf)

The final detail and implementation of the NI Protocol will determine the ease of trade, investment and travel for domestic, business or leisure purposes to/from NI. This must be read alongside any future transport policy for the UK as a result of the departure from the European Union.

Since 2014, Belfast has formed strong city strategic relationships with the City of London and Dublin and this remains a key lever for the future economic, social and environmental development of the city.

There are some very specific issues for Belfast and NI, which do not apply elsewhere across GB. These relate, in particular, to the land border with ROI, which has a large international airport in Dublin – as well as a number of regional airports. These airports operate under a different taxation regime – in particular regarding Air Passenger Duty (APD) levels.

As per the Council's response to the Ministerial Panel for an Infrastructure Commission, the majority of NI infrastructure has suffered from long-term under-investment resulting in the need for significant investment in key infrastructure provision including rail, and sustainable and active travel. There is a need for a longer-term regional prioritised infrastructure strategy and updated integrated localised strategic plans such as Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan. Longer-term planning, clear priorities and a sustained commitment to invest in robust and quality infrastructure is vital to provide stability. This must take account of the commitments to decarbonisation and sustainable development as well as the need and demand for increased digital connectivity. This will support the economy in terms of business investment decisions and increasing the opportunities for residents as well as improving quality of life, for both transport users and residents.

### **Final questions**

#### **10. What else can be done to support greater transport connectivity between the nations of the United Kingdom?**

As responsibility for transport is a devolved matter, the involvement of the devolved governments in the review and plans for greater transport connectivity is vital. Along with this, it is essential to recognise the role that local government plays in influencing and shaping transport and connectivity requirements through community planning and enabling enhanced greener, sustainable and inclusive transport and connectivity.

The NI Minister for Infrastructure has recently called for evidence on the establishment of an Infrastructure Commission for NI to be in place by 2022 that will develop a 30+ year vision to provide the overarching framework and vision to meet future economic growth, environmental and societal needs. The Commission will recognise climate change as a key challenge and the role of local government as a key stakeholder.

#### **11. Do you have any further comments?**

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,  
Wednesday, 13th January, 2021**

*A balanced and sustainable approach to developing connectivity between core cities is critical for Belfast and the region to be able to compete and to secure the potential for recovery and longer-term inclusive economic growth.*

In order to ensure that greater transport connectivity between NI and England, Scotland and Wales is in line with the UK government's levelling up agenda, it is essential for both inter and intra connectivity to be considered and aligned. The complex inter-dependencies of a connected transport system should be recognised if it is to fully contribute to the goal of levelling up.

Local government, working with central NI government, has a vital role in influencing the city's connectivity and direction of travel across economic, social and sustainable transport provision, as demonstrated through the recently adopted Bolder Vision for Belfast which has been agreed by Belfast City Council and the Departments for Infrastructure and for Communities.

During discussion, Members raised concerns in relation to the short turnaround time to consider the response. The Director of City Regeneration and Development Committee highlighted that the draft response was based on previously adopted Council positions on key transport and connectivity issues. She confirmed that the original deadline for receipt of submissions was the 30th December 2020, however, officers had obtained a revised deadline of 14th January, 2021, and if there were any further amendments, an addendum report could also be submitted to the Independent Review Team, after ratification at Council.

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Beattie,  
Seconded by Councillor Maskey,

That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the report until February, so that Members have more time to consider the associated response.

Following a vote, eight Members voted for the proposal and eleven against and it was declared lost.

The officer's recommendation was thereupon put to the meeting and it was agreed.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to submit the draft response, as set out in Appendix 1, to the Call for Evidence- Union Connectivity Review. The Committee noted that whilst the original deadline for receipt of submissions was the 30th December 2020, officers had obtained a revised deadline of 14th January, 2021; however, the draft response would also be subject to ratification at Council on 1st February and if there were any amendments, an addendum report could also be submitted to the Independent Review Team.

**Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

Before Councillors proposed the following three agenda items, the Strategic Director of Place and Economy explained the impact of the current pandemic on the organisation's capacity to continue to deliver vital services. He highlighted that it was unlikely that staff would be in a position to undertake significant additional work raised through this route in respect of new areas of work for some time.

**Alternative to York Street Interchange (Cllr O'Hara to raise)**

Councillor O'Hara advised that he had been liaising with various groups and individuals, including Mr. Mark Hackett, in relation to alternative designs to York Street Interchange and suggested the Committee invite Mr. Hackett to a future Committee to present his ideas.

The Director pointed out that, as the Council was not a technical body for the roads network, officers would not be able to provide advice on the competency of alternative schemes presented to the Council.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to receive a presentation from Mr. M. Hackett on the issue raised at a future meeting.

**Fra McCann's (MLA) Proposals for Free Car Parking at Hospitals (Cllr O'Hara to raise)**

Councillor O'Hara suggested that, following the debate on the issue at the Council Meeting on 1st September under the motion 'Free Car Parking for Health Workers, Patients and Visitors', the Committee writes to Mr. F. McCann MLA to reiterate the outcome of the debate.

During discussion, the Senior Democratic Services Officer confirmed that, following the Council meeting in September, correspondence had already been sent to the Minister for Infrastructure and the Minister for Health to outline the Council's position on the issue.

Noted.

**Environmental Infrastructure in Council Car Parks (Cllr Heading to raise)**

Councillor Heading suggested that the Council examine the feasibility of a pilot scheme to provide car parking spaces for electric cars in council car parks to incentivize the use of electric cars in the city and noted that associated infrastructure could also be provided under other work streams at a later stage.

The Committee noted that the issue would be investigated, once resources became available, and agreed that a report, on how this could be facilitated, resourced, managed, be brought back in due course.



**Disabled Parking Accreditation Scheme (Cllr McMullan to raise)**

On behalf of Councillor McMullan, Councillor Mulholland outlined the following proposal:

“This Council is committed to ensuring that the city and neighbourhood areas of Belfast are accessible and inclusive for disabled people, older people and carers. This Council recognises that access to a car is central to the independence of many people with mobility issues but notes the low provision of accessible bay parking spaces in its off-street car parks with just 3% of its spaces designated as accessible across the city.

This Council agrees to join Disability Motoring UK’s Disabled Parking Accreditation scheme to improve the minimum number, size and quality of our accessible bay parking spaces. This Council further notes this is one of many interventions that need to be taken by this Council and partners as part of our commitment to an inclusive COVID-19 response and recovery and our commitment in the Belfast Agenda to become an accessible city for all by 2035.”

After discussion, the Committee noted that the issue would be investigated, once resources became available, and agreed that a report, on how this could be facilitated, resourced, managed, be brought back in due course.

Chairperson

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## Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 20th January, 2021

### MEETING OF LICENSING COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Donnelly (Chairperson);  
Aldermen Copeland and Sandford; and  
Councillors Bradley, Bunting, Howard, Hussey,  
Hutchinson, T. Kelly, Magee, Magennis,  
McAteer, McCabe, McCullough,  
Nicholl, Smyth and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. A. Thatcher, Director of Planning  
and Building Control;  
Mr. S. Hewitt, Building Control Manager;  
Ms. N. Largey, Divisional Solicitor;  
Mr. K. Bloomfield, HMO Unit Manager;  
Mr. J. Cunningham, Regulatory Services Manager;  
Mr. V. Donnelly, City Protection Manager;  
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer; and  
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were reported from Councillors M. Kelly and McKeown.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 16th December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 7th January, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Hutchinson confirmed that he was not related to any individual who had applied for a licence to operate a house of multiple occupation (HMO).

### **Presentation**

#### **Mr. D. Boyle**

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. Boyle, a private landlord, to the meeting.

Mr Boyle informed the Committee that he required further time to consider the proposed process for dealing with new licence applications for premises which previously operated as a HMO.

**Licensing Committee,  
Wednesday, 20th January, 2021**

He informed the Members of his concerns surrounding the application process and the confusion surrounding the requirement for planning permission to accompany an application for a HMO licence. He stated that he also required clarification between an application for a new licence and an application for the renewal of a licence.

He stated that there would be scenarios whereby an application for renewal would be out of time, as an inspection by a Council officer, a requirement of the licence application, on premises to renew a licence where there had been a fire, flood or ongoing renovations, would not authorise the property to operate as a house of multiple occupation, and the licence would therefore expire.

He appealed to the Committee to defer its consideration of the proposed process for dealing with new licence applications for premises which previously operated as a HMO, until further consultation had been undertaken.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Boyle for his presentation to the Committee.

**Mr. S. Magill**

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. Magill, from the Landlords Association of Northern Ireland (LANI), to the meeting.

Mr. Magill reported that he welcomed the proposal that HMO Officers would contact licence holders, whose licenses were due to expire, to inform them that planning permission was not required. However he stated that he felt that it was not a common misunderstanding as officers had previously advised landlords that planning permission was required to accompany an application for renewal.

He added that landlords had incurred costs in obtaining planning permission, following the advice of officers, which had not been necessary. He reported that some landlords had forfeited the renewal of a licence and rented their property to fewer tenants, in order to avoid the possibility of losing the application fee or the possibility of a fine, and, as a result, more individuals had been seeking HMO accommodation.

Mr. Magill stated that LANI had engaged McCann and McCann Solicitors to request that the deadline by which applications must be lodged, where the premises have previously operated as an HMO, should be extended by three months until 30th June, 2021.

He pointed out to the Committee that, when making an application for the transfer of ownership of a HMO licence, the application must be submitted within three months from the date of death of the licence holder, and that, on occasions where probate had not been completed, the agent had not been informed of the death or the grieving spouse was not aware of the licence requirement, therefore applying within the timeframe was not possible.

He stated that LANI was asking the Council to address the transfer of ownership timeframe with the Department for Communities and to consider a suitable extension as

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a matter of urgency, and to provide clarification between a new licence application and a renewal application.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Magill for his presentation to Committee.

**Mr. M. McMahon**

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. McMahon, a Property Agent, to the meeting.

Mr. McMahon informed the Members that there previously had only been one form for a HMO application, whether it was a new application to renew a licence or to transfer ownership. He pointed out that the first part of the form referred to the requirement of planning permission which confused many landlords, and that they had been unwilling to make an application and risk losing the application fee. He stated that Landlords had been waiting on clarification from the Council on the requirement of planning permission before submitting their renewal applications.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. McMahon for his presentation to the Committee.

**Non-Delegated Matters**

**Proposed process for dealing with new licence applications  
for premises which previously operated as a HMO**

The Divisional Solicitor presented the Committee with an update in respect of the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**To consider how to address the issue of overprovision in respect of certain new applications for a licence to operate a House of Multiple Occupation (‘HMO’) given the requirements of the Houses of Multiple Occupation Act (NI) 2016.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**The purpose of this report is to update members in respect of representations received subsequent to Committee’s last meeting on 16th December 2020.**

**Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and determine whether to agree the recommendation in the substantive report from December; namely:**

**That all new applications received up to and including 1st March 2021 where the premises have previously operated as a HMO and have the benefit of planning permission and/or a certificate of lawful use or development (CLUD) will not be considered to result in overprovision given there appears to**

have been a generally held misconception that planning permission must be obtained before an application for renewal of a licence was submitted.

That officers write to all HMO licence holders whose licence is due to expire before 1st March 2021 and explicitly advise that if they fail to apply to renew the application before that date the Council will, in accordance with the requirements of the 2016 Act, assess whether the grant of a licence would result in a breach of planning control or result in overprovision of HMO accommodation in the locality.

### **3.0 Main report**

#### **Key Issues**

#### **Correspondence from Belfast Holyland Regeneration Association**

Since Committee's last meeting correspondence has been received from Tony McGuinness on behalf of Belfast Holyland Regeneration Association.

Officers have carefully considered the representations which have been received and believe the recommendation to Committee is legally robust.

The correspondence asks why the Council does not propose to revoke those licences which were granted prior to counsel's advice being sought.

There is no proposal to revoke licences in respect of which over provision was not taken into account as a separate and distinct issue to planning permission. Legal Services have advised that any such revocation is likely to be subject to the same concerns about fairness and the ability to successfully defend any appeal. This is based upon a number of considerations, including the common misconception that the Council would automatically refuse a renewal application where the owner did not have the benefit of planning permission or a CLEUD.

It was alleged that the paper's advice that there are no equality or good relations issues which arise from the proposal 'insults residents of affected areas' due to the overprovision of HMOs. Officers acknowledge that overprovision of HMO's in certain areas of the city is controversial. However it is not considered that this limited proposal would give rise to an equality or

good relations issue which would require the Council to screen the decision.

Having considered representations from those landlords who would be affected, officers would propose that all new applications received up to and including 1st March 2021 where the premises previously operated as a HMO and have the benefit of planning permission and/or a CLUD will not be considered to result in overprovision. Officers will also write to all HMO licence holders whose licence is due to expire before 1st March 2021 and explicitly advise that if they fail to apply to renew the application before that date the Council will, in accordance with the requirements of the 2016 Act, assess whether the grant of a licence would result in a breach of planning control or result in overprovision of HMO accommodation in the locality. They will be further advised that this may result in the refusal of the application even if the premises has planning permission or previously operated as a HMO.

In relation to the number of unlicensed HMOs, this query is specifically raised in relation to the application for Penrose Street, Belfast which is also before Committee this evening. There are no live enforcement investigations by either Planning Service or NIHMO Unit in relation to alleged HMOs in that street. Council continues to take enforcement action in respect of any unlicensed HMO properties which come to its attention or those without planning permission

**Correspondence from McCann & McCann Solicitors**

Correspondence has also been received from McCann & McCann solicitors asking that we extend the proposed transitional period from 1st March 2021 for a further 3 months until 30th June 2021. This is due to the deferral of the report from December and also due to the current Covid pandemic and the current restrictions.

Officers have advised the solicitors that this request would be placed before Committee for consideration. They were however advised that it is the responsibility of landlords to apply to renew their licences before their current licence has expired.

Furthermore, officers advised that its standard HMO renewal, reminder letter has been amended, to remind licence holders that should they fail to renew their licence on time, the Council will take into account planning permission and overprovision as two distinct issues. Officers have also issued further

reminder letters to those approaching the date for the renewal of their licence, and whom had already been issued with reminder letters, previously.

#### Other issues

Officers believe it may be helpful to provide some further clarity for members following on from the discussion which took place at Committee in December.

#### Reference to 'new applications' in December Committee report

It is important to clarify that the reference to 'new' applications should be considered in the context of this report, which is those applications which are essentially an out of time renewal application rather than a new licence. It is also limited to those properties where it is alleged that the failure to renew on time was due to the misconception that planning was required. All of these premises have planning permission/CLEUD and have previously been registered as a HMO under the old NIHE scheme.

The report is not intended to deal with all new applications and the transitional period will not apply to any licences which are due to expire after 1st March 2021.

By way of example, in paragraphs 2.1, 3.6 and 3.14 of the report, there is reference to 'new' applications but this is only a reference to the limited number of applications which this proposal directly relates to, which is considered to be approximately 30-35 properties throughout the city.

#### Transfer of ownership

Overprovision will not lead to a refusal where there is a transfer of ownership. However this is only where there is a live HMO licence held by the vendor. This remains valid until the property is transferred. Therefore the number of licences in the area remain the same.

#### Financial & Resource Implications

There are no financial or resource implications relating to this report.



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

**There are no implications relating to this report.”**

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Hussey,  
Seconded by Alderman Sandford,

That all new applications due to expire 1st March 2021, where the premises have previously operated as a HMO and have the benefit of planning permission and/or a certificate of lawful use or development (CLUD), would not be considered to result in overprovision.

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

**Delegated Matters**

**THE COMMITTEE DEALT WITH THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN PURSUANCE  
OF THE POWERS DELEGATED TO IT UNDER STANDING ORDER 37(d)**

**Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licenses  
Issued Under Delegated Authority**

The Committee noted the applications that had been issued under the Scheme of Delegation.

**Application for a New Licence to operate a House of  
Multiple Occupation for 32 Stranmillis Gardens**

The HMO Unit Manager provided an overview of the application and explained that, as a valid objection had been received, the application must be considered by the Committee, pursuant to the 2016 Act and legal advice.

He advised that no noise complaints had been received in relation to the property.

The Committee agreed to grant the application, without any special conditions, contingent upon the ratification of the proposed process for dealing with new licence applications for premises which previously operated as a HMO by Council, at its meeting on 1st February, 2021.

**Applications for a New Licence to operate a House of  
Multiple Occupation for 11 Penrose Street**

The HMO Unit Manager provided an overview of the application and explained that, as a valid objection had been received, the application must be considered by the Committee, pursuant to the 2016 Act and legal advice.

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He advised that no noise complaints had been received in relation to the property.

The Committee agreed to grant the application, without any special conditions, contingent upon the ratification of the proposed process for dealing with new licence applications for premises which previously operated as a HMO by Council, at its meeting on 1st February, 2021.

Chairperson

## Planning Committee

Tuesday, 19th January, 2021

### MEETING OF PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

- Members present: Councillor Hussey (Chairperson);  
Councillors Brooks, Carson, Matt Collins,  
Garrett, Groogan, Hutchinson,  
Maskey, McCullough, McKeown,  
Murphy, Nicholl and O'Hara.
- In attendance: Mr. A. Thatcher, Director of Planning and  
Building Control;  
Mr. E. Baker, Planning Manager  
(Development Management);  
Ms. N. Largey, Divisional Solicitor;  
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer;  
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer; and  
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

#### **Apologies**

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

#### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings of 15th December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 7th January, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

#### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Groogan declared an interest in item 7c – the Centralised Anaerobic Digestion (CAD) plant at lands to the northwest of existing Belfast City Council Waste Transfer Station, 2a Dargan Road, in that she had asked questions in relation to the application but that, as she had not expressed a view in respect of it, she was content that she could participate in any discussion on the matter.

Councillor O'Hara also declared an interest in Item 7c – the CAD plant, in that he was on the Board of Belfast Harbour Commissioners as a political appointment, and that it had objected to the application. He advised that, as it was a Council appointment and as he did not have a pecuniary interest, he could fully participate in the discussion on the item.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,  
Tuesday, 19th January, 2021**

Councillor Nicholl declared an interest in Item 8a, the Proposed listing of nine Street Signs, in that a party colleague lived in one of the streets and she did not participate in the vote on the item.

**Restricted Item**

**The information contained in the report associated with the following item 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 Committee meeting during discussion of these 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 (NI) 2014.

**Finance Update**

The Committee was provided with an update on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council's financial position, and a strategy to address the forecast deficit and the mitigation measures which had and would be taken as the situation evolved.

Noted.

**Abandonments**

The Committee noted that the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) proposed to abandon an area of footway at Albert Street/rear of Quadrant Place under Article 68(1) of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993.

**Committee Site Visit**

The Committee noted that a site visit had been undertaken, on 13th January, to LA04/2019/2653/F - Demolition of existing property and erection of a 9 storey building (overall height 37m) comprising a ground floor retail unit together with cycle parking and plant areas and 8 floors of Grade A office accommodation at Chancery House, 88 Victoria Street.

**Planning Decisions Issued**

The Committee noted a list of decisions which had been taken under the delegated authority of the Director of Planning and Building Control, together with all other planning decisions which had been issued by the Planning Department between 14th December, 2020 and 11th January, 2021.

**Planning Appeals Notified**

The Committee noted the receipt of correspondence in respect of a number of planning appeals which had been submitted to the Planning Appeals Commission,

**Meeting of Planning Committee,  
Tuesday, 19th January, 2021**

together with the outcomes of a range of hearings which had been considered by the Commission.

**Planning Applications**

**THE COMMITTEE DEALT WITH THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN PURSUANCE OF THE  
POWERS DELEGATED TO IT BY THE COUNCIL UNDER STANDING ORDER 37(e)**

**Withdrawn Item**

The Committee noted that the following item had been withdrawn from the agenda:

- LA04/2020/0426/F - Reconstruction of petrol station and ancillary retail unit including the replacement of fuel tanks, pumps and canopy alterations. Hot food takeaway unit, ATM, compactor and provision of an EV charging facility at 228 -232 Stewartstown Road.

**LA04/2019/1540/F - Centralised Anaerobic Digestion (CAD) plant to include a bunded tank farm, (6no. digester tanks, 2no. buffer tanks, 1no. storage tank and associated pump rooms), biogas holder, biogas conditioning system, temperature control system, waste-water treatment plant (WWTP), motor circuit control room building, hot/cold water recovery system, feedstock reception and digestate treatment building, product storage building, odour control system and associated tanks, emergency gas flare, back-up boiler, administration/office building, car parking, 3no. Weighbridges, fire water tank and pump house, pipelines to existing combined heat and power (CHP) plant engines, switchgear, earth bunding, 3no. Accesses to existing Giant's Park Service road infrastructure and ancillary plant/site works on lands to the northwest of existing Belfast City Council Waste Transfer Station (2a Dargan Road)**

Moved by Councillor Groogan  
Seconded by Councillor Garrett and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to:

1. defer consideration of the item to request further information on the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) which had been carried out by Shared Environmental Services (SES), and;
2. to hold a non-mandatory Pre-Determination Hearing in respect of the application in due course.

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**(Reconsidered item) LA04/2019/1833/F –  
New dwelling to replace previous dwelling on  
site at 11 Ashley Park, Dunmurry**

The Principal Planning officer reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 15th December, it had agreed to defer consideration of the application to enable a site visit to be undertaken to allow the Committee to acquaint itself with the location and the proposals at first hand. The site visit had been scheduled to take place on 13th January, 2021, but no Members attended.

She provided the Committee with the details of the proposal for a new dwelling to replace the previous dwelling on site, with connection to all existing services to the site and the use of the existing vehicular access into the site. The site had previously contained a dwelling which was demolished between 2012 and 2015. She explained that the site was white land within the BUAP and was in the Dunmurry draft Area of Townscape Character as designated within dBMAP.

She explained the key issues which had been considered in the assessment of the application, including the principle of a dwelling in that location, the character, layout, design, private amenity, access/parking and the impact on neighbouring amenity.

She explained that the surrounding area comprised of dwellings which were set back from the road and contained driveways to the side. The proposed dwelling in the application was, in that regard, out of character. However, it was considered that the proposed dwelling was in a similar location to the previously demolished dwelling and it was therefore considered that, while the previous dwelling was demolished a number of years ago, it would attribute to the character of the area. She outlined that, in considering the previous dwelling, it was deemed that the proposal respected the surrounding context and was appropriate.

She added that, when the designation of draft ATC was applied, the previous dwelling would have been in situ and, therefore, the proposal would not impact the character of the draft ATC given its similarities in location and massing to the previous dwelling. The proposal therefore complied with policy ATC 1 of the addendum to PPS 6.

The Members were advised that the principle of a dwelling in the location was acceptable. The Principal Planning officer advised that the design and layout was compatible with PPS7 and would not impact on the character of the area or result in an unacceptable impact to neighbouring amenity.

However, she pointed out that an application could only be considered a replacement dwelling when there was a physical structure on the site to be replaced. PPS21 stated that the dwelling to be replaced must, as a minimum, have all external walls intact and that the access was also linked to the dwelling. She explained that, as the previous dwelling had been demolished, the development as a whole must be assessed as a new dwelling and considered under its own merits. The demolition of the previous dwelling meant that any new development and associated access had to adhere to current policy and guidance.

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She advised that DfI Roads had objected to the proposal, as it was contrary to policy Access, Movement and Parking (AMP) 2 of PPS 3, whereby the proposed access would prejudice road safety as the visibility splay to the west fell considerably short of the requirement and was deemed to be inadequate.

The Principal Planning officer explained that the previous dwelling contained a vehicular access bounded with a boundary wall and which contained a large gate. She explained that the previous dwelling and access had since been demolished. As the previous dwelling and access had been demolished, the Committee was advised that the proposal was treated as a new development and therefore paragraph 5.15 of AMP 2 of PPS3 applied.

She explained that Paragraph 5.15 required that applicants must have control over the land required to provide the requisite visibility splays and to ensure that they were retained free from any obstruction. The Members were advised that the proposal contained direct access from the driveway to Ashley Park. DfI Roads had advised that the visibility splays were inadequate. It stated that the neighbouring land contained a brick wall which would obstruct visibility and a representation received from the occupants at no. 10a confirmed that it was within their ownership.

Given that the applicant had not amended the red line to include the neighbouring brick wall, and subsequently not served notice on the landowner, it could not be considered that the applicant had any prospect of gaining control of the third party lands in order to carry out the works necessary to comply with the required sightlines, as the area required did not form part of the application.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the Late Items pack, whereby correspondence had been received from the agent and the Members were provided with the Planning officer's response to the points raised.

The Chairperson then welcomed Mr. T. Gourley, agent, to the meeting. He advised the Committee that:

- PPS 21 was not relevant to the application as it only applied to rural settings and the site was in an urban area;
- the existing site was derelict and vacant;
- the existing access was a key consideration – the previous dwelling had vehicular access, illustrated by a dropped kerb, and the site had been fenced off with an openable gate;
- there was no intensification on the site, in that it was a like-for-like replacement of a single dwelling;
- the previous vacant dwelling had been demolished at the request of the Council, as it had been subject to a fire a few years previously;
- it was a sustainable development as services were already on the site, and access already existed to the site;
- it was within a residential area;
- visibility splays were only required for new developments or intensification of developments, and this was neither;

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- a number of the residents in the immediate area were keen that the development would proceed in order to bring the site back into use, given the unsightly nature of the derelict site;
- it complied with land use zoning and a number of planning policies, including reducing dereliction; and
- there had been no history of vehicular accidents on the site and no access issues had arisen previously.

In response to a Member's query as to whether the applicant was seeking to gain access or control of the brick wall in question, Mr Gourley advised that there was a limited frontage to the site and no opportunity to undertake the works required. He reiterated that there had been no issue in terms of traffic safety previously.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that Mr. G. Lawther, DfI Roads, was in attendance and he was welcomed to the meeting. He explained that the application was considered a new dwelling and, as such, Development Control advice note 15 applied, which required a wide distance of 45metres and the applicant was unable to achieve that. The other issue was the width of the footway, which was required to be 2metres, and that this had also not been met.

A Member queried whether an existing access to a site was extinguished even if a site had not wilfully been abandoned.

Mr. Gourley advised that he believed the case law was clear, and, as there had been no wilful abandonment and there was an extensive planning history on the site, therefore the access still existed. He stated that the applicant and the previous owner always had the intent of retaining the use of the site as a dwelling with access to the road.

The Planning Manager advised the Committee that the case law provided that, as soon as a building had been demolished, the use of the land had a nil use, as opposed to the issue of abandonment, where the use was given up. He added that the applicant was proposing to introduce a new use, a dwelling, with the use of an access which was quite severely substandard in one direction and which would create a road safety issue.

Mr. Gourley stated that he disagreed with the Planning Manager and that the key to this application was that it was an established use on the site, in a residential area, and that the use endured until someone wilfully abandoned it or changed its use. He also reiterated that there had been no history of traffic accidents at the site.

The Divisional Solicitor urged the Committee to be mindful of the fact that the statutory agency had highlighted that there was a road safety issue with the application and also that the intentions of any previous owner of the site were not wholly relevant to the application. She explained that she could not advise the Committee in relation to the legal position in respect of the current status of the site, regarding wilful abandonment and demolition, and would need some time to consider it.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the application in order that clarification on the legal status of the site would be provided to the Committee.



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**LA04/2018/2659/F - 22 residential units in a mix of 20 detached dwellings and 2 apartments with associated site works, parking and landscaping on lands on McClure Street to include land south of Railway and north of Powerscourt Place; between 10 Cameron Street and 85 Ormeau Road**

The Principal Planning officer provided the Committee with the key aspects of the scheme.

She outlined the issues which had been considered in the assessment of the development, including the principle of development, the design, layout, impact on character and appearance of the area, parking and access, amenity space provision, drainage and flooding, infrastructure, contamination and ecology.

The Committee was advised that the Council was the landowner and that the site was located adjacent to a railway line and comprised two landscaped areas separated by McClure Street. The Principal Planning officer advised that the site was located on the boundary of the city centre and was identified as open space in both versions of dBMAP.

She provided the Members with the planning history of the site, which she advised was an important consideration of the current proposal. She explained that application Z/2014/0586/F had been refused permission for 27 dwellings with no in curtilage car parking on the site. The Committee was advised that the proposal was dismissed at appeal, however, the Commission had determined that the principle of the use of the site for social housing represented substantial community benefit to outweigh the loss of the open space to meet an exception to Policy OS1 of PPS8.

The Committee was advised that the current application had a reduced number of units, from 27 down to 22, and that it incorporated in curtilage parking. The Principal Planning officer explained that the application was also accompanied by Flood Risk and Drainage Assessments.

She highlighted to the Committee that 6 letters of support, 49 objections and 2 petitions of objection with 36 signatories had been received in respect of the proposed development. The objections were received from 32 different persons/addresses and raised issues primarily with respect to parking, traffic, noise, loss of open space, amenity and the character of the area. She explained that the issues had been addressed in the case officer's report. The Members were advised that the most recent amended layout had been re-advertised and neighbour notified, with two representations having been received from one objector and one letter of support.

The Committee noted that Environmental Health, DFI Roads, NI Water, Rivers Agency, NITHC, NIHE and NIEA had all been consulted and had offered no objection to the proposal.

The Principal Planning officer drew the Committee's attention to the Late Items pack, whereby correspondence had been received from an objector. She outlined the

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Case officer's response to the issues raised, including that DfI Roads had required a number of amendments to the application and that, during the processing of the application, an adjacent development on the lands had been approved by the Planning Appeals Commission, which required the application to be amended to take account of that committed development.

In relation to the social housing element, the Principal Planning officer explained that officers had since considered that a legal agreement might be more appropriate to secure the social housing use on the site. She explained that the Council's Physical Programmes Department had confirmed that it was content that the sales contract for McClure Street could specifically state that the site could only be developed for social housing purposes.

She outlined that each dwelling benefitted from private garden amenity provision to the side and garden space to the front. Overall, the officers felt that the proposal respected its surrounding context and would not cause significant harm to the amenity of neighbouring properties and would provide sufficient amenity space for future occupants in accordance with the SPPS, PPS7 and its addendum and Creating Places.

In relation to parking, she pointed out that 20 in curtilage spaces were provided for the 20 separate dwelling units and an in curtilage space was provided for each of the 2 apartments, with 3 visitor spaces also provided within the apartment unit curtilage. She explained that, given that the site was on the boundary of the City Centre, adjacent to an arterial route and within an Area of Parking Restraint, where the requirement ratio of 1:1 parking was fulfilled, it was considered that adequate parking was provided.

A Member queried whether the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic had perhaps hindered the objectors making representation at the meeting. The Principal Planning officer reiterated that the scheme had been re-advertised and that neighbours had been re-notified in respect of the amendments and advised the Committee that the post and email systems were still being monitored by staff. No requests to speak in objection to the application had been received.

Further Members noted that the majority of the objections were from nearby office buildings and welcomed the scheme for much-needed social housing in the area, which met the required space standards and separation distances.

The Committee granted approval to the application, subject to the imposing of the conditions set out within the case officer's report, and delegated power to the Director of Planning and Building Control for the final wording of the conditions and to secure an appropriate agreement, if required, with respect to securing the social housing use of the site.

**LA04/2019/2229/F - 17.5m telecommunications column, with  
6 antennae (3 enclosed within a shroud. 3 not enclosed)  
3 radio units and 4 new equipment cabinets and associated  
ground works on footpath adjacent to no 318 Ravenhill Road**

The Planning Manager provided the principal aspects of the application for a 4G mast, with associated cabinets, to the Committee.

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The main issues which had been considered in the assessment of the case were the principle of development, the impact on the character and appearance of the area, mast sharing and the potential to share existing structures, health considerations and road safety.

He explained that no third party objections had been received.

The Committee was advised that DfI Roads objected to the proposal. He drew the Committee's attention to the Late Items pack, whereby DfI Roads had clarified their objection to the proposal, in that they felt that the column and cabinets would partially obscure the view of the existing advertising signage on the side of the shop. DfI Roads advised that it felt that drivers might avert their attention from the road ahead for a greater period than would be required if the signage were unobstructed, as they tried to interpret what the signs were advertising. Driver distraction was one of the main causes of road traffic collisions.

The Planning Manager outlined that the signage referred to by DfI Roads was, in fact, unauthorised, and that an enforcement case had been opened in respect of it. He explained that it was considered that the applicant should not be prejudiced because of unauthorised works by another party.

He explained that DfI Roads had raised no other issues and that the mast was considered acceptable in other respects. The Committee was advised that the applicant had amended the proposal in an effort to reduce the extent to which the signs were obscured, with the proposed equipment only marginally obscuring part of one of the two signs.

A Member queried what the outcome would be if the Committee was to approve the application for the mast while the unauthorised signage remained in place.

The Planning Manager advised the Members that the agent for the application was in attendance and might be better placed to advise the Committee of their timeline between the approval of a planning application and the construction work on the mast. He added that, if approval was granted to the mast, his expectation would be that Planning would promptly undertake enforcement action to remove the signs due to the potential for conflict.

A further Member queried how long the signage had been there and whether the situation could arise whereby the Committee approved the mast and associated cabinets, and that the signage were also to remain as a result of having exceeded the timeline for enforcement action to be taken. The Planning Manager confirmed to the Committee that officers had already considered that eventuality and he confirmed that the signage had not been in existence beyond the 10 year limit.

In response to a request from a Member regarding the uncertainty around the permissions required for advertisement signage, the Director of Planning confirmed that the Committee was scheduled to receive training on enforcement in March 2020 and that the issue could be covered as part of that.

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The Chairperson advised the Committee that Mr. G. Lawther, DfI Roads, was in attendance. He advised the Committee that, while it was quite an unusual circumstance, the Department was attempting to provide a consistent approach in respect of advertisements. He outlined that, at present, the signs, regardless of their legal status, could be easily seen by road users, and that any obstruction to them could cause a distraction to drivers, causing them to avert their attention from the road ahead for a greater period.

The Chairperson advised the Members that Ms. H. Dallas, agent, was in attendance and she was welcomed to the meeting. She explained that the applicant was effectively being punished for somebody else's wrongdoing. She also pointed out that only one of the signs would be obscured with the equipment. In regards to timescales, she advised the Members that the client was keen to install the equipment as quickly as possible to ensure better 4G coverage in the surrounding area but that it would likely take a few weeks for works to commence on site.

The Committee granted approval to the application and delegated power to the Director of Planning and Building Control for the final wording of the conditions.

**Miscellaneous Items**

**Proposed Listing of Nine Street Signs**

The Director of Planning and Building Control advised the Committee that correspondence had been received from the Historic Environment Division (HED) regarding the proposed listing of nine street signs in Belfast. He explained that Article 80 (3) of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 required that HED consulted with the Council before placing any such sign on the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest.

The Committee agreed to recommend to the Historic Environment Division that it should proceed with the proposed listing of the following nine street signs, situated at the junctions of:

- Beersbridge Road and Upper Newtownards Road;
- Summerhill Parade and Barnett's Road;
- Knockland Park and Barnett's Road;
- Cherryvalley Park and Kensington Road;
- Kensington Road and Knock Road;
- Eastleigh Drive and Kincora Avenue;
- Clonlee Drive and Upper Newtownards Road;
- Belmont Church Road and Sydenham Avenue; and
- Carolhill Gardens and Holywood Road.

Chairperson

## **Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee**

Monday, 18th January, 2021

MEETING OF BELFAST WATERFRONT AND ULSTER HALL LTD.  
SHAREHOLDERS' COMMITTEE  
HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Alderman Haire (Chairperson);  
Alderman Copeland;  
Councillors Matt Collins, Flynn,  
M. Kelly, Kyle, Magee, McAteer,  
McCabe, Mulholland and Newton.

In attendance: Ms. J. Corkey, Chief Executive, ICC Belfast (Belfast  
Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.);  
Mr. I. Bell, Director of Finance and Systems, ICC Belfast  
(Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.);  
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;  
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer; and  
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

No apologies were reported.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 19th October were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd November.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were recorded.

### **Restricted Items**

**The information contained in the report associated with the following 4 items is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.**

#### **Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2020**

The Chief Executive of ICC Belfast (Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.) reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 15th June, 2020, it had been presented with the draft year-end position and overview. She explained that the full audited accounts

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were available and had been included for notation by the Shareholders' Committee, in addition to the Independent Auditors Report, which she advised was unqualified.

The Committee was advised that the Annual Report and Financial Statements had been agreed as final by the Board at its meeting on 19th November, 2020.

The Committee noted the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March, 2020.

**Extending Directors' Contracts to 30th April, 2021**

The Director of Economic Development advised that part of the Shareholders Committee's role included recommending the appointment of the Chairperson and non-executive Directors to the Board of the BWUH Ltd, and to agree remuneration.

He reminded the Committee that the Directors had reached the end of their initial appointment period on the 31st March, 2019. The Members were advised that, as outlined in the Service Level Agreement, a board evaluation process had been completed and the directors' contracts were subsequently extended to allow for the recruitment of new directors. In order to facilitate the recruitment of new directors, which had been paused due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Committee had been asked to extend the directors' contracts to the 31st December, 2020.

He explained that, given the ongoing impact of COVID-19, a recruitment exercise for Directors was still not possible at that time. As a result, a further extension of three directors' contracts had been required, until 30th April, 2021. The extension applied to the following three directors: Mr. A. Dixon, Mr. R. Holt and Mr. P. McClughan.

The Committee was advised that the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Shareholders' Committee, in the absence of a Committee meeting, had approved that decision.

The Committee noted the extension to 30th April, 2021.

**Draft Business Plan 2021 – 2022**

The Chief Executive of ICC Belfast reported that, in January 2020, the BWUH Ltd Board and Senior Management team, Belfast City Council and the Shareholders' Committee had agreed a five year business plan, including a strategy execution map and tactical direction of the company.

However, given the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, which had caused the ICC Belfast, the Waterfront Hall and the Ulster Hall to close, in April 2020, the agreed mission and aim was set aside for an interim mission.

She explained that the BWUH Ltd Board had held a virtual strategy day in October 2020, to discuss short and medium plans to take the business forward. The Members were advised that outputs from the session had included both strategic and corporate

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projects to ensure the long term sustainability of BWUH Ltd and eventual business preparedness for when it was safe to open again.

The Committee was advised that it was usual at that time of year to agree amendments and extensions to the five year plan but, due to the uncertainty that Covid-19 had brought to the industry, the report sought to provide the Shareholders' Committee an overview of the direction of travel for 2021/2022.

She explained that a draft business plan would be submitted to the BWUH Ltd Board on 11th February, 2021, for its consideration, and would subsequently be presented to the next BWUH Shareholders' Committee.

The Members were advised that the anticipated re-opening date for the venues was 1st April, 2021, however, given the recent announcement from the NI Executive in January 2021, that was subject to change.

The Committee was provided with an overview of the Business's key achievements in 2019/2020, including that it had exceeded the £100M economic impact target one year ahead of schedule.

She provided the Members with the Interim Strategic and Corporate Projects 2021/2022 as well as an analysis of the company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

The Director of Finance and Systems provided a financial update in regard to income, room hire targets and overheads. He emphasised that there remained a great deal of uncertainty for events which were currently scheduled to take place between April and June 2021.

A Member cited the recent Supreme Court ruling which would mean that tens of thousands of businesses would receive an insurance pay out to cover financial losses occurring during the UK's first lockdown under Covid-19. The Director of Finance confirmed that he had been in touch with the Council's Insurance and Risk manager in relation to that issue.

A number of Members raised questions in relation to future proofing the venues, including hybrid-offerings and live streaming artists to a virtual audience. The Chief Executive confirmed that they had successfully held a "Live from the Ulster Hall" event over the festive period and had received a small grant from the Arts Council NI to do so.

A further Member asked for an update on the building maintenance programme. The Chief Executive advised that an update on the works could be submitted to a future meeting in conjunction with the Physical Programmes Department.

The Committee noted the contents of the draft Business Plan 2021/2022.

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**Approach to Casual Workers**

The Chief Executive of ICC Belfast provided the Committee with a detailed overview of the financial support which had been given to casual workers throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, since March 2020.

She explained that, following the UK Government's announcement on 31st October, 2020, to extend the financial support offered by the Corona Virus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), BWUH Ltd would continue to pay casual workers until the end of the scheme, which was currently due to end on 30th April, 2021.

She outlined that casual workers at BWUH had been paid from the beginning of March 2020 in line with the CJRS. The Committee was advised that, following on from a review by the Board at its strategy day on 21st October, 2020, A&L Goodbody had been engaged to advise on the legal status of casual workers and the employment options which might be available to the company for further consideration.

The Committee was presented the details of the first review by A&L Goodbody.

A Member stated that he would like to see early engagement with the Trade Unions. The Chief Executive of ICC Belfast advised that extensive conversations had already taken place with the Trade Unions and would continue as part of the process.

Moved by Councillor Matt Collins  
Seconded by Councillor McAteer and

Resolved – that the Committee noted the contents of the report and agrees to invite representatives from the Trade Unions in to a future meeting in respect of the issue.

**Issued Raised in Advance by a Member**

**Belfast Multi Cultural Association - Cllr Flynn to raise**

A number of Members expressed solidarity with the Belfast Multi Cultural Association, in light of the recent arson attack of their premises in Donegall Pass, and that they wanted to see the Council and all statutory agencies assist BMCA in any way it could.

The Director of Economic Development suggested that the ICC Waterfront might be a more suitable location than the Ulster Hall, which was currently closed, but that he and the Chief Executive of ICC would discuss the most viable option.

Moved by Councillor Flynn  
Seconded by Councillor Mulholland and

Resolved – This Council recognises the important work of the Belfast Multi Cultural Association (BMCA) in delivering vital services to



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communities across Belfast, and expresses its solidarity after the racist attack on their premises.

The Council requests that officers engage with its partners in the Belfast Waterfront & Ulster Hall Ltd to determine if the ICC Belfast could be used temporarily by the BMCA, so that the organisation may continue providing these key services to communities in Belfast.

Chairperson

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## Brexit Committee

Thursday, 14th January, 2021

### MEETING OF BREXIT COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Flynn (Chairperson); and Aldermen Rodgers and Sandford; and Councillors Baker, Brooks, Canavan, de Faoite, Ferguson, Gormley, Kyle, Long, Magennis, McLaughlin, Newton, Spratt, Whyte and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, City Solicitor;  
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;  
Ms. K. Walsh, Business Research and Development Manager;  
Mrs. C. Sullivan, Policy and Business Development Officer;  
Mr. S. Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager;  
Mr. R. Connelly, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer;  
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer; and  
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were reported from Alderman Haire and Councillors Hanvey and McMullan.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 3rd December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 7th January.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were recorded.

### **Correspondence Received - European Commission**

The Committee was reminded that, at the meeting of Council of 1st July, 2020, it had agreed that the decision of the Brexit Committee, of 11th June, be amended to the following:

“The Council notes with dismay the failure of the UK Government to request for an extension to the Brexit transition period before the end of June deadline and agrees to write to the Prime Minister, Taoiseach, President of the European

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Commission and the EU Commission's Chief Negotiator outlining our concerns; noting the ongoing COVID-19 crisis and the extreme challenges facing businesses and workers in the city; and requesting that the UK Government and the European Union work together to enable the extension of the Brexit transition period."

Democratic Services had wrote to the aforementioned persons on 28th July, 2020 to respond with any comments which they might wish to make in relation to the Council's position.

The Members were informed that a response had been received on behalf of the President of the European Commission, Ms. Ursula von der Leyen, in response to the Council's letter in relation to the Brexit transition period.

The Committee noted the correspondence.

**Presentations**

**Department of Finance: Ms. L. McDonald and  
Mr. B. Pauley (Shared Prosperity Fund)**

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. L. McDonald and Mr. B. Pauley from the Department of Finance to the meeting.

Mr. Pauley introduced himself as the Strategic Policy Director for the Department of Finance (DoF) and informed the Committee that he was leading the future policy and finance workstream which linked into The Executive's overall EU future relations work. He directed the Members to the executive summary of the Northern Ireland Executive Future Funding Priorities – Shared Prosperity Fund paper, and highlighted the following points:

- The Executive had indicated to Whitehall, the Treasury, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, that it was seeking full EU replacement funding, delivered in a way that was consistent with the devolution settlement;
- That the priorities were aligned with those that were in the existing European funding programmes, so as to maintain the expenditure and deliver the same services, in the same way; and
- That the DoF had pointed out to Whitehall that Northern Ireland was different to other devolved regions of the United Kingdom, in terms of the roles and responsibility of local government.

He reported that the Department of Finance had been frustrated with engagement with Whitehall and had not been informed of plans with regard to the Shared Prosperity Fund and that there was a lack of clarity surrounding the reporting structure.

In response to a number of questions from Members regarding the Department of Finance's position on local government delivery and co-design of the Shared Prosperity

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Fund, Mr. Pauley reported that its priorities were aligned with the European funding it had been receiving from the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Rural Development Fund, and that local government had not been involved in delivering the funding from those programmes but that it was anticipated that a partnership approach between the Executive and local governments would be incorporated into future delivery structures. He added that local government participation in European funding had been through the Interreg programmes and that there would be opportunities to invest at a community level through the PEACE PLUS programme which will build upon the previous PEACE programmes.

Ms. McDonald advised the Committee that the position paper was reflective of all Northern Ireland government departments, agreed by the Executive, and not just a Department of Finance position.

Mr. Pauley, in response to a further question from a Member, stated that the Executive was compiling a budget using its own resources, in order to account for the funding gap between the discontinuance of European funding and the commencement of the Shared Prosperity Fund, and was looking at ways to continue to finance productivity and skills.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. McDonald and Mr. Pauley for their presentation and they retired from the meeting.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed to request, that the Chief Executive raise the Shared Prosperity Fund at the next meeting of Solace, in that the Council was calling for inclusion in its co-design and delivery.

**NI Retail Consortium: Mr. A. Connolly**

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. A. Connolly Director of the Northern Ireland Retail Consortium (NIRC) to the meeting.

Mr. Connolly reported that he had consulted with various different sectors to obtain their perspectives on the impact on business, following the end of the transition period.

He reported that the retail sector's main concern was with pre-notifications and the tracing system, and that late information had led to businesses training employees on the new procedures less than 24 hours before implementation. He added that there were some choice issues, but stressed that there were no food shortages and that any items which were missing from shelves was due to various different issues such as suppliers not being prepared to send goods to Northern Ireland and overbuying due to the pandemic. He further reported that although there had been issues, the sector was in a better position than it had been at the beginning of the month.

He pointed out to Members that there had been concern regarding the introduction of export health certificates, and stated that the Northern Ireland Retail Consortium had asked the EU and UK authorities to work with them to provide solutions and simplify processes.

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He stated that there was a lot more work to do to ensure Northern Ireland business was competitive and to continue to give choice and affordability to Northern Irish consumers.

A Member asked Mr. Connolly if the issues were a result of the implementation of the grace period not being at an acceptable level or if they were due to businesses not being informed of the measures needed to be undertaken to deliver goods to Northern Ireland. Mr. Connolly reported that there were several factors contributing to the availability and choice issues, including the cost of export health certificates, implementation of new information systems, and lack of accessible information. He further reported that he had consulted with the large supermarket chains who had stated that, without simplifications, it could become unworkable.

In response to further questions from Members with regard to logistics and the supplies for the construction and medical sectors, Mr. Connolly advised that he would be working with the Consumer Council to ensure Northern Irish consumers and businesses were not being adversely affected. He stated that he did not anticipate any changes or issues with the supplies of medicines to hospitals and added that there had been various issues within the construction sector, with suppliers to Northern Ireland not being aware of the protocols that had been put in place, but that he expected it to resolve quickly.

Following further discussion, the Committee thanked Mr. Connolly for his presentation and he retired from the meeting.

**Update on Relationship between UK and EU**

The City Solicitor presented the Committee with an update in respect of the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**The purpose of this report is to update Members on papers that are currently available summarising the key features of the new relationship between the UK and the EU. Members should note that this is an evolving situation and that it is to be expected that new and updated documents will become available over time.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**Members are asked to note this report.**

**3.0 Main report**

**Key Issues**

**As Members are aware at 11 pm on 31 December 2020, the transition period ended and the United Kingdom left the EU single market and customs union. On 24th December 2020 UK**

and EU negotiators agreed the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement. The agreement sets out preferential arrangements in areas such as trade in goods and in services, digital trade, intellectual property, public procurement, aviation and road transport, energy, fisheries, social security coordination, law enforcement and judicial cooperation in criminal matters, thematic cooperation and participation in European Union programmes. It is underpinned by provisions ensuring a level playing field and respect for fundamental rights. A copy of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement can be found at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/relations-united-kingdom/eu-uk-trade-and-cooperation-agreement\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/relations-united-kingdom/eu-uk-trade-and-cooperation-agreement_en)

It should be noted that Foreign policy, external security and defence cooperation is not covered by the Agreement. In addition, the Trade and Cooperation Agreement does not cover any decisions relating to equivalences for financial services, the adequacy of the UK data protection regime, or the assessment of the UK's sanitary and phytosanitary regime for the purpose of listing it as a third country allowed to export food products to the EU.

On the 29th December 2020, The Council of the EU adopted a decision on the signing of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement and its provisional application (pending a consent vote by the European Parliament in early 2021; it is envisaged that this vote will take place in February/March but at this point, there is uncertainty around the timings of this). On the 30th December 2020, The European Union (Future Relationship) Bill passed through the various stages of the UK parliament thus becoming an Act of Parliament: the European Union (Future Relationship) Act.

The UK Government have produced a summary of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, a copy of which can be found at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/948093/TCA\\_SUMMARY\\_PDF.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/948093/TCA_SUMMARY_PDF.pdf)

The Agreement is structured into 7 Parts:

- Part 1 covers the common and institutional provisions in the Agreement;
- Part 2 covers trade and other economic aspects of the relationship, such as aviation, energy, road transport, and social security;

- Part 3 covers cooperation on law enforcement and criminal justice;
- Part 4 covers so-called 'thematic' issues, notably health collaboration;
- Part 5 covers participation in EU Programmes, principally scientific collaboration through Horizon;
- Part 6 covers dispute settlement;
- Part 7 sets out final provisions.

**Key features of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement include the following:**

- **Trade:** There will be no tariffs or quotas on trade in goods provided rules of origin are met. There are increased non-tariff barriers, but measures on customs and trade facilitation to ease these.
- **Governance:** The Agreement is overseen by a UK-EU Partnership Council supported by other committees. There are binding enforcement and dispute settlement mechanisms covering most of the economic partnership, involving an independent arbitration tribunal. There is no role for the Court of Justice of the EU in the governance and dispute settlement provisions.
- **Both parties can engage in cross-sector retaliation in case of non-compliance with arbitration rulings (through suspension of obligations, including imposition of tariffs). This cross-sector retaliation applies across the economic partnership.**
- **Level playing field provisions:** Both parties have the right to take counter-measures including imposition of tariffs, subject to arbitration, where they believe divergences are distorting trade. There is also a review mechanism where this occurs frequently.
- **Subsidies/state aid:** Both parties are required to have an effective system of subsidy control with independent oversight. Either party can impose remedial measures if a dispute is not resolved by consultation.
- **Fisheries:** 25% of the EU's fisheries quota in UK waters will be transferred to the UK over a period of five years. After this, there will be annual discussions on fisheries opportunities. Either party will be able to impose tariffs on fisheries where one side reduces or withdraws access to its waters without agreement. A party can suspend access to waters or other trade provisions where the other party is in breach of the fisheries provisions.



- **Security:** A new security partnership provides for data sharing and policing and judicial co-operation, but with reduced access to EU databases. A new surrender agreement takes the place of the European Arrest Warrant. Cooperation can be suspended by either side swiftly in the case of the UK or a Member State no longer adhering to the European Convention of Human Rights
- **EU Programmes:** Continued UK participation in some EU programmes: Horizon Europe (Research), Euratom Research and Training, ITER fusion and Copernicus (satellite system).
- **Review and Termination:** The TCA will be reviewed every five years. It can be terminated by either side with 12 months' notice, and more swiftly on human rights and rule of law grounds.

There are only two references to Northern Ireland in the summary of the trade agreement.

- The first is in relationship to passenger transport providers – 'Services on the island of Ireland will also be able to pick up and set down passengers in both Ireland and Northern Ireland, enabling cross-border services to continue with no restrictions'
- The second is not a direct reference to NI but rather mention of conditions that seem to only apply to GB – The Agreement 'Ends the EU State Aid regime in Great Britain and allows us to introduce our own modern subsidy system'.

#### **The Northern Ireland Protocol**

Members are reminded that on 10 December 2020, the Co-Chairs of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee reached an agreement in principle to address the outstanding issues related to the implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement, in particular the Northern Ireland Protocol.

The Northern Ireland Protocol Command Paper outlines further details; as well as further information on the UK Government's work to implement the Protocol and support businesses as it comes into force. This paper was laid in Parliament on 10 December.

The decisions contained in the Co-Chairs agreement in principle were agreed to at the Joint Committee meeting on 17 December. These papers set out those Decisions of the Joint Committee, and unilateral declarations by the United

Kingdom and the EU in the Joint Committee. A copy of these papers and the Command Paper can be downloaded at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-northern-ireland-protocol>

### **2025 UK Border Strategy**

Members' attention is also drawn to the 2025 UK Border Strategy which was published on 17th December 2020, a copy of which can be downloaded at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2025-uk-border-strategy>

In summary, the 2025 UK Border Strategy sets out the UK Government's vision for the UK border to be the most effective in the world. The strategy states: 'A border which embraces innovation, simplifies processes for traders and travellers and improves the security and biosecurity of the UK.' The purpose of the strategy is to set out:

- The UK Government's approach to working in partnership with the border industry and users of the border to design, deliver and innovate around the border;
- a long-term Target Operating Model (TOM) for the border that describes the border the UK Government are intending to create; and
- the major transformations that government and industry will need to deliver by 2025 and beyond to implement the Target Operating Model.

For further research and briefing papers in relation to the UK relationship with the EU, Members' attention is drawn to the House of Commons Library webpage: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/tag/brexit/>

The Library has published a range of briefing papers including:

- The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement: summary and implementation
- The Northern Ireland Protocol & the Joint Committee
- Brexit: the financial settlement
- The UK's contribution to the EU budget
- End of Brexit transition: mobile roaming
- Brexit and state pensions

Members will be aware that there have been various initial analyses undertaken of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation

**Agreement and there are links on this webpage to various Think Tanks and opinion pieces:**

**<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9106-2/>**

**Financial and Resource Implications**

**There are no financial or resource implications relating to this report.**

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

**There are no implications relating to this report.”**

The Committee noted the report.

**Brexit Services Review**

The Policy and Business Development Officer informed the Committee that officers had been continuing to monitor the ongoing developments in relation to the implementation of the new Brexit readiness arrangements and advised the Members that an update from each critical services would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager provided the Committee with an update regarding Port Health, highlighting the following areas:

- Upgrade to Corry Place completed and discussions regarding new facility at Dargan Drive;
- New staff appointed and 24 hour operation;
- Volumes through the port;
- Compliance approach (DAERA LEAD);
- Retail checks (Trusted Trader Scheme);
- Support for trade (Fish Importer Webinar 14th January);
- EU Inspectors; and
- Financial impact and charging.

The Director of Economic Development provided the Committee with an overview on support for Belfast based business, and updated Members on the following areas:

- 11,000+ VAT registered businesses in Belfast, 80% employed less than 10 people;
- 1,800 of these businesses were exporters and around 1,200 were Invest NI client companies;
- 600 exporters who would not be accessing client-managed support through Invest NI;

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- Wide range of support services available to businesses to help them address impact of UK exit from EU;
- Council's business support function, through its Enterprise and Business Growth Team and the need to understand where the team can have the most impact in terms of businesses engaged;
- Many smaller businesses work in service sectors which traded externally and were likely to be impacted by Brexit; and
- Priority groups for council support included smaller exporters, trading services and traders that import or make purchases from outside of NI.

He reported that officers were engaging with Belfast based businesses and offering support to help understand the guidance as it was emerging. He advised the Members that a piece of work was underway which would look at the free trade agreement and its context within the Northern Ireland protocol, to gain an understanding of type of support that the Council may have to offer Belfast based businesses, and he pointed out that the current free trade agreement did not address the services sector, upon which the Belfast economy was heavily reliant.

The Committee noted the update and following a suggestion by a Member, agreed to invite representation from the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) to a future meeting of the Brexit Committee to discuss the proposed consultation process for the PEACE PLUS programme.

Chairperson

## **Proposed Future Development – Writer’s Square**

“This Council recognises the significance of Writer's Square to the city of Belfast as a public and civic space and its historical significance. This Council calls upon the Department for Communities to ensure that any development brief relating to Writers’ Square respects the civic use of the Square as a place facilitating lawful protest and celebration. Further, the Council calls upon the Department to ensure that the setting of St Anne’s Cathedral is protected.

The Council will write to the Minister for Communities to that effect.”

Proposer: Councillor Áine Groogan

Seconder: Councillor Gary McKeown

**(To be debated by the Council)**

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## **Child Poverty Task Force**

“This council notes with alarm the Department of Communities Family Resources Survey 2018/2019 which show that 122,000 children in Northern Ireland live in relative poverty (24% of children) with 109,000 of those living in absolute poverty and expresses deep concern that these figures have increased significantly since the previous year and have not improved at all in the last five years. The rise of the Universal Credit claimant count and expected end of the furlough scheme could see a further increase in these numbers, with the two-child tax credit rule and benefit cap only adding to the pressure on families with children.

This Council calls on the Minister for Communities to immediately convene a child poverty task force, to set out how her department will reduce child poverty by next year and over the next decade.”

Proposer: Councillor McCusker

Seconder: Councillor Whyte

**(To be debated by the Council)**

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## **Student Support**

“Belfast City Council recognises the COVID-19 pandemic has affected all citizens including having a profound impact on our young people;

Acknowledges the difficulties faced by those young people in full-time third level education, both at universities and further education colleges, who, because of restrictions, are unable to attend classes in person or live in student accommodation which they have paid for;

Believes that many university students have found themselves suffering financial hardship which has caused significant distress and led to poor mental health;

Calls on university accommodation providers and private landlords who have not provided rent waivers to do so immediately;

Further calls on the Department for the Economy and Department of Finance to address these new burdens of generational injustice by developing and funding a Student Support Grant for all full time third level students, many of whom cannot gain any employment at this time and are unable to claim benefits.”

Proposer: Councillor de Faoite

Seconder: Councillor Whyte

**(To be debated by the Council)**

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## **Takeover of private healthcare**

“Council calls on the Stormont Executive to immediately bring the personnel and resources of private health care facilities into public control and under the direction of the health service as an emergency response to ease the burden on our overwhelmed health service and health workers; to ensure the health service has the available beds, capacity and staff to care for all those sick with covid; and in order to carry out all Red Flag cancer surgeries, and all other vital operations and life-saving procedures.”

Proposer: Councillor Ferguson

Seconder: Councillor Matt Collins

**(To be debated by the Council)**

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## **Urgent action to address invasive odour in Collin**

“Council notes with alarm the invasive odour which has pervaded in the Collin area of West Belfast for several years.

This has caused extreme concern amongst residents, who have been expected to simply put up with this odour, with little or no action from the DAERA minister to address the issue.

The odour has been traced to the Mullaghglass landfill site in Collin. Immediate action must be taken to ensure this odour does not persist, and a comprehensive study should be carried out by DAERA to ensure the air quality in Collin is of a safe standard.

Council resolves to write to DAERA minister Edwin Poots to this end, urging him to assess and allay any concerns about air quality residents have because of this odour, and to take immediate action to eradicate this invasive smell coming from the Mullaghglass site.

Proposer: Councillor Michael Collins

Seconder: Councillor Matt Collins

**(To be referred without discussion to the People and Communities Committee) )**

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