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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 Thursday, 1st April, 2021 at 6.00 p.m., for the transaction of the following business:

1. Summons
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes of the Council (Pages 1 - 10)
5. Official Announcements
6. Minutes
 - a) Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Pages 11 - 62)
 - b) People and Communities Committee (Pages 63 - 86)
 - c) City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Pages 87 - 114)
 - d) Licensing Committee (Pages 115 - 128)
 - e) Planning Committee (Pages 129 - 176)
 - f) Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Stakeholders' Committee (Pages 177 - 182)
 - g) Brexit Committee (Pages 183 - 186)
7. Motions
 - a) Presentation to Shared Island Unit/All-party Working Group (Pages 187 - 188)
 - b) Proposed Bank of Ireland Closures (Pages 189 - 190)
 - c) Violence against women and girls strategy - Raise Your Voice Training (Pages 191 - 192)
 - d) Legislation to tackle the third party sale of pups (Pages 193 - 194)
 - e) Mullaghglass Landfill Site (Pages 195 - 196)

- f) Support for Sign Languages Action and sign languages added to School Curricula (Pages 197 - 198)
- g) 10 percent pay increase for Council workers (Pages 199 - 200)
- h) Funding for the Citywide Tribunal Service (Pages 201 - 202)

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

Chief Executive

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held Remotely via Microsoft Teams on Monday, 1st March, 2021
at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor
(Alderman McCoubrey) (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCusker);
The High Sheriff (Councillor Long);
Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Haire, Kingston,
Rodgers and Sandford; and
Councillors Baker, Beattie, Black, Brooks, Bunting,
Carson, Canavan, Matt Collins, Michael Collins, Corr,
De Faoite, Donnelly, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley,
Groogan, Hanvey, Heading, Howard, Hutchinson,
Hussey, M. Kelly, T. Kelly, Kyle, 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

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

Declarations of Interest

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

- Alderman Kingston, in that he was an employee of Forward South Partnership;
- Councillor Verner, in that she was an employee of the Greater Shankill Partnership;
- Councillor McCabe, in that her husband worked for the Upper Andersonstown Community Forum and she was an employee of Feile an Phobail;
- Councillor Gormley, in that he was a Board member of Lower Ormeau Residents' Action Group;

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- Councillor Canavan, in that she was a Board member of the Greater Shankill Partnership;
- Councillor Hutchinson, in that he was a Board member of the Greater Shankill Partnership and he was an employee of Mount Vernon Community Development Forum; and
- Councillor Maskey, in that he was employed by Intercomm.

Alderman Haire declared an interest in respect of item 7.a Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, Requests for the Use of the City Hall and the Provision of Hospitality, insofar as it related to an application from the County Grand Orange Lodge of Belfast, and he was a Trustee of that organisation.

Councillor Long declared an interest in respect of item 7.a Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, in relation to the Motion “Black Lives Matter Demonstrations - Response from Police Service of Northern Ireland”, on the basis that his wife Naomi Long was the Justice Minister.

Councillors Brooks declared an interest in relation to Item 7b, People and Communities Committee, Update on the Motion “Urgent action to address invasive odour in Collin” and 7f, Brexit Committee, Port Health Unit Update, in that he was employed by Gordon Lyons MLA, Minister of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

Official Announcements

Expressions of Sympathy

The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Council, extended his condolences to the family and friends of Captain Sir Tom Moore following his recent death and paid tribute to his huge fundraising effort during the pandemic, which had raised millions of pounds for the for the National Health Service. He advised that an online book of condolence had been opened in his memory and a letter of condolence had been sent on behalf of the Council to his family.

The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Council, extended his condolences to Councillor Walsh on the recent death of his mother, Katie.

New Bridge linking Annadale and Stranmillis

Councillor McAteer welcomed the erection of the new bridge connecting the Annadale Embankment and Stranmillis and commended the Council staff for the delivery of this project during the pandemic.

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Request to Address the Council

Motion - Belfast Hills “Call to Action” Document

The Chief Executive advised that a request to address the Council had been received in relation to the motion on the Belfast Hills “Call to Action” Document.

The Council acceded to the request and Mr. Gray, representing the Belfast Hills Access Campaign, was welcomed to the meeting.

Mr. Gray referred to the report ‘Access to the Belfast Hills – Promises, Betrayals and a Call to Action’ which contained proposals to try and address the long running access to the hills problem. He provided a historic overview in regard to the Belfast Hills and the various measures that had been taken over the years to try to ‘open up’ the hills and the difficulties that had prevented progress being made.

The representative welcomed the fact that the aforementioned motion being brought for consideration by Councillor Matt Collins sought to endorse the publication of the report.

He asked the Council to work in partnership with all the stakeholders to try and resolve, through dialogue, the ongoing issues to enable the hills to be accessed through four proposed routes, as follows:

- Black Mountain and Divis from Glencairn/Ligoniel;
- Black Mountain and Divis from Whiterock;
- From the top of Collin Glen to Black Mountain and Divis; and
- Completion of the key spinal route (the Ulster Way) by securing access to its central section from Wolf Hill to Squires Hill.

The Lord Mayor thanked Mr. Gray for the presentation.

The Council noted the information which had been provided and that it would have an opportunity to discuss the issue later in the meeting.

Minutes of the Council

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

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

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Minutes

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Black,
Seconded by Councillor Bunting

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th February, 2021, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**Request for Matter to be Taken
Back for Further Consideration**

**Motion: Black Lives Matter Demonstrations
Response from Police Service of Northern Ireland**

The Council agreed that the minute of the meeting of 19th February, under the heading "Motion: Black Lives Matter Demonstrations – Response from Police Service of Northern Ireland", be taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

It also agreed that, the Council would write to the Minister of Health, Robin Swann MLA, and The Rt. Hon. Lord Chief Justice calling for all penalty notices and prosecutions against Black Lives Matter activists relating to 6th June protests to be rescinded.

It further agreed that an independent legal opinion be sought in relation to the PSNI's interpretation that the existing Regulations made no provision for Fixed Penalty Notices to be rescinded either by it or by the Public Prosecution Service and that the only mechanism by which an enforceable penalty registered under Regulation 12 could be set aside was by direction of the Magistrates' Court.

**Update on Decade of Centenaries Programme 2021
and 80th Anniversary of the Belfast Blitz**

The Council agreed that consideration would be given at the next meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to turning off the lights at the City Hall on 15th April to mark the 80th anniversary of the Belfast Blitz.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th February, 2021, were subsequently approved and adopted.

People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Baker,
Seconded by Councillor Magee and

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That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 9th February, 2021 and be approved and adopted.

**Request for Matter to be Taken
Back for Further Consideration**

Knockbreda Road entrance to Cherryfield Playing Fields

The Council agreed that the minute of the meeting of 19th February, under the heading "Knockbreda Road entrance to Cherryfield Playing Fields", be taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

Amendment

Motion - Urgent action to address invasive odour in Collin

(Councillor Brooks left the meeting whilst this matter was being considered.)

Moved by Councillor Pankhurst,
Seconded by Councillor McCullough,

To delete the second paragraph from the letter to be issued to the *DAERA Minister, as follows: "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."*

On a recorded vote, thirteen Members voted for the proposal and forty against, with two no votes and it was declared lost:

<u>For 13</u>	<u>Against 40</u>	<u>No Vote 2</u>
The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor (Alderman McCoubrey); Dorrian, Kingston, Haire, Sandford; and Councillors Bunting, Hussey, T. Kelly, McCullough, Newton, Pankhurst, Spratt and Verner.	The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCusker), The High Sheriff (Councillor Long); Aldermen Copeland and Rodgers; and Councillors Baker, Beattie, Black, Canavan, Carson, Matt Collins, Michael Collins, Corr, De Faoite, Donnelly, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Groogan, Hanvey, Heading, Howard, M. Kelly, Lyons, Magee, Magennis, Maskey, McAllister, McAteer, McCabe, McDonough-Brown, McLaughlin, McMullan, McReynolds, Mulholland, Murphy, Nicholl, O'Hara, Smyth, Walsh and Whyte.	Councillors Hutchinson and Kyle.

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Update on Responsible Dog Ownership

At the request of Councillor McMullan, the Council agreed to write the DAERA Minister to advise that the Council was supportive of the proposed approach in relation to the use of DNA testing to assist dog fouling detections but stating that a Northern Ireland wide approach should be adopted.

Affordable Warmth Scheme update

At the request of Councillor Heading, the Council agreed to write to the Minister for Communities to request that the underspend for the Affordable Warmth Scheme in 2020/21 be rolled over to the next financial year.

**Update on development of the Belfast City
Air Quality Action Plan 2021 – 2026**

At the request of Councillor McAteer, it was agreed that the Strategic Group overseeing the development of the Action Plan be asked to take submissions from Community Groups during the consultation in regard to the preparation of the five year plan.

DAERA - A Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland

At the request of Councillor Gormley, the Council agreed to write to DAERA to highlight the need for it to support the accelerated improvement of air quality within Belfast and specifically within the Council's four Air Quality Management Areas. It would also seek clarity from DAERA as to what actions it planned to take, through the strategy, to tackle the persistent hot-spots.

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 9th February, 2021, 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 10th February, 2021, be approved and adopted.

Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor Magee and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 17th February, 2021, omitting matters in respect of which

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the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Hussey,
Seconded by Councillor Hutchinson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Pre-Determination Hearing and Planning Committee of 16th February, 2021, 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 Walsh

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Brexit Committee of 11th February, 2021 be approved and adopted.

Motions

Application fees in the private rented sector

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

“This council notes that tenants in the private rented sector are still being charged illegal letting fees by letting agents despite the June 2018 legal case of Loughran v Piney Rentals Limited and F5 Property Limited having determined the illegality of these fees under The Commission on Disposals of Land Order 1986.

Council further notes that the “Joint Ministerial Communiqué on Letting Agency Fees” published by the Ministers for Communities and Finance in March 2020 has been helpful, but ineffective in stopping the illegal practice of letting agents charging tenants for professional services that would normally be carried out by them.

This council believes:

- The charging of illegal letting fees by letting agents restricts access to the private rented sector while placing a heavy financial burden on low income households, particularly in the context of a global pandemic and looming economic/housing crisis’.
- There is a need to strengthen regulation of the private rented sector, including legislation regarding the charging of illegal

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application fees where adequate penalties and enforcement arrangements are put in place to deter those who seek to continue to charge these fees.

- Enforcement of any new legislation regarding the charging of illegal application fees should be carried out by local councils across Northern Ireland with adequate resources provided for by government.
- Council agrees to write to the Minister for Communities and the Minister of Finance, outlining concerns above and pledging council's support for the regulation of the private rented sector."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Kyle.

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

Belfast Hills "Call to Action" Document

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

"Council welcomes and endorses the publication of the new report, Access to the Belfast Hills –Promises, Betrayals and a Call to Action, prepared by the Belfast Hills Access Campaign. Council also welcomes the recent decision by the People and Communities Committee to request a report on improving access to the Belfast Hills. Council requests that the aforementioned report is incorporated into this process in order to best compliment this effort. Council wishes to see a comprehensive resolution of the access problem which requires more specific measures and the opening of the following routes;

- 1 Black Mountain and Divis from Glencairn/Ligoniel.
2. Black Mountain and Divis from Whiterock.
3. From the top of Collin Glen to Black Mountain and Divis.
4. Completion of the key spinal route (the Ulster Way) by securing access to its central section from Wolf Hill to Squires Hill.

Council recognises the difficulties caused to officers by the pandemic but also wishes the question of access to the Belfast Hills to be given higher priority than has been the case in recent years. In doing so, Council recommends that officers take account of the, Access to the Belfast Hills – Promises, Betrayals and a Call to Action. Following this, Council requests that officers prepare an indicative plan and timescale for addressing these issues."

The motion was seconded by Councillor O'Hara.

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

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Real Living Wage Foundation Accreditation

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

“This council is proudly a Real Living Wage Foundation employer for its direct employees. However, Belfast City Council does not pay the Real Living Wage Foundation rate to casual workers, industrial placements and apprentices. As a result of this policy, Belfast City Council is not an accredited Living Wage Foundation Employer. This council believes this must change.

Belfast City Council wants to become a leader for Workers Rights in this City and encourage other organisations/business through our Social Value Procurement strategy to become Real Living Wage Foundation Employers. Many local authorities are Real Living Wage Employers in Scotland, Wales and England however no Council in the North has yet to become an accredited Real Living Wage employer. Therefore this Council commits to becoming an accredited Real Living Wage Foundation Employer by 1st April, 2022.

Furthermore, this council recognises its' continued use of outside employment agencies and notes the difficulties that this can present which were highlighted throughout the Covid 19 pandemic when we had limited control over the terms and conditions of those employees carrying out council functions employed through an agency. Therefore, this Council will establish plans to review workforce planning with a view to reducing the use of agencies and will bring a report before exploring options on how we can achieve this.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Murphy.

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

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

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Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 19th March, 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: Councillor Michael Collins and
Councillor McMullan.

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 19th February were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st March, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Bunting declared an interest in relation to item 2d – Bonfire Approach 2021, on the basis that she acted as the Secretary to the Belvoir Area Residents' Group, which had applied for the micro grant and cultural leadership programme funding mentioned in the report, and left the meeting whilst the matter was being discussed.

Councillor Groogan drew the City Solicitors attention to that part of the report under item 2h – Asset Management, referring to a potential planning application for Site D within the Gasworks Northern Fringe Site, and sought advice on whether those Members who were also on the Planning Committee should declare an interest. The City Solicitor

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confirmed that, should a discussion arise around the merits of that application, they should leave the meeting at that point.

Councillors Carson, Garrett, Heading, McReynolds and Pankhurst declared an interest in relation to item 3b – Motion: Health and Social Care Workers Thank You Payment – Response from Minister of Health and item 3c – Motion: Takeover of Private Healthcare – Response from Minister of Health, on the basis that family members were employed by the National Health Service, and left the meeting whilst those reports were being considered.

The High Sheriff (Councillor Long) also declared an interest in respect of items 3b and 3c, in that he was employed by the National Health Service and left the meeting for the duration of the discussion.

Alderman Sandford and Councillors Garrett and Groogan declared an interest in relation to item 4b – Revisions to the Scheme of Allowances, in that they represented the Council on the Northern Ireland Local Government Association. The City Solicitor informed the Members that, since those were Council appointments, there was no requirement for them to leave the meeting whilst that item was being considered.

Councillor Walsh declared an interest in respect of item 9d – James Connolly Heritage Trail Sign, in that he was involved in that initiative, and left the meeting whilst the matter was being considered.

Restricted Items

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

Finance Strategy

The Committee:

- i. agreed to extend the temporary expenditure controls outlined within the report into the 2021/22 financial year;
- ii. agreed that the five step financial strategy which had, in June, 2020, been approved to manage the impact of Covid-19 upon the Council's finances, be extended into the first quarter of 2021/22;
- iii. agreed that the weekday rate for bereavement fees would continue to apply to weekends for the first quarter of 2021/22;

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- iv. agreed that any increases resulting from rent reviews across the Council estate be deferred until April, 2022, rather than July, 2021, as had been recommended within the report;
- v. noted that the aforementioned decisions would be subject to regular review, in line with ongoing Covid-19 restrictions; and
- vi. noted that a report would be submitted to its meeting in April providing an update on the Medium Term Financial Plan.

**Update on Organisational Recovery
and Covid Management**

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided details of:

- i. the ongoing approach to organisational recovery and Covid-19 management;
- ii. the factors to be taken into consideration in response to the Northern Ireland Executive's Roadmap to Recovery; and
- iii. the roll-out of an asymptomatic testing programme for those working for key employers in the public and private sectors and local government.

Support for Street Traders

(Mr. A. Thatcher, Director of Planning and Building Control attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 19th February, it had considered a report providing details of the measures which had been put in place by the Council to support various licence-holders over the course of the current pandemic. The Committee had agreed that a report be submitted to its next meeting indicating whether there were any additional ways in which licensed street traders could be supported.

The Director of Planning and Building Control explained that Street Trading Licences were normally issued for three years, with traders being required to pay an application fee at the start of that period and an annual licence fee once the licence had been granted. The annual licence fee could be paid at the start of each year, although many traders availed of a scheme to pay by direct debit on a monthly basis.

He pointed out that, in light of these differing payment arrangements, not all street trading fees had been collected for 2020/21 and that some traders might have paid a fee for a period during which they had been unable to trade. It was proposed, therefore, that officers review each licensee's payment circumstances and draw up appropriate criteria, similar to that being used to assess applications for rent relief from businesses operating across the Council's estate, which those applying for support must meet. Should the criteria be met, it would enable a credit, to the value of the last financial year, to be placed on a trader's account to offset any future licence fee. The Council would seek to recoup the financial cost from the

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Northern Ireland Executive through the support package being provided to local councils to cover income lost during the pandemic.

The Committee endorsed the proposed approach for the provision of additional support to eligible licensed street traders, as outlined by the Director.

Bonfire Approach 2021

The Committee agreed:

- i. that those groups which had, in 2019, availed of the opportunity to replace a traditional bonfire with a beacon be requested to confirm if they wished to do so again this year and noted that the provision of beacons would be subject to any Covid-19 restrictions in place in July; and
- ii. to align funding which had been delivered previously through the Bonfire and Cultural Expression Programme with the specific micro grant and cultural leadership programme being delivered through the City Imagining Strategy, as outlined within the report.

**Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council –
Local Development Plan – Focused
Changes Consultation**

The Committee approved the following response to Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council's latest consultation on its Local Development Plan Draft Plan Strategy:

**Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council Local Development Plan Draft Plan Strategy
Proposed Focused Changes (published 14/1/21)**

**Local Development Plan Comments to clarify / supplement
the previous formal submission to the draft Plan Strategy**

Growth

The Council notes that LCCC's focused changes include a revision to the housing growth study to take account of the 2016-based HGI's that were published in September 2019 and that the growth figures have been adjusted accordingly. The overall figure between 2017 and 2032 is now 12,375 dwellings (825 per annum over 15 years), compared to the 2016-based HGI (10,700 or 764 per annum over 14 years), which represents an annual rate increase of 8% above the latest HGI's. This is 4% higher than the annual rate initially proposed relative to the 2012-based HGI.

The above figures have been informed by an adjustment made to reflect the mid-point between the two employment-led scenarios in the Housing Growth Study (as updated), which are based on long and short term trends. However, it is unclear why a mid-point between these two employment scenarios has been taken, other than to seek closer alignment with the revised HGIs. Given that the housing growth originally proposed was based on the adjusted HGI baseline figure, which took account of the differences

in plan period covered by the HGI and which was already updated to reflect the 2016-based household projections, it would seem more logical to retain growth on that basis. Using the updated 2016-based HGI figure, adjusted to reflect the different time periods, would seem a more consistent approach to take account of the updated HGIs and should result in a housing requirement of 10,845 units.

However, the Council would also reiterate previous concerns regarding the continuation of unsustainable trends that have been largely based on commuting flows into Belfast for employment. The original housing growth study notes that the labour force ratio, which takes account of commuting for employment, is held constant from 2017 and that the District “is a net exporter of labour” with a “close functional relationship with Belfast.” A constant ratio means a rise in real terms of commuting into Belfast, an assumption that will exacerbate the existing congestion and associated problems within the Belfast District. There does not seem to have been any consideration of these cross-boundary implications raised in our previous consultation response.

If the intention of this apparent change in approach is to ensure that housing growth aligns with employment growth, then it would seem more coherent to use one of the two jobs-led scenarios, as amended in the Addendum to the Housing Growth Study. Given the current economic context, it would perhaps be more prudent to take the lower of the two requirements as contained within the short-term jobs-led scenario E. This should result in a requirement for 10,260 net additional dwellings over the plan period. Although this is lower than HGI requirements, we would note that the HGIs are only indicators and should be considered a starting point for assessing housing need rather than a target to be met. To that end, we would refute the statement at p58 of the dPS that the requirement for the Council to ensure that the identified HGI figure can be met.

Given that the Belfast LDP is seeking to accommodate the housing growth associated with its baseline economic growth within its own boundaries, reducing the requirement in the LCCC District to better reflect likely jobs growth in that District would also serve to minimise potential negative implications for Belfast. This is particularly important given the current commuting context and the fact that the majority of housing within the Belfast District will be delivered on previously developed land within the existing urban footprint, as opposed to the less sequentially preferable greenfield land (only 40% is within the existing urban footprint) land and urban extensions delivered at a relatively low density (25-35 dph).

Given this context, we would also question whether the revised Sustainability Appraisal assessment of FC1A and FC1B is appropriate given that there are no resultant changes as a result of the likely increased pressure for greenfield land. This reiterates our comments previously submitted that the overall approach to housing growth in the LCCC plan area is unsustainable.

West Lisburn / Blaris Lands

In addition to the general comments above regarding the housing growth, it is notable that the revised 12,375 dwelling requirement over the plan period continues to include a 10% buffer that can accommodate the West Lisburn / Blaris proposals. The Council

is disappointed to note this retention as a Strategic Mixed Use site, despite previous concerns in respect of sustainability.

The Council would refer to previous comments made in its submission of 10th January 2020, which noted that the inclusion of a 10% buffer still seems to be driven by the desire to deliver development at West Lisburn/Blaris, rather than being required to meet housing needs over the plan period. As previously articulated, this is contrary to the SPPS sequential test and highlights significant shortcomings that still remain within the sustainability appraisal process.

The Council would reiterate comments from its previous submission, that no alternatives have been assessed from a sustainability appraisal perspective, apart from the Blaris lands as a new policy option. By way of example, no consideration has been given to the scope for an increase of densities above 35dph in the wider urban area, outside of Lisburn City Centre, as an alternative to the delivery of housing in West Lisburn / Blaris, which would better align with the SPPS requirement to deliver increased housing density without town cramming.

Moreover, following the Council's previous comments in relation to the potential of the Maze lands, it is noted that it is now proposed to remove reference to the employment potential of these lands from the Urban Capacity Study (Minor Change MC67). We are not clear how this helps address the concerns previously raised by this Council given that, whether or not the 141 ha of land are referenced in the Urban Capacity Study, LCCC have not assessed the potential to use these lands to meet housing or economic development needs. The Council would contend that these brownfield lands should be fully assessed as a potential alternative to the Blaris lands, in line with the sequential approach advocated in the SPPS, in the context of future sustainable economic development.

The intention to retain the Blaris lands is also considered at odds with the statement made at the end of section 7, page 61 of the focussed changes document that *'The Strategic Housing Allocation presented in Table 3 negates the need to provide any greenfield extension to allow for future housing growth'*. Clearly, the Blaris lands are a significant greenfield expansion of the existing settlement, which when taken alongside the fact that only 40% of housing sites are considered to be within the existing urban footprint is highly misleading. The Council would contend that the 10% buffer should be removed from the overall housing allocation, which would reduce the need for housing at West Lisburn / Blaris and therefore address some of the concerns previously raised in relation to the sustainability appraisal process.

The Council remains concerned that transportation issues relating to the West Lisburn / Blaris lands have not been adequately considered or addressed particularly with regard to the 'significant additional commuting traffic on the M1 to Belfast' that DfI have highlighted in the Lisburn and Castlereagh Local Transport Plan – Transport Study (para 2.11.4, pg17, [TS8](#)). There does not appear to be any robust, quantitative evidence demonstrating that the potential transport implications this proposed mixed use site will have on the transport network have been considered and the potential impact this will have on a neighbouring council.

Similarly, despite the assertion that this site is a 'highly accessible location' ([POP](#), pg 78) there doesn't appear to be any specific accessibility analysis to substantiate this or demonstrate that Blaris is significantly more accessible than any other Lisburn City site.

Density

Further to the Council's letter of 10th January 2020 to the consultation on the draft Plan Strategy, which outlined some concerns in relation to density levels, the Council notes the proposed rewording in respect of densities within policy HOU4 (FC5B). However, the Council considers that further clarification is needed, in particular in terms of density levels to be used within the Greater Urban Area.

Whilst we recognise that existing densities are lower in the LCCC District than the Belfast District, it would seem prudent to prevent any barriers to higher density development in appropriate locations. The Belfast LDP has proposed a density band of 25-125 dph within the outer city, which forms a continuous built-up area with the Lisburn and Castlereagh Greater Urban Areas. Whilst such a large range may not be appropriate for the LCCC District, we would suggest that the upper limit should be removed or increased for land, particularly within the Greater Urban Area.

As previously advised, increasing the density of development in appropriate locations would represent a more sustainable option for future growth and avoid or reduce reliance on more peripheral sites. Such an approach would also assist the increase in the amount of new housing being delivered within the urban footprints of LCCC settlements, noting the RDS target of 60% to be accommodated within existing urban areas.

Affordable Housing

The Council notes the revision to affordable housing need over the Plan period and welcomes the adjustment to reflect up to date evidence of prevailing need. The proposed revision to policy COU5, to require proposals for affordable housing located outside settlement boundaries to demonstrate that need cannot be met within the settlement, is also supported.

Adaptable Housing

The proposed change to amend the second sentence of criteria e) of Policy HOU4 (MC13) is noted as follows: *"The design of dwellings should ensure they are capable of adaption to provide accommodation that is wheelchair accessible for those in society who are mobility impaired."*

The Council would caution against an approach which moves away from dwellings being capable of modification for occupation by wheelchair users, to relating solely to access. The Council's approach on this issue sets out a clear focus on ensuring that homes are accessible for those who live in them, and the evidence points towards an increasing need for accessible and adaptable accommodation into the future.

Knockmore Link

The Council's concern that the new Knockmore Link is described as key to unlocking the development potential of the West Lisburn / Blaris lands, rather than improving public transport access, has not been taken on board. In fact, following a submission from DfI Transport, the wording around this under Strategic Policy 20 has effectively been diluted:

"In addition the Local Transport Study will consider the strengths and weaknesses of various modes of transport, including walking, cycling, public transport and roads. This will provide clarity on the transport measures that DfI expect to deliver during the LDP period to 2032 and which will become evident at Local Policies Plan stage."

The Council would stress the importance of enhancing accessibility by sustainable transport modes, such as bus and rail, and active travel modes such as walking and cycling, with the need to reduce single occupancy car journeys. We would strongly encourage an approach which promotes more sustainable patterns of transport and travel in line with the SPPS (para 6.293) which not only will reduce the impact on the highway network in terms of addressing commuting-based congestion but also contribute to improvements in air quality arising from reduced vehicular emissions and associated health benefits for society (SPPS para 6.294). Facilitating opportunities for modal shift through improvements in sustainable transport infrastructure which in turn gives people greater choice about how they travel should be the priority here. In this context, the status of the West Lisburn (Knockmore) rail halt should be clarified and given appropriate recognition in the Plan.

Sprucefield

The Council welcome the intention to remove criteria b) from Strategic Policy 14 that sought to support Sprucefield Regional Shopping Centre in recognition of its regional status in accordance with key site requirements (FC2). This focused change aligns this policy with a town centre first approach to retail investment, as recommended in the SPPS. In this regard, the Council also support the proposed amendment to policy TC1 to clarify the application of a sequential approach.

The Council note the correction of existing gross external retail floorspace to 44,750 square metres. However, concerns remain with policy SMU03, which enables an additional 50,000 square metres gross external floor space to be permitted at Sprucefield (25,000sqm of which is unrestricted retail floorspace). The separation of Sprucefield from the retail hierarchy within the dPS, continues to raise significant concerns that the policy approach would have a significant adverse impact on the vitality and viability of both the Lisburn and Belfast city centres. The Council would again refer to the Addendum to its submission of 10th January 2020 in this regard.

Policy TC3

A change has been proposed to TC3, to remove reference to proposals for town centre uses outside of town centres not having an adverse impact on the role and function of the town centre as a result of the proposal (MC27). This appears to dilute the original policy intent to protect town centres and only allow development that does not have

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adverse impact on adjacent land uses. Any proposals for town centre uses outside of town centre locations must ensure there is no adverse impact on the vitality and viability of centres within the proposals whole catchment that may include centres outside its council boundary.

Further minor points for info

Policy HOU1 on new residential development is being amended to make provision for housing as part of mixed-use development, with LCCC citing the DfI submission (DPS-109) which asked the Council to consider the relationship between HOU1 and SMU01 (West Lisburn / Blaris) and any other strategic mixed-use zonings.

‘Cycling’ has been added into criteria c) of policy TRA 1 on creating an accessible environment, in response to DfI submission. This ties in with the proposed change to SP20 in reference to the Local Transport Study that it will ‘consider the strengths and weaknesses of various modes of transport, including walking, cycling, public transport and roads’.

Note for policy HOU11 on specialist accommodation, clarifying its purpose and removing reference to *‘retirement villages’*.”

**Carnegie UK Trust – Embedding Wellbeing
in Northern Ireland**

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy informed the Committee that the Carnegie UK Trust’s ‘Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland’ project was providing financial and in-kind support to those Community Planning Partnerships working in the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Derry City and Strabane District Council and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council areas, to assist them in overcoming the challenges they faced in implementing their Community Plans.

He explained that, in 2018, following an expression of interest process, those councils had been selected to participate in the project, which would conclude with the publication of a final report in the spring/summer of 2021, which would be relevant to all councils. He drew the Members’ attention to key recommendations for the Northern Ireland Executive, Community Planning Partnerships and other organisations which had been formulated by the Trust over the course of the project and recommended that those be endorsed by the Committee and that the Minister for Communities be advised accordingly.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Motion: Black Lives Matter Demonstrations

(The High Sheriff (Councillor Long) withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item, on the basis that the Committee was proposing, as part of its decision, to write to his wife, the Justice Minister.)

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 19th February, it had considered correspondence from the Police Service of Northern Ireland in response to a motion which

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had been passed by the Council on 7th January on the policing of Black Lives Matter Demonstrations in Belfast and Londonderry on 6th June, 2020.

The response had stated that the policing of the pandemic had created difficulties for the Police Service, in the balancing of rights and had accepted that errors had been made. It had stated also that the withdrawal of Fixed Penalty Notices was not possible, due to the absence of any statutory power to do so.

The City Solicitor explained that he had, at that meeting, identified a potential issue with the Police Service's response, in that the extent of its powers appeared to have been misconstrued. He drew the Members' to the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) Act 1954, which stated that, if an authority was empowered to do something, all powers necessary or incidental to that power were also conferred, even if not expressly referred to in the legislation under which that power had been given. That would, in this case, include a power to withdraw Fixed Penalty Notices.

Accordingly, the Council, at its meeting on 1st March, had authorised him to commission legal advice in relation to the issue which he had identified. The resulting Counsel opinion had concurred with his position, in that the Police Service had the power to withdraw Fixed Penalty Notices. Furthermore, it had confirmed that the Public Prosecution Service should take into account the public interest and any change in circumstances and had noted that the Magistrates' Court was empowered to set aside fines when it was in the interest of justice to do so.

Councillor Michael Collins, who was in attendance, welcomed the Counsel opinion and expressed concern that the Police Service had misinterpreted its powers in relation to Fixed Penalty Notices during the two demonstrations on 6th June, 2020. He referred to the fact that the Police Ombudsman's report had found that the actions of the Police Service on that day had been discriminatory and highlighted the disproportionately higher level of fines which had been imposed on those from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background since the introduction of the Coronavirus Regulations in Northern Ireland. He concluded by inviting the Committee to write to the Police Service of Northern Ireland informing it of the Counsel opinion and requesting it to withdraw all of the Fixed Penalty Notices which it had issued at the Black Lives Matter Demonstrations on 6th June, 2020, and to write also to the Justice Minister and to the Minister of Health.

After discussion, the Committee agreed:

- i. to write to the Police Service of Northern Ireland enclosing Counsel opinion and calling upon it, in the context of that opinion, to revisit the Council's motion of 7th January requesting:
 - a.) that all Fixed Penalty Notices be rescinded and that prosecutions against Black Lives Matter activists relating to the protests on 6th June, 2020 be abandoned; and
 - b.) that the Police Service exercise its discretion and withdraw or rescind applications made to the courts for registration of the Fixed Penalty Notices; and

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- ii. to write to the Minister of Health, the Justice Minister and the Northern Ireland Executive's Adherence Group making them aware of the Council motion, the Police Service's response and the subsequent Counsel opinion.

Asset Management

The Committee approved the following:

- i. **Shankill Shared Women's Centre**
 - "step in" rights for the Council in the Development Agreement between the Department for Communities and the Shankill Women's Centre;
- ii. **Gasworks Northern Fringe Masterplan – Site D Car Park**
 - the issuing of a notice to terminate the Licence Agreement, dated 1st July 2005, with Inislyn Limited in respect of the 'pay on foot' visitors' car park at the Gasworks Estate; and
- iii. **Surrender of Lease of White City Community Centre**
 - the transfer of ownership of the existing White City Community Centre from White City Community Centre Development Association to the Council.

Brexit and Port Health – Transition Update

The Chief Executive submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided an update on the significant programme of work which was being undertaken in support of the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol, which had been agreed as part of the European Union and United Kingdom Withdrawal agreement, including the phased introduction of new processes and functions required at Belfast Port.

The report referred to correspondence which the Chief Executive had forwarded recently to the Food Standards Agency and to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs highlighting a number of issues which would impact upon the Council's ability to fulfil its obligations under the Protocol and which required urgent resolution. The Chief Executive had also called for the immediate establishment of an oversight board to oversee service planning until such time as new arrangements were clarified and embedded.

The report set out also the legal considerations to be taken into account by the Committee in terms of:

- i. the Permanent Secretary's assertion within correspondence to the Council that the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs was not the competent authority in respect of any functions undertaken by the

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Council and that it had essentially no legal relationship to the Council in respect of obligations arising under the Northern Ireland Protocol; and

- ii. the Minister's decision to suspend construction works at Belfast Port, which would impact upon the Council's ability to fulfil its legal obligations under the Protocol.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor McLaughlin,
Seconded by Councillor Walsh,

That the Committee agrees that the City Solicitor issue a pre-action letter to the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, in the context of a potential future Judicial Review, in relation to his decision to suspend construction works at Belfast Port and that the response to that letter be presented to the Committee for consideration in advance of any further action being taken.

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

<u>For 14</u>	<u>Against 6</u>
Councillor Black (Chairperson); The High Sheriff(Councillor Long); Councillors Beattie, Carson, Garrett, Groogan, Heading, Lyons, McAllister, McDonough-Brown, McLaughlin, McReynolds, Murphy and Walsh.	Aldermen Dorrian, Haire, Kingston and Sandford; Councillors Bunting and Pankhurst.

The Committee also granted approval for the City Solicitor to commence proceedings seeking declaratory relief, which would mean that the Court would be asked to determine the issue of competent authority and to whom obligations fell, in the context of the Northern Ireland Protocol and International Law.

**Roselawn Cemetery – Action Plan to Implement
Recommendations in Peter Coll QC Report**

The Committee was reminded that Mr. Peter Coll QC had, on 18th February, published his report on the outcome of an investigation which had been commissioned by the Council into the arrangements surrounding the cremation of Mr. Robert Storey at Roselawn Cemetery on 30th June, 2020.

The Committee was reminded further that, at its meeting on 19th February, it had, in considering Mr. Coll's report, agreed that a report be submitted to its next meeting outlining how the six recommendations contained therein would be implemented and monitored, in order to ensure that wider lessons were learnt and that a similar situation did not occur.

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Accordingly, the Chief Executive submitted for the Committee's approval an action plan which had been developed in response to the aforementioned recommendations. She explained that the actions set out within the plan were pragmatic and practical, with a focus on improving decision-making and communication between Members and officers, workforce planning and crisis management.

The Council approved the action plan.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Motion: Real Living Wage Foundation Accreditation

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 1st March, the following motion on Real Living Wage Foundation Accreditation, had been proposed by Councillor McLaughlin and seconded by Councillor Murphy:

"This Council is proudly a Real Living Wage Foundation employer for its direct employees. However, the Council does not pay the Real Living Wage Foundation rate to casual workers, industrial placements and apprentices. As a result of this policy, the Council is not an accredited Living Wage Foundation Employer. This Council believes that this must change.

The Council wants to become a leader for Workers' Rights in this City and encourage other organisations/business through our Social Value Procurement strategy to become Real Living Wage Foundation Employers. Many local authorities in Scotland, Wales and England are Real Living Wage Employers, however, no Council in the North has yet to become an accredited Real Living Wage employer. Therefore, this Council commits to becoming an accredited Real Living Wage Foundation Employer by 1st April, 2022.

Furthermore, the Council recognises its continued use of outside employment agencies and notes the difficulties that this can present, which were highlighted throughout the Covid 19 pandemic when we had limited control over the terms and conditions of those employees carrying out Council functions employed through an agency. Therefore, the Council will establish plans to review workforce planning, with a view to reducing the use of agencies and will bring a report before exploring options on how we can achieve this."

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

The Committee adopted the motion and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting outlining how it might be progressed and resourced.

**Motion: Health and Social Care Workers - Thank
You Payment - Response from Minister of Health**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 7th January, had passed the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Brooks and seconded by Councillor Verner:

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“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.”

The City Solicitor drew the Committee’s attention to a response which had been received from the Minister of Health.

The Minister had stated that he had decided to proceed with a special recognition payment of £500 for health and social care workers in Northern Ireland, which, reflecting the principle of parity, would be similar to a scheme operating currently in Scotland. His officials were finalising the details of the special payment and information would be published on the Department of Health’s website as soon as that work had been completed.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Motion: Takeover of Private Healthcare –
Response from Minister of Health**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st February, had passed the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Ferguson and seconded by Councillor Matt Collins:

“This Council calls on the Stormont Executive to continue to work with all available health care resources, including all publicly funded health professionals and the private health sector, to ease the burden on our overwhelmed health service and health workers; to ensure the health service has the available beds, capacity and staff to care for all those sick with Covid; and in order to carry out all Red Flag cancer surgeries, and all other vital operations and life-saving procedures.”

The City Solicitor submitted for the Committee’s consideration a response which had been received from the Minister of Health.

The Minister had begun by stating that it was unacceptable that any patient had had to wait longer than was clinically appropriate for surgery or treatment and had stressed that waiting times for elective surgery remained one of his key priorities.

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

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He had explained that all Trusts maintained urgent bookable theatre lists for emergency surgery and utilised capacity within those lists for cancer surgery. This was kept under daily review.

In addition, his Department had established a Regional Prioritisation Oversight Group to ensure that clinical prioritisation of time critical and urgent cases across surgical specialities and Trust boundaries was consistent and transparent. The Group ensured also that the utilisation of all available capacity was fully maximised.

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

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

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

The Minister had assured the Council that Trusts were working hard to maintain cancer care, in so far as that was possible during the current surge. That would include seeking to continue to maximise fully all available in-house HSC and independent sector capacity, both within and outside Northern Ireland.

He had added that it must also be recognised that cancer services had been in a challenging position before the pandemic. The pandemic had exacerbated the challenges but it had not created them. There was no doubt that some services would benefit from reform, but above all, there needed to be a commitment to significant and sustained investment.

The Minister had concluded by stating that he deeply regretted that anyone had had their surgery postponed or delayed.

The Committee noted the response.

**Motion: Child Poverty Task Force –
Response from Department for Communities**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st February, had passed the following motion, which had been proposed by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCusker) and seconded by Councillor Whyte:

“This Council notes with alarm the Department of Communities Family Resources Survey 2018/2019 which shows that 122,000 children in Northern

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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 and to identify regional policy with local outcomes, with a clear target, to eradicate child poverty.”

The City Solicitor reported that a response had been received from Mr. Michael Donnelly, Director for Central Policy, on behalf of the Minister for Communities.

Mr. Donnelly had explained that the Department for Communities was responsible for taking forward poverty policy on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive. On 24th September 2020, the then Minister for Communities, Carál Ní Chuilín MLA, had announced the commencement of work on the development of a range of Social Inclusion Strategies, including an Anti-Poverty Strategy, as part of the commitments made under the New Decade, New Approach deal.

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

Mr. Donnelly had gone on to state that, in September, 2020, the Northern Ireland Executive had agreed to extend the 2016-2019 Child Poverty Strategy until May, 2022. The purpose of that extension was to allow time for key stakeholders to be consulted on whether the Anti-Poverty Strategy, covering all age groups, was sufficient or whether the development of a Child Poverty Strategy was also required.

He had pointed out that the most recent Child Poverty Annual Report, for 2019/20, which had been published on the Department for Communities website in September 2020, had outlined the measures which Departments were taking to ensure, as far as possible, that children did not suffer socio-economic disadvantage. The areas of focus and actions fell under four high level outcomes, namely, health, education, safe/secure stable living environments and economic well-being.

In view of the work currently taking place, the Department would not, therefore, propose convening an additional body, such as a Child Poverty Taskforce, at this time.

Mr. Donnelly had added that, in the course of the development of the Anti-Poverty Strategy, the Department for Communities would continue to engage with and listen to the

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views and ideas of those impacted by poverty and their representative organisations and would continue to work collaboratively across Departments to address their needs.

The aforementioned Anti-Poverty Co-design Group would, over the coming months, be assisting the Department for Communities to facilitate a number of feedback sessions to seek the views of stakeholders, in order to inform their decisions on a range of specific areas of the recommendations.

The Department also planned to host a session to obtain the views of district councils and would in the near future be writing to SOLACE with further details. There would also be a public consultation in the latter half of this year and the Department would welcome comments from the Council when this was published.

Mr. Donnelly had concluded by stating that, subject to Executive approval, it was planned that the Child Poverty Annual Report for 2020/21 would be published in March, 2021 and that an Anti-Poverty Strategy would be published in December, 2021.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Governance

Committee Motions – Quarterly Update

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 an update on the progress of all motions for which the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is responsible.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is recommended to

- i. note the updates on all motions for which the Committee is responsible; and**
- ii. agree to the closure of a number of motions, as referenced in Appendix 1 and noted in paragraph 3.8 below.**

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 At the Committee meeting on 25th October 2019, the following motion was agreed:

‘That this Council notes that other Councils produce a monthly status report in relation to motions and agrees that Belfast City

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Council adopts a similar practice and produces a monthly motion update which will be brought to each full Council Meeting, detailing the following:

- 1. Date received**
 - 2. Motion title**
 - 3. Submitted by which Councillor**
 - 4. Council meeting date**
 - 5. Committee motion is referred to**
 - 6. Outcome of committee where Notice of Motion will be debated**
 - 7. Month it will be reported back to committee**
 - 8. Other action to be taken.'**
- 3.2 As a first step, officers undertook a review of existing motionm to ensure any that had been completed could be reported to Committee as closed before commencing the live database. This review was undertaken in 2020 and recommendations were brought to the Committee to close 69 motions.**
- 3.3 The remaining motions were added to a new database with all additional motions from this point in time now added to the database for quarterly reporting to the relevant Standing Committee. Appendix 1 is the first of the quarterly updates showing 54 currently active motions and Issues Raised in Advance which the Committee is responsible for.**
- 3.4 At the Committee meeting on 20th November, there was a query in relation to a missing motion on Abortion Imagery. Upon investigation, it was realised that the query raised was in relation to an Issue Raised in Advance at Committee rather than a motion. Members are asked to note that all outstanding Issues Raised in Advance at Committee have now been added to the database and will be regularly reported through this database.**

Motions Updates

- 3.5 The Committee is asked to note that, given the current pressures in responding to the pandemic, it has been difficult to afford the usual time towards progressing motions. Nevertheless, there has been progress in a number of motions.**
- 3.6 Likewise, given the nature of remote working at present, it has proven more difficult than usual to coordinate the updates across all departments. Members will note that estimated completion dates and Next Steps require further updates – these will be progressed and reported back at the next quarterly update.**

Closure of Motions and Issues Raised in Advance

3.7 At the Committee meeting on 20th November, it was agreed that motions could be closed for one of two reasons:

- Category 1 - Motions which contained an action that has been completed and recommend they are closed.

All motions within this category contained a specific task that has since been complete. It is worth noting that, when Committee agree to action a motion, there are sometimes additional actions agreed alongside the motion. As these are not technically part of the motion, they are taken forward through normal committee decision making processes. The motion can, therefore, be closed, but additional actions related to it will continue to be progressed and reported to the committee. These additional actions are not contained in this report, but will be noted in the live database moving forward.

- Category 2 – Motions which have become Council policy and recommend they are closed. These notices of motion did not contain a specific task that could be complete. Instead, they were more strategic in nature and required changes in Council policy and/ or strategy for long term outcomes. Those listed within this category have all been agreed by Committee and are now either Council policy or are currently being implemented through a Council strategy that is managed by a Standing Committee through the corporate planning process.

3.8 The Committee is asked to agree that the following 13 motions be now closed:

Category 1 Recommended Closures:

- Regeneration Powers (Ref number 42). This was an issue raised in advance at Committee on 24th January 2020 and had a specific task of writing to the Minister for the Department of Communities requesting that she consider again the transfer of regeneration powers to local councils. This task has been undertaken, along with further representation in regards to the devolution of powers to local government, including in the draft response to the PfG Outcomes Framework which is one the agenda for today's meeting.
- Flying of the Flag on 19th February to mark the Birthday of the Duke of York (Ref number 60). This was a time sensitive issue and the manner has now been resolved.

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

Category 2 Recommended Closures:

- Report by the Environmental Audit Committee into the impact of disposable coffee cups in the UK (Ref number

5). This issue will be considered as part of the internal sustainability review being undertaken by KPMG on behalf of the Council under the Climate Adaption and Mitigation Plan.

- City Tree Initiative (Ref number 36). City Tree Initiative is being progressed as part of One Million Trees programme.
- SUDS and the City (Ref number 68). Council have made significant progress with DfI in relation to the use of SUDS in Belfast, as evidenced by their extensive inclusion in the recent Living With Water in Belfast consultation document, including Distillery Street/Westlink. These will now be taken forward across Belfast in partnership between the Council, DfI and NI Water, subject to funding being available.

3.9 Additional information in relation to these Notices of motion and Issues Raised in Advance are available in Appendix 1, a copy of which has been circulated.

3.10 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no additional financial implications required to implement these recommendations.

3.11 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment

There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications contained in this report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Revision to Scheme of Allowances

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To consider amendments to the Council’s Scheme of Allowances to increase the rate of Basic Allowance, to increase the maximum rate of Special Responsibility Allowance, and to increase the maximum rate of Dependant’s Carers’ Allowance, in line with the National Living Wage for 2021-22.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is recommended to:

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- 1. consider whether it wishes to apply the increase in the Basic Allowance from £15,071 per annum to £15,486 with effect from 1st April, 2020;**
- 2. consider whether it wishes to increase the total maximum Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) from the current £108,000 per annum to £117,774 as set out in Appendix 2 with effect from 1st April, 2020; and**
- 3. approve the increase to the maximum rate of Dependants' Carers' Allowance as set out in the report, with effect from 1st April, 2021.**

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

- 3.1 The Department for Communities issued a circular, LG 07/2021, which set out revised maximum limits for basic and special responsibility allowances with effect from 1st April, 2020.**
- 3.2 The Committee, at its meeting in June 2019, agreed to apply the increase in the basic allowance from £14,200 per annum to the current £15,057. Local Government Circular LG 07/2021, dated 8th March, 2021, has increased the maximum basic allowance, which Councils may pay to Members, to £15,486 with effect from 1st April, 2020.**
- 3.3 The Committee is also requested to consider whether to apply the increase to the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) budget, with effect from 1st April, 2020. For a number of years, the Council has agreed a split in the special responsibility allowance budget so as to pay both the Chairpersons and the Deputy Chairpersons of the Standing Committees and the Party Officers (Party Leader, Deputy Party Leader and Party Secretary – depending upon Party size). The current division of SRAs is set out in Appendix 1. If the increase in the overall budget is increased, a suggested split is set out in Appendix 2.**
- 3.4 The Department for Communities determines the maximum hourly rates of Dependant's Carers' Allowance for both standard care and specialised care. The rate for standard care is based on the hourly National Living Wage for age 25+, which will increase on 1st April, 2021 from the current rate of £8.72 per hour to £8.91 per hour. The rate for specialised care is double the rate for standard care. In addition, the Department for Communities sets the maximum monthly amounts for standard care and specialised care, capped at the equivalent of 52 hours per month.**

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3.5 Accordingly, in line with the increase in the National Living Wage, the Committee is requested to agree to the amendments to the Scheme of Allowances as follows:

3.6 “(iv) Dependants’ Carers’ Allowance

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

Financial and Resource Implications

3.7 The increase to the maximum rates of each of the allowances has already been considered and can be met through existing budgets.

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

3.8 There are not any Good Relations, Equality or Rural Needs issues associated with this report.”

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Carson,
Seconded by Councillor McLaughlin,

That the Committee agrees to reject recommendations 1 and 2 within the report and to approve recommendation 3, that is, the increase in the maximum rate of Dependants’ Carers’ Allowance, with effect from 1st April, 2021.

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

The Committee subsequently approved the increases, as set out in recommendations 1, 2 and 3 of the report.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Council Improvement Objectives for 2021-22

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To present the Committee with the draft corporate improvement objectives for 2021 - 2022 and to seek its approval to issue these

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for public consultation, in line with our statutory performance duty obligations.

2.0 Recommendation

The Committee is asked to consider the draft improvement objectives for 2021-22, and subject to any refinements, to authorise the public consultation required as part of the council's improvement duty.

2.2 The proposed improvement objectives for 2021-22 are as follows:

Our City
We will support our city to recover by helping to restore the social and cultural vibrancy of our city spaces and places in a safe and sustainable way
Our Services
We will take steps to ensure our services adapt and improve in the short and longer term
Our Communities
We will work to support our communities, helping them to become stronger, healthier and more resilient
Our Economy
We will work in collaboration with others to protect and create jobs and support people into employment
Our Environment
We will take action to protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast
Our Digital Innovation
We will improve digital inclusion and enhance our digital infrastructure to support jobs, our economy, sustainability and wellbeing

3.0 Key Issues

- 3.1** We have a statutory duty to agree improvement objectives and produce an annual improvement plan, by 30th June each year. Last year, the Department for Communities (DfC) agreed to suspend the improvement plan process to enable councils to refocus efforts and reconfigure services to support the covid-19 pandemic response. However, DfC has now confirmed that an improvement plan will be required for 2021-22, including the requirement to consult with residents.
- 3.2** The Improvement objectives and plan does not include everything that council plans to do that year, but instead focuses on a smaller set of key improvement priorities, as informed by resident priorities and evidenced by need. For the past 4 years, we have aligned our improvement objectives to the key priorities within the Belfast Agenda. However, given the current situation and the lack of uncertainty around when restrictions might end, it is either no longer possible to deliver or sustain some of this activity. It is also questionable as to whether these improvement objectives would continue to be the highest priority for our residents and the city. For this reason, and to ensure focus remains on priority areas, we are proposing to realign the improvement objectives to the Belfast recovery plan published in September, 2020.
- 3.3** Our recovery plan has six main pillars, each helping to support our communities and economy to recover by building on our strengths and assets as a city and wider city region. Appendix 1 shows how these pillars have been adapted for our 2021-22 improvement plan and how it aligns to previous improvement objectives. Indicative areas of activity have been included for illustration. However, given the fluidity of the current situation, detailed activity and associated performance measures, the Strategy, Policy and Partnership Unit will work with services to refine the detailed actions and performance measures. Given current circumstances, we will take a pragmatic approach, which takes into account resourcing implications and covid restrictions. Activity will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. DfC are currently reassessing the statutory performance indicators in light of Covid; we await the outcome of this process.

Next Steps

- 3.4** Councils are legally required to consult on their improvement objectives and to publish an Improvement Plan by 30th June each year. Subject to approval, we will issue the improvement objectives for public consultation via our on-line engagement platform for a period of 8 weeks. However, it should be noted that resident feedback in relation to Belfast: Our Recovery

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(yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/belfast-our-recovery) has already informed the selection of the objectives and indicative actions. During this time, we will work develop detailed actions, milestones and performance indicators and factor in public feedback. A final report and draft improvement plan will be brought to SP&R for ratification and publication in June.

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee – agrees improvement objectives for consultation	19th Mar 2021
Improvement Objectives: 8 week consultation	22 Mar - 16 May 2021
Services refine actions and PIs	Mar - May 2021
SP&R approves Improvement Plan	18th June 2021
Publish Improvement Plan 2021 - 22	30th June 2020

Resources Implications

- 3.5 There are no resource implications arising directly from this report. As some of our services continue to face significant pressures and budgets remain stretched, we have taken care to ensure that the improvement objectives align to the council's recovery plan.

Equality Implications and Rural Needs

- 3.6 There are no equality or rural need implications arising directly from this report."

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Programme for Government Outcomes Framework –
Draft Consultation Response**

The Committee considered the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present the Committee with the draft response to the NI Executive's draft Programme for Government Outcomes Framework.

2.0 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- i. approve the draft consultation response for submission to The Executive Office, as set out in Appendix 2 and; and
- ii. endorse the NILGA response to the draft PfG Outcomes Framework Consultation, as set out in Appendix 3.

2.2 Given the deadline for submission of responses by 22nd March, the Committee is asked to give delegated authority to officers to submit the agreed response before the deadline, noting that it is subject to Council ratification on 1st April.

2.3 To support the co-ordination of the new community plan with the completion of the Programme for Government it is proposed that the Council renews its contribution to the work of the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre for a 2 year period.

3.0 Key Issues

3.1 The NI Executive is developing a new strategic, Outcomes-based Programme for Government (PfG). The Executive's aim for the PfG is to deliver real, lasting and positive change in people's lives. This consultation is seeking opinions on the draft framework of nine Outcomes upon which the PfG will be built. Together these Outcomes create a picture of the kind of society we all want to live in.

3.2 The draft Outcomes are illustrated in the following diagram:



- 3.3 The Framework focuses on the 9 Outcomes, each with a number of draft priority areas for focus and associated strategy documents. It should be noted that this is intended to be a high level document which, once finalised, will be followed by more detailed priority plans. It should, therefore, be seen as the first step in the development of a PfG, not the complete picture.

Draft BCC Response

- 3.4 A draft BCC response has been attached in Appendix 2, which contains feedback on individual outcomes, along with a number of suggested priority areas. In general, it is recommended that the Council supports the draft Outcomes – they are broadly in line with the Outcomes contained within the Belfast Agenda and the aspirations of our Recovery Plan.
- 3.5 The key elements of our response are focused on more overarching comments in relation the PfG, the need for better partnership working between the government departments and local government and the need for further devolution. A summary of our main comments are as follows:

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- **We encourage the NI Executive to recognise the important benefits a place based approach can bring and specifically recognise the importance of investing in the regional capital as a driver for economic regeneration for the entire region;**
 - **We recommend that the further devolution of neighbourhood services, regeneration and employability and skills powers would greatly help the public sector as a whole deliver on the aspirations articulated in the PfG Outcomes Framework;**
 - **We encourage greater collaboration between local government and government departments, in the planning, development, delivery and monitoring of interventions in order to increase their effectiveness for Belfast residents and, in turn, create a more cohesive society;**
 - **We strongly encourage the coordination of new community plans with the completion of the Programme for Government;**
 - **We strongly encourage the NI Executive to consider establishing a coalesced implementation body that can help coordinate and oversee the implementation of the Programme for Government and the 11 community plans for Northern Ireland;**
 - **We would welcome further detail on the timeframes for regular review and a commitment to involve key stakeholders in the review, including Belfast City Council;**
 - **We strongly encourage that key government strategies are reviewed in light of the new PfG to ensure they are still fit for purpose in the post Covid landscape.**
- 3.6 It is recommended that this response be submitted to The Executive Office, with the intent of following up with further communication as the PfG further develops.**
- 3.7 The Committee is asked to note that the deadline for submissions is 22nd March. In order to meet this deadline, the Committee is asked to give delegated authority for Officers to submit this consultation response in advance of full Council ratification. Should the Council not ratify the response, officers will ask for the response to be withdrawn as a formal submission.**
- 3.8 To support the co-ordination of the new community plan with the completion of the Programme for Government, it is proposed that**

the Council renews its contribution to the work of the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre for a 2 year period, particularly in the post-Covid context. This will enable the Council to influence its research programme and support the connections between the new Programme for Government, community plan and the Belfast Region City Deal.

Endorsement of NILGA Response

- 3.9 Appendix 3 contains the draft response from NILGA, which has formally requested that this response is distributed through a council standing committee or full Council and to senior council policy staff, for feedback / support. The Committee is, therefore, asked to support the attached response from NILGA. It should be noted this response has been written as a regional response, designed to emphasise local government's collective view on what needs to change through the PfG and recognising that individual councils will have local and strategic priorities.

Resources Implications

- 3.10 The £40,000 contribution to the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre has been included in Departmental estimates.

Equality Implications

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

The Committee approved the Council's draft response to the Programme for Government Draft Outcomes Framework for submission to the Executive Office [here](#) and endorsed NILGA's response [here](#), as recommended within the report.

Inclusive Growth - Social Value Policy

The Committee considered the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is update the Committee on the work of the Social Policy Working Group and in particular steps to progress social value procurement within the Council.

2.0 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- i. agree to write to the Department for Communities Minister and the Chair of the NI Assembly Committee for Communities asking for legislation to be brought

forward to enable increased powers for local government to introduce social value in procurement and requesting changes to be made to the existing 1992 Order as detailed in sections 3.5-3.7;

- ii. approve the amended terms of reference and the re-naming of the group to the Social Policy Member Working Group; and
- iii. approve and adopt the minutes of the Social Policy Members Working Group of 23rd February

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 In November 2020, members agreed to hold an initial workshop of the Social Value Members Working Group to lead the Council's work in relation to social value. Following the initial meeting on 29th January, the Working Group agreed to amend the group's Terms of Reference to reflect the need demonstrate further ambition in relation to the council's inclusive growth aspirations.
- 3.2 As part of the policy development journey to introduce social value procurement within the Council, officers developed a draft Social Value toolkit. The proposed toolkit provides a consistent approach to enable the measurement, monitoring and reporting of social value commitments within Council contracts and to, in as far as possible, deliver social value at scale. In developing the Toolkit, officers have built on the good practices already established in our procurement processes to support and develop our local supply base by ensuring improved awareness of opportunities, advice and guidance and removal of any barriers to tender.
- 3.3 Our message to our supply chain is clear – we want to do business with suppliers who have a strong people, environmental and ethical focus within their business. To that end the Toolkit includes:
 - Selection Criteria - This includes grounds for exclusions such as offences in relation to conspiracy, corruption, bribery, fraud etc. and compliance with Modern Slavery Act. These criteria are typically pass/fail minimum mandatory standards assessed at the tender evaluation stage and include: Ethical procurement policies and procedures; Environmental policies and procedures; and HR policies and procedures.
 - Award Criteria – These are additional interventions or actions that a supplier will deliver over and above the

supply of the goods/services/works and have been linked to the outcomes set out in the Belfast Agenda.

- 3.4 What is permissible under procurement law, as selection and award criteria is not clear and impacted by the legislative picture in Northern Ireland. A Social Value Act was introduced in England and Wales in 2013 and in Scotland in 2014. It is essentially a requirement for the procurement of public services to consider wider social, economic, and environmental benefits. An equivalent Act, shaped to reflect the priorities of Northern Ireland has not yet been introduced.
- 3.5 Article 19 of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 sets out restrictions on Council's freedom to consider various matters when procuring works or goods by declaring certain items 'non-commercial considerations' which can't be considered as part of a procurement process.
- 3.6 The Article includes a provision for the Department to make an order to the effect that any matter shall cease to be a non-commercial consideration. The Department has already done this through the Local Government (Exclusion of Non-commercial Considerations) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015. This 2015 Order has therefore removed one of the constraints that the 1992 Order placed on Councils and means that it is permissible now for the Council to ask Contractors to, for example, employ apprentices.
- 3.7 This does, however, still leave exclusions in force. This could prove a considerable bar to the Council, as it will prevent the Council, as an example, specifying it wants goods or services supplied by a local supplier. There is a relatively straightforward procedure available to the Department to make an Order similar to the 2015 Order removing this exclusion. If this could be done, it would greatly widen the available options for the Council in seeking to ensure social value for Belfast through its procurements.

Resource Implications

- 3.8 There are no direct financial implication arising from this report.

Equality Implications

- 3.9 There are no direct equality implications contained in this report."

After discussion, during which it was confirmed that the provision of a spend analysis and the expansion of the anchor institution network had been included within the Working Group's overall work plan, the Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed that all Members be invited to attend the briefing by the Centre For Local Economic Strategies on community wealth building referred to within the minutes.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Alleygating Programme – Phase 5

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 the Committee on the next steps in the progression of Phase 5 of the Alleygating Programme.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i. note the contents of the report and agree the next steps;
and**
- ii. agree the funding allocation model across the city.**

3.0 Main Report

Background

- 3.1 The Committee will be aware that the Council has delivered to date four phases of the alleygating programme across the city which has seen the installation of 1081 gates with both Council funding and funding from external funders.**

3.2 The total number of gates per area is currently:

**North – 307
South – 278
East – 250
West – 246
Total – 1081**

Capital Programme Commitment and Funding Allocation Model

- 3.3 Members will be aware of the Council’s decision as part of the 21/21 rate setting process that £500,000 will be made available from the Capital Programme for alleygates Phase 5 across Belfast.**
- 3.4 The Committee is asked to consider how the total budget of £500K is allocated across the city.**
- 3.5 It is not possible at this stage to give an approximate price for an average gate as there have been significant fluctuations in the**

steel market and this will need to be formally priced by the supplier in due course. This information will be provided to Members at Area Working Group stage.

Alleygates Evaluation / Future Planning

- 3.6 Members will be aware that the People and Communities Committee has already agreed that the Council engage a suitably qualified contractor to under a review of the Alleygates Programme to date, specifically exploring the following:
- the benefits of the scheme within neighbourhoods and how the overall scheme performs against Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles;
 - to review the current selection process and identify potential future options for selection of Alleygate locations taking in to account what has worked well and what could be improved to date;
 - to examine if there has been any reduction in crime / return for investment in areas where there has been intense Alleygate installation;
 - to examine whether there have been any long-term impacts or reduction in crime within gated areas in general;
 - to identify opportunities to maximise the benefits of alleygating by working closer with other partners in the context of wider neighbourhood regeneration;
 - to make recommendations about how to maximise the benefits and opportunities from the Alleygate Project, taking into consideration other Council work streams and external strategies;
 - to consider the longer-term impact of the continuous alleygating investment to date in the city
- 3.7 It is more important to note that with the level of demand and Member priority attached to alleygating, that a medium-long term planning process and financing strategy will now begin to assess need and plan for a more significant roll out across the city following Phase 5.
- 3.8 The Committee is requested to note that this evaluation, and the future planning process, will be progressed simultaneously with Phase 5 Alleygates (as per the standing Phase 4 criteria).

Process for Agreeing Gate Locations

- 3.9 Members should note that the demand for gates throughout the city far outweighs the £500,000 available and, therefore, as part of the Full Business Case approval, it will be necessary to identify those areas to be considered for alleygating in order of evidenced need.
- 3.10 The agreed process for Phase 4 Alleygates recognised that official statistics do not always fully represent actual need, as crime and anti-social behaviour is often under reported in some of the areas of greatest need across Belfast.
- 3.11 Therefore, the process for agreeing the final list of streets to be gated was revised by the previous Health and Environmental Services Committee to include Area Working Group consideration of the evidence of need based on official statistics. Area Working Group Members would then use their local knowledge to enrich this evidence of need before making a formal recommendation to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
- 3.12 Before any engagement can take place with Area Working Groups in relation to potential gate locations, the Outline and Full Business Case must be developed to take this through to a fully committed capital project.
- 3.13 This combined with the time needed to complete the statistical analysis needed to inform Area Working Group discussions will mean it may be autumn 2021 before officers are in a position to bring forward reports to Area Working Group for discussion on potential gate locations.
- 3.14 Additionally, previous experience indicates that it can take a number of Area Working Group meetings to agree a final list of gate locations to be recommended to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
- 3.15 It is, therefore, not possible to give a detailed timeline at this stage, but for Members information the indicative timeline is provided below. Please note the timeline commences at the point at which Strategic Policy and Resources Committee/Council have agreed the gate locations.
- Start - Gate Locations Agreed by SP&R Committee and Full Council
 - Month 1 – Regulatory and Community Consultation Commenced
 - Month 3 – Regulatory Consultation Completed

- Month 4 – Community Consultation Completed
- Month 5 – Legal Preparation
- Month 7/8 – Notice of Intention Advertised
- Month 8/9 – Clarification of Objections
- Month 9 – People and Communities Committee Consideration of Traffic Regulation Order
- Month 10 – Full Council Approval of Traffic Regulation Order
- Month 10 – Gates Ordered
- Month 12/13 – Gates Manufactured and Installation Commenced
- Month 14 to 16 – Phase 5 Gate Installation Programme rolled out across the city

3.16 Members should note that experience has also shown that not all agreed gate locations can be brought forward at the same time to Traffic Regulation Order stage due to objections as part of the community consultation process, not meeting the legal threshold of evidenced ASB to enact the legislation with further work needed and site suitability issues. Phase 4 Alleygates was brought forward to Traffic Regulation Order stage in four sub phases.

3.17 Members should also be aware timelines may be further delayed if the disruption caused by Brexit to supply chains for Alleygates material/parts continues and that orders must be placed with the contractor no later than 30th April ,2022 due to current contract end timescales.

Financial implications

3.18 Financial implications are detailed in the body of the report.

Equality, Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment

3.19 An Equality Screening will need to be completed on alleygates Phase 5 in due course.”

During discussion, the Chief Executive confirmed that lists of streets which had been compiled by Members under previous phases would be included for consideration under Phase 5 of the alleygating programme.

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Councillor Groogan made a formal proposal that a scoring/evaluation matrix be developed for Phase 5, in order to ensure that there was transparency around all elements of the decision-making process.

In response, the Director of Neighbourhood Services pointed out that an evaluation of Phases 1 to 4 was ongoing and that its findings, including any relating to the decision-making process, would be used to inform the Council's approach to alleygating in the longer term. However, the evaluation had yet to progress to a stage where it could be used to fully inform Phase 5 and, should a decision be taken to wait until it was completed, it would significantly delay the commencement of that phase. He confirmed that there was an assessment process used for decision-making around prioritisation.

As there was no seconder for Councillor Groogan's proposal, it was not put to the meeting.

After further discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed that the allocated budget of £500k for Phase 5 again be divided on an equal basis across North, South, East and West Belfast.

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 170 current capital projects under a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Council's Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for Stage movements on the Capital Programme and to provide an update on contracts awarded for capital or capital-related works.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked –

- **To agree the following Capital Programme Movements:**
 - **IT Programme: Building Control System Replacement project moves to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted***
 - **IT Programme: Financial Replacement System project moves to *Stage 3 – Committed***
- **To note the update in relation to contracts awarded.**

3.0 Main Report

Members will be aware that the Council runs a substantial physical programme under a range of funding streams including the capital programme, BIF and LIF together with the projects that it is delivering on behalf of other agencies including the Executive Office, the Department for Communities and Department for Infrastructure. There are currently 170 live projects worth in excess of £120m, as well as 100+ early stage uncommitted projects and £300m+ of completed projects which still receive dedicated resourcing effort.

Proposed Movements - Capital Programme

- 3.2 Members agreed that all capital projects must go through a three stage process where decisions on which capital projects progress are taken by the Committee. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project. Members are asked to agree to the following movements on the Capital Programme:

Project	Overview	Stage
IT Programme: Building Control System Replacement	Replacement ICT building control system to include building regulations, licensing, property certificates and addressing functions.	Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted
IT Programme: Financial Replacement System	Replacement of the current SAP corporate financial system and support services which are nearing end of life.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed

Building Control Replacement System

Members are asked to agree that the IT Programme Building Control System replacement project is moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* on the Capital Programme to allow the project to be further developed. Members are asked to note that further detail will be brought back to Committee in due course in line with the agreed three stage approvals process.

Financial Replacement System

Members are also asked to agree that the IT Programme Financial Replacement System is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed*. The Council has reviewed the ongoing requirements of its current

financial system with the emerging outcome to replace the current system with a modern Financial System, which will enable streamlined, efficient processes, deliver accurate financial data, and provide seamless integration into and from other solutions. This offers the potential to reduce the number of systems that the council currently supports and the number of interfaces it manages. Any project which is being moved from Stage 2 to Stage 3 under the Capital Programme is required as part of the three stage approval process to complete an Outline Business Case. Members are asked to note that this has been completed and reviewed internally. An update will be brought back to Committee at this stage along with the final budget allocation and confirmation that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

3.3 Contracts Awarded

Members are asked to note the award of tenders for capital works including services related to works in the attached appendix.

3.5 Financial and Resource Implications

Financial – The final budget for the Financial Replacement System will be brought back to Committee for sign-off and confirmation that it is within the affordability limits of the Council upon receipt of the tender return.

Resources – Ongoing running costs over a 10 year period to be confirmed

**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.

Update on Area Working Groups

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meetings of the North Belfast Area Working Group of 24th February and the West Belfast Area Working Group of 25th February, including the following recommendations from the West Belfast Area Working Group:

BIF Programme

BIF29 Greater Shankill Community Council - Royal British Legion

- to note the movement of the Greater Shankill Community Council – Royal British Legion project to Stage 2 - Uncommitted.

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LIF Programme

St. John's GAC

- to reallocate the remaining £17,000 to the St. John's GAC project.

Finance, Resources and Procurement

**CIPFA Prudential Code Capital Strategy and
Treasury Management Indicators 2021-22**

The Director of Finance and Resources submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report

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

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i. note the contents of this report and the prudential and treasury management indicators included within the appendices to the report;**

and agree:

- **The Authorised Borrowing Limit for the Council of £154m for 2021/22; and**
- **The Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22, which has been included as Appendix B to this report.**

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 The Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 requires the Council to adopt the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local**

Authorities. In doing so, the Council is required to agree a minimum revenue provision policy annually and to set and monitor a series of Prudential Indicators, the key objectives of which are to ensure that, within a clear framework, the capital investment plans of the council are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

- 3.2 At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the 9 December 2011, Members approved the Council's Treasury Management Policy which is based on the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice. The Treasury Management Policy requires that a Treasury Management Strategy be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on an annual basis and that it is supported by a mid-year and year end treasury management reports.**
- 3.3 The Capital Strategy, incorporating the prudential indicators, is included as Appendix A, while the Treasury Management Strategy and treasury management indicators have been included as Appendix B.**
- 3.4 The comparison of 'Gross Borrowing' to 'Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)' is the main indicator of prudence when considering the proposed capital investment plans of the Council. Estimated gross borrowing should not exceed the CFR for the current year plus two years. The Council's estimated gross borrowing position, illustrated in Table 6, Appendix A, is comfortably within the CFR in the medium term. The Director of Finance and Resources therefore considers the estimated levels of gross borrowing as being prudent.**
- 3.5 Table 9 (Appendix A) shows the estimated financing costs for capital expenditure as a percentage of the estimated net revenue stream for the Council, based on the medium financial plan. These illustrate that in the medium term, capital financing costs will represent 11.3% of the Council's net running costs. On this basis the Director of Finance and Resources is satisfied that the level of capital expenditure is affordable.**
- 3.6 The Finance Act requires the Council to set an affordable borrowing limit, relating to gross debt. The Prudential Code defines the affordable limit as the 'Authorised Borrowing Limit' and gross borrowing must not exceed this limit. Table 7 (Appendix A) sets out the recommended 'Authorised Borrowing Limit' for the Council as being £154m for 2021/22.**

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.7 As detailed in the report**

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Equality or Good Relations Implications

3.8 None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Update on Contracts

The Committee:

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

Table 1 - Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Estimated Total Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Tender for advanced expert knowledge and support in the event of IT security incident	up to 3 years	£60,000	R Cregan	Direct support of security appliances with direct connection to suppliers. In hours on call assistance and on-site support for security issues/incidents
Tender for the provision of 1100L euro bins and castors	one off purchase	£70,490	S Toland / R Black	Provision of 1100L euro bins & castors for commercial waste
Tender for the provision of laptops, docking stations and other IT peripherals	up to 1 year	£500,000	R Cregan	New devices and other peripherals to facilitate home working and replacement devices as per regular business as usual replacement cycle
Tender for the provision of dog kennelling facilities and related services	up to 4 years	£144,000	S Toland / R Black	Requirement to ensure council's obligations under the "the Dogs (N.I.) Order 1983."

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Belfast Safer Homes scheme including: home safety checks; equipment delivery; repairs; security assessments; security equipment fitting	up to 5 years	£500,000	S Toland	This is a joint project delivered in partnership with PCSP, BCC Older People budget (£20K) and external PHA funding. This is a health and wellbeing project which assists the Council in meeting its targets to address issues faced by older people in our community.
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Table 2 - Single Tender Actions

Title	Total Value	SRO	Supplier
Contract for the Information @ Work document management system	£105,000	R Cregan	Northgate PS
Contract for the support and maintenance and perpetual licences for the Housing Benefit system for NIHE (include recent legislation changes)	£856,800	R Cregan	Northgate PS
Contract for the NI Land & Property Services agreement	£150,000	R Cregan	Land and Property Services (LPS) NI
Contract for the Microsoft Premier Support	£180,000	R Cregan	Microsoft
Contract for the maintenance and support for SAP, SRM & VIM until financial systems replacement	£70,730	R Cregan	HCL Technologies
Contract for Clockwise System until replacement in HR/Payroll/T&A project implementation	£56,162	R Cregan	Softworks
Contract extension for 6 months for the removal, transportation and emptying of skips and hook lift containers (T1430 contract) to ensure ongoing service delivery whilst a formal procurement exercise is completed	£150,000	S Toland / R Black	Avenue Recycling
Contract extension for 9 months for the collection, storage,	£42,000	J Walsh	Morgan Document Security

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retrieval and destruction of office records (T629a contract) to ensure ongoing service delivery whilst a formal procurement exercise is completed			
Contract extension for 2 years for £3.85m for the recycling collection service from 58,000 households on a weekly basis (T1200 contract) to ensure ongoing service delivery whilst economic appraisal of service is completed and a subsequent procurement exercise run.	£3.85m	S Toland / R Black	Bryson Recycling

Table 3 - Modification to Contract Term

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

Table 4 - Retrospective Single Tender Actions

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

Equality and Good Relations

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Shared City Partnership**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Shared City Partnership held on 8th March, including the recommendations:

PEACE IV

- to delegate authority to the Peace IV Programme Board to consider modifications to target delivery timescales for projects, subject to approval from the Special European Union Programmes Body.

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Good Relations

- that a further report be submitted to the Partnership outlining the current structures within the Council for working with groups aligned to those mentioned under the good relations duty and the following 'Hate Crime Categories' - disability, transgender identity and sexual orientation and how these should relate to the work of and representation on the Shared City Partnership.

**Update on Decade of Centenaries Programme 2021
and 80th Anniversary of the Belfast Blitz**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- provide an update on progress concerning the Decade of Centenaries Programme 2021; and
- provide further information on how the Council can mark the 80th anniversary of the Belfast Blitz on 15th April 2021 in the context of Covid-19 restrictions.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to:

- i. note that Council has received £87,700 from the Shared History Fund, which is being distributed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund towards the Council's Decade of Centenaries Programme;
- ii. consider the proposals contained in the report to mark the 80th anniversary of the Belfast Blitz on 15th April 2021 with regard to the use of searchlights at City Hall and note the challenges in securing the use of the siren;
- iii. consider turning off the lights at City Hall on 15th April 2021, as referred to the Committee from the Council meeting on 1st March 2021; and
- iv. agree an amount of up to £800 towards the use of the searchlights/equipment on 15th April 2021.

3.0 Main Report

Decade of Centenaries Programme

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
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- 3.1** At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 19th February 2021, Members were advised that an application requesting £87,700 had been submitted to the Shared History Fund which is being distributed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The application was seeking funding for 4 projects which had been agreed by Council as part of the Decade of Centenaries Programme ; namely:
- Drama and animation programme in mid June 2021
 - The restoration of the chairs in the Council Chamber, used by the King and Queen on the occasion of the inauguration of the NI Parliament in 1921
 - A digitised artefacts and stories project related to 1921 and;
 - A time capsule project
- 3.2** Members are advised that the Council's application to the Fund has been successful, with the full amount requested being granted. Officers have already began work on the implementation of these projects.
- 3.3** Members may wish to note that a panel discussion is being organized for March 26, from 12 noon – 2pm on the topic: *'100 Years of Northern Ireland; How Has It Gone?'* This event is being run by ND Events and Tara Mills from the BBC has agreed to be our moderator.

The panel for this event will consist of the following:

- Lord Paul Bew, Chair of the Centenary Historical Advisory Panel
 - Professor Mary E. Daly, UCD and Royal Irish Academy
 - Professor Thomas Hennessey, Professor of Modern British and Irish History, Canterbury Christchurch University.
 - Dr. Marie Coleman, School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics, Queens University Belfast.
 - Dr. Seán Byers, Researcher at Trademark Belfast and author of a number of pieces on trade unions, economic and political strategies
- 3.4** Each of the panel members have been asked to focus the topic from a particular angle.

Registration for this event is here:

<https://ndevents.co.uk/bcccentenariesprogramme/>

80th Anniversary of the Belfast Blitz

- 3.5** At the last meeting of the Committee, Members agreed that in the current environment, and given that the Northern Ireland War Memorial (NIWM) are organising a range of creative activities including online lectures, work with schools, reminiscence projects which will reach a wider audience, Council would take the approach of supporting and promoting the programme in the following ways:
- Subject to restrictions, the Lord Mayor will take part in the annual laying of wreaths ceremony at City Cemetery and Milltown Cemetery on 15th April, on behalf of Council if small gatherings are permitted.
 - Lord Mayor to launch and/or promote the activities being planned around the anniversary.
 - Council Communications Team will liaise with the NIWM to ensure we promote the events and Lord Mayor could record an appropriate message as part of this promotion.
 - The NI War Memorial is planning to deliver reminiscence resource packs to care homes to mark the 80th anniversary. Council will liaise with the Museum to publicise the activity packs and the Lord Mayor will be involved in some capacity to be determined.
- 3.6** The Council also agreed to contribute up to £1,000 towards the printing costs of the school and care home packs.
- 3.7** Officers were asked to explore the possibility of including an air raid siren/searchlight within the programme and bring a report back to the Committee.
- 3.8** The Council has engaged with War Years Remembered who had previously provided an air raid siren and a searchlight for the 75th anniversary. However, while willing to be of help, at the time of writing, the organisation are not in a position to confirm if they can supply the equipment at this stage and Officers are still awaiting potential costs. The air raid siren which they previously supplied would only be heard in the environs of the City Hall grounds and the searchlight provided would not require permission from the Aviation Authority.
- 3.9** As a further option, officers have sourced a company which could provide two searchlights on the evening which could be seen across Belfast at a cost of £500. These would be more powerful

than the previous searchlight used and would require that notice be given to the Aviation Authority.

- 3.10** In addition, at the March Council meeting, it was agreed that consideration would be given at the next meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to turning off the lights at the City Hall on 15th April to mark the anniversary.
- 3.11** Should Members approve the above action, the lights at the City Hall could be turned off at an appropriate time and the searchlights be turned on for a period of time which would be a significant visual representation for the commemoration of the anniversary.
- 3.12** Members may wish to note that the NIWM are also in the process of producing a Blitz Walking Tour booklet which will contain QR codes where information about the Blitz can be downloaded and the tour includes the NIWM, St Anne's cathedral among others, with the tour finishing at City Hall. Copies of the booklet will be made available at the City Hall to enhance the visitor offering.

Equality and Good Relations Implications

- 3.13** There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this event.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.14** £1,000 has already been agreed from existing budgets and up to an additional £800 could also be covered from existing budgets for the above occasion."

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted that the Council had received £87,700 from the Shared History Fund, which was being distributed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, towards the Council's Decade of Centenaries Programme;
- ii. agreed to mark the 80th anniversary of the Belfast Blitz on 15th April with searchlights and an air raid siren at the City Hall, subject to appropriate equipment being sourced by Council officers;
- iii. agreed to turn off the lighting at the City Hall on 15th April; and
- iv. agreed to allocate an amount of up to £800 towards the use of the searchlights/equipment on 15th April.

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Operational Issues

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

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 11th March.

Minutes of the Meeting of Audit and Risk Panel

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Panel of 9th March.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Customer Focus Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Customer Focus Working Group of 24th February.

James Connolly Heritage Trail Sign

The City Solicitor informed the Committee that a request had been received from Redhead Exhibition to install an interpretative interactive sign on a bollard facing the North West lawn in the grounds of the City Hall. The sign would form part of a James Connolly heritage trail in Belfast being funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

He reported that Mr. Michael Lyons, Assistant Director, Redhead Exhibition, was in attendance to outline the extent of the proposal and he was welcomed to the meeting.

Mr. Lyons informed the Members that the James Connolly heritage trail had been designed as a walking tour and that it would be supported by an innovative augmented reality app, which would allow for the presentation of dynamic interpretative content via smartphone and tablet devices. The trail would commence in the grounds of the City Hall, as a natural meeting and focal point, and proceed, with stops being made at a number of buildings and areas of historical significance, to the Connolly family home opposite the City Cemetery on the Falls Road. It would, he pointed out, target local and international visitors and was being integrated into the City's tourism offering through Visit Belfast and other tourism centres.

He explained that Redhead Exhibition had been tasked with designing and installing thirteen signs for the trail, all of which would be 300 mm in diameter and of a consistent design. The sign in the grounds of the City Hall would, upon being activated virtually, create a virtual interpretative space which would set the cultural, economic, political and social context around the time of James Connolly's arrival in Belfast in 1911 as a Trades Union pioneer. All design, manufacturing and installation costs would be met by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. He concluded by inviting the Committee to accede to his request.

During discussion, a Member raised a number of issues around the proposal, such as the increasing number of tours which were now using the City Hall as a starting point and the potential for congestion, the setting of a precedent for further requests of this nature, the affixing of the sign to what was a listed building and the use on the sign of a symbol which

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had, in the past, been used by proscribed organisations. He made the point that the use of the sign would be limited to those occasions on which the grounds of the City Hall were open and suggested that it would be more effective if placed at a nearby public realm location, where it was more accessible or combined with other cultural tour signage nearby.

Other Members highlighted the benefits to be derived from the proposed James Connolly Trail and the need for the Council to develop a policy to deal with future requests of this nature was raised.

In response, Mr. Lyons confirmed that the interactive technology used in the sign was well advanced and would not be affected by crowds or other obstructions and added that the sign would be affixed to a post close to the main entrance, rather than on the façade of the building. He added that the symbol on the sign was a representation of that used by the Irish Citizen Army of trade union volunteers, of which James Connolly was a member, and was now part of the James Connolly Visitor Centre corporate brand.

After further discussion, it was

Moved by Alderman Kingston,
Seconded by Councillor Pankhurst

That the Committee agrees to defer the request from Redhead Exhibition to install a sign in the grounds of the City Hall, as part of the James Connolly Heritage Trail, to allow for it to be considered by Party Group Leaders and agrees also that consideration be given to formulating a policy to deal with future requests of this nature.

On a recorded vote, eleven Members voted for the proposal and eight against and it was declared carried.

<u>For 11</u>	<u>Against 8</u>
The High Sheriff (Councillor Long); Aldermen Dorrian, Haire, Kingston and Sandford; and Councillors Bunting, Groogan, McAllister, McDonough-Brown, McReynolds and Pankhurst.	Councillor Black (Chairperson); and Councillors Beattie, Carson, Garrett, Heading, Lyons, McLaughlin and Murphy.

The Committee noted that the City Solicitor would submit to a future meeting a report providing a legal opinion on the outcome of the independent Equality Impact Assessment which had, in 2012, been undertaken in relation to City Hall Memorabilia.

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

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Working Group on the Climate Crisis of 15th March.

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Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Autism Impact Champion

At the request of Councillor McMullan, the Committee adopted the following motion and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting outlining how it might be progressed and resourced:

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

Chairperson

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People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 2nd March, 2021

SPECIAL MEETING OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Baker (Chairperson);
Alderman Rodgers; and
Councillors Black, Bunting, Corr, Flynn, M. Kelly,
Magee, McAteer, Mulholland, Newton, Pankhurst,
Smyth and Verner.

Also attended: Councillor Kyle.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Mrs. A. Allen, Neighbourhood Services Manager;
Mr. Stephen Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager;
Mr. Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and
Ms. Katharine McCrum, Democratic Services Officer.

External attendance:

NI Housing Executive: Mrs. Jennifer Hawthorne, Regional Manager for Belfast
Mr. Brian O'Kane, Senior Principal Officer
Ms. Fiona McGrath, Head of Place Shaping Belfast

Apologies

Apologies were recorded on behalf of Councillors Cobain, Collins, de Faoite, Garrett, McCusker and McReynolds.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Updates from Northern Ireland Housing Executive

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Mrs. J. Hawthorne (Belfast Regional Manager), Ms. F. McGrath (Head of Place Shaping Belfast) and Mr. B. O'Kane (Senior Principal Officer), representing the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE).

Presentation on Dealing with Homelessness during the Pandemic

Mr. O'Kane provided Members with statistics regarding homelessness in Northern Ireland during 2019/2020, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic:

- 16,802 households presented as homeless last year (11,323 accepted);
- 36 rough sleepers were identified in the 2019/2020 street count;
- There were 4,527 temporary accommodation placements;

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- 21,955 households were on the social housing waiting list as homeless;
- The top 3 reasons for presenting as homeless were accommodation not being reasonable, breakdown or family dispute, and loss of rented accommodation;
- 52% were single, 32% families, 12% older people and 4% were couples.

Mr. O’Kane explained that, since the outbreak of Covid-19, the number of homeless presentations had fallen while demand for temporary accommodation had increased. He added that young people had been disproportionately impacted and that the availability and throughput of temporary accommodation had reduced, necessitating an increase in the use of hotel and B&B accommodation.

The Members were advised that the aim of the NIHE Covid-19 response was to safeguard as many homeless people as possible from the virus, ensuring that they had the same opportunities as other vulnerable people to self-isolate, receive care, protection and treatment where possible. The key impacts on customers were identified as physical health, financial pressures, mental health, relationship breakdowns, reduced access to support and social isolation.

Mr. O’Kane then provided details of their ‘Everyone In’ approach to accommodate rough sleepers, including those with no recourse to public funds.

In terms of the NIHE response to date, the following elements were outlined:

- Increased supply of temporary accommodation;
- The lockdown of night shelters and day centres;
- Additional support provided and a shift made from in-reach to assertive outreach;
- Publication of ‘The Way Home’ Reset Plan;
- The appointment of a Coordinator and an Emergency Relief Panel;
- The ‘Everyone In’ approach;
- New arrangements for multi-agency consultation and collaboration.

Mr. O’Kane explained that their aim now was to prevent people returning to rough sleeping and to work to prevent the loss of homes in the private rented sector. He also noted that they were working to acquire additional temporary accommodation units with block bookings made in order to respond to emergency scenarios.

The Committee was provided with information on a Strategic Review which would remodel and reconfigure services whilst looking at the long term suitability of accommodation, private sector leasing and reducing reliance on non-standard accommodation (hotels and B&Bs).

In conclusion, Mr. O’Kane detailed the challenges moving forward, including securing the budget for the year ahead, anticipating demand, the rollout of vaccines and testing, and the next steps for the ‘Everyone In’ approach.

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Mrs. Hawthorne noted the strain on staff, particularly those with young families, as a result of the ongoing working from home arrangements and the increased demand on services.

A Member commended the work of the staff and voiced his understanding of the issues they were facing. He then questioned what could be done to support new residents to an area, including asylum seekers, who might only come to the attention of community groups or representatives if an issue was to arise. He suggested that it was important to connect with people at an earlier stage as this could prevent isolation and improve the chances of sustaining tenancies.

Mrs. Hawthorne welcomed the increase in asylum seekers who had been granted leave to remain in Northern Ireland. She noted however that there were a number of pressures on the system, including delays to the construction of new builds, repair issues and a rise in the need for permanent accommodation. She agreed that wrap around services for asylum seekers was a key issue and noted that a number of other agencies were responsible for Sustainable Integration work to support that.

Mr. O'Kane confirmed that, despite the difficulties in travel over the last year, a record number of people had presented as seeking asylum in December 2020. He outlined the work that the NIHE was doing with partner agencies to provide support but agreed that additional work could be done to support that transition.

With regards to getting people 'tenancy ready', Mrs. Hawthorne explained that staff were seeing an increase in 18-25 year olds with extreme vulnerabilities and without the skills to maintain a tenancy. She added that tolerance levels also appeared to be lower now that more people were working or staying at home all day. She also pointed out that people were often at a point of crisis when they presented as homeless and in need of a range of support, with housing often being an isolating factor that could compound the other issues. Both representatives underlined the learning points from the last year and reiterated the importance of not losing this and continuing with outreach support.

A Member queried how an applicant would be defined as suitable for temporary accommodation as opposed to permanent accommodation, and what statistics existed for the move through to permanent tenancies. He also questioned why there had been a rise in the 18-25 age range.

Mr. O'Kane explained that anyone who presented for housing assistance, if they met the statutory definition, would be provided with temporary accommodation (if needed) alongside other services. He advised that people often made their own temporary arrangements to stay with family or friends while they made their way through the permanent waiting list, however, as a result of Covid-19, this was now less likely. Mrs. Hawthorne added that the final solution was always to offer permanent and suitable accommodation.

With regards to statistics, Mr. O'Kane suggested that around 70% of those in temporary accommodation were offered permanent accommodation by the Housing Executive or a social housing partner but the process had slowed during the pandemic resulting in increased time in temporary accommodation.

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A Member reiterated previous comments about supporting those who were new to an area by using the community sector in a GDPR compliant manner in order to offer practical advice and support. She also noted the need to include open spaces in new designs as their importance had become so apparent during periods of lockdown. Finally, she recommended that honest conversations were had with those on the housing waiting list about demand levels and the likelihood of permanent housing as frustrations were growing.

Mr. O'Kane confirmed that conversations had recently taken place with partners about the idea of Community Navigator roles. He suggested that those honest conversations were had, but agreed that additional work could be undertaken, whilst not putting people off joining the waiting list. He suggested that additional initiatives could be included in the Reset Plan and stated that sustaining tenancies was key.

In response to a query as to whether the Executive was equipped to deal with increased demand from young families or other fall outs from the pandemic, Mr. O'Kane advised that they continued to look at demand and the emerging pressures. He suggested that demand from the private rented sector was likely to increase due to rent arrears, and unemployment and changes to benefits were also likely to have an impact. He also commented on the needs of young families, couples, and larger blended families, as well as the lessons learnt over the past year.

New Build Update and City Centre Waiting List

The Committee was presented with an update report on the Social Housing Development Programme for Belfast during 2020/21, which included the following details:

- Units completed 2020/21; 255;
- Units under construction; 907; and
- Units programmed to start; 1636.

Ms. McGrath drew attention to a number of the larger schemes within the Development Programme, including Glenmona, Hannahstown, the St Gemma's High School site, Brookfield Mill, Visteon Blacks Road and Upper Dunmurry Lane. The Members were advised that a draft programme for 2021/22 had been developed but would not be published until it received DfC Ministerial approval.

In terms of the City Centre, the Members were advised that:

- Work was ongoing with the developer at the Waterside/Sirocco site, however, development had slipped to a 2021/2022 start but discussions were scheduled regarding the delivery of shared housing under the Housing For All programme;
- NIHE was continuing to work with Castlebrook on the social housing units at the Tribeca site;
- The developer of a Titanic Quarter site had proposed 106 units of social housing, with a mixture of 1, 2 and 3 bed units, however no housing association had been appointed as yet.

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A Member provided an example of a family in his constituency in a single let for 5 years with no offer of permanent accommodation, and questioned what advice could be given in this instance.

Ms. McGrath noted that there were a number of new schemes under development in the area and confirmed that they were aware of the high need. Ms. Hawthorne added that the same number of points could be considered high in some areas but low in others, and so she recommended that Members speak to the relevant NIHE Area Manager to find out what the allocations for an area were in order to have realistic conversations with their constituents and manage expectations. She also explained that often people were offered permanent housing but turned it down as it was not in the area that they were now established in.

A Member commented that there was still some fear from communities and families around moving to apartment living in the City Centre. She questioned whether a branding exercise was needed between the Council and the NIHE in order to make the move more appealing in terms of promoting green spaces, connectivity, regeneration, and the emerging availability of permanent housing.

Ms. McGrath agreed that, while it was common in other cities, it was not yet the norm in Belfast although an encouraging number of families had expressed an interest in living in the City Centre, similar in number to those on the general waiting list. She stated that, once schemes were ready for allocation, people would be able to see what was available and it might be appropriate to undertake some branding work at this stage. She also confirmed that housing would be provided to those with the highest points but it was too soon to know what the points level would be at this stage.

Another Member noted the positive lifestyle available to those living in the City Centre and questioned how the revitalisation of areas could be reimagined to include family homes which could make use of the increasing retail vacancies. She also questioned whether planning rules dictated whether balconies could be included in new developments as this too may encourage apartment living.

Ms. McGrath confirmed that NIHE worked closely with Belfast City Council whose Local Development Plan foresaw a huge increase in the city centre population with up to 8,000 housing units. She confirmed that the NIHE ask was for 20% of these units to be made up of social and affordable shared housing. With regards to balconies, she confirmed that developers had insisted upon them at the Sirocco site but this was not standard a requirement. The Members were also advised that DfC was working on increased space standards for apartments and flats, including additional storage spaces. Ms. McGrath suggested that in time the area could be suitable for older populations too, with retirement villages offering social opportunities alongside apartment living.

A Member observed that the majority of new builds in East Belfast were apartments, and underlined the need for more family housing. Ms. McGrath suggested that they did their best to provide a mix of housing, with most families requiring 2 or 3 bed accommodation. Mrs. Hawthorne agreed that there was a lack of new building in East Belfast but noted that most existing housing in the area was family housing. She explained

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that half of the waiting list was made up of single people and so the development plan needed to reflect this. In conclusion, she raised the issue of under occupation, advising Members that there were a substantial number of single elderly people living in family accommodation and so it was important that support was provided to those who were willing to downsize in order to free up family accommodation.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the NIHE representatives for their attendance and noted the updates provided.

Chairperson

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 9th March, 2021

MEETING OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Baker (Chairperson);
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.

Also attended: Councillors Matthew Collins and Kyle.

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

Apologies

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

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 9th February were taken as read and signed as correct.

It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st March with the following amendments:

Request for Matter to be Taken Back for Further Consideration - Knockbreda Road entrance to Cherryfield Playing Fields

The Council agreed that the minute of the meeting of 9th February, under the heading "Knockbreda Road entrance to Cherryfield Playing Fields", be taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

Update on Responsible Dog Ownership

At the request of Councillor McMullan, the Council agreed to write the DAERA Minister to advise that the Council was supportive of the proposed approach in relation to the use of DNA testing to assist dog fouling detections but stating that a Northern Ireland wide approach should be adopted.

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Affordable Warmth Scheme update

At the request of Councillor Heading, the Council agreed to write to the Minister for Communities to request that the underspend for the Affordable Warmth Scheme in 2020/21 be rolled over to the next financial year.

**Update on development of the Belfast City
Air Quality Action Plan 2021 – 2026**

At the request of Councillor McAteer, it was agreed that the Strategic Group overseeing the development of the Action Plan be asked to take submissions from Community Groups during the consultation in regard to the preparation of the five year plan.

DAERA - A Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland

At the request of Councillor Gormley, the Council agreed to write to DAERA to highlight the need for it to support the accelerated improvement of air quality within Belfast and specifically within the Council's four Air Quality Management Areas. It would also seek clarity from DAERA as to what actions it planned to take, through the strategy, to tackle the persistent hot-spots.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were recorded.

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 5 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 and the Members' attention was drawn to the associated report. The Committee was advised that, given that the Council had put in place mitigation measures for 2021/22, it was being suggested that the Council would once again revert to the normal financial reporting process as per G.12 of the Financial Regulations. This would free up officer time to focus on monitoring the financial position on a daily basis and the development of a revised finance strategy.

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The Committee also noted the contents of a report which summarised the Quarter 3 financial position for the People and Communities Committee, including a forecast of the year end outturn. It noted that the revenue outturn at Quarter 3 was an underspend of £3.1m representing 2.8% of the net expenditure budget for the quarter. Income losses from closure of facilities and services continued to be offset by reduced costs resulting from event cancellation, premise related savings and employee savings from the moratorium on recruitments with the exception of business critical posts.

The Committee noted the February 2021 financial update, Quarter 3 financial position and agreed to revert to the normal financial reporting process as per G.12 of the Financial Regulations

Request for hire of Botanic Gardens and Boucher Road Playing Fields for a series of music events

The Committee was asked to note that Aiken Promotions had submitted a contingency request in regard to the hire of Botanic Gardens from 1st – 20th September, 2021. The Members were reminded that, at the People and Communities Committee meeting held in February 2020, the Committee had granted authority to Aiken Promotions for the hire of the great lawn at Botanic Gardens for a series of music events with attendances under 5,000 persons in the years 2021 and 2022 to include set up and take down. In light of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic the Promoter had submitted a contingency request, should the NI Executive Roadmap prevent the June 2021 dates from going ahead as planned. If the current restrictions were to be lifted, the September contingency would not be required.

Following a query from Councillor Smyth in regard to the potential of offering environmental assessment awareness training, the Director of City Services undertook to investigate and to liaise with the Member directly.

The Committee approved the contingency request from Aiken for the hire of Botanic Gardens from 1st until 20th September 2021 and to delegate authority to officers to work with both promoters to agree different dates for the events should public health and other operational restrictions require further adjustments and contingency measures to be agreed.

Matters referred back from the Council/Motions

Motion - Belfast Hills "Call to Action" Document

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 1st March, the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Matt Collins and seconded by Councillor O'Hara, had, in accordance with Standing Order 13(f), been referred to the Committee for consideration:

“Council welcomes and endorses the publication of the new report, Access to the Belfast Hills –Promises, Betrayals and a Call to Action, prepared by the Belfast Hills Access Campaign. Council also welcomes the recent decision by the People and Communities Committee to request a report on improving access to the Belfast Hills. Council requests that the aforementioned report is incorporated into this process in order to best compliment this effort. Council wishes to see a comprehensive resolution of the access problem which requires more specific measures and the opening of the following routes;

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1. *Black Mountain and Divis from Glencairn/Ligoniel.*
2. *Black Mountain and Divis from Whiterock.*
3. *From the top of Collin Glen to Black Mountain and Divis.*
4. *Completion of the key spinal route (the Ulster Way) by securing access to its central section from Wolf Hill to Squires Hill.*

Council recognises the difficulties caused to officers by the pandemic but also wishes the question of access to the Belfast Hills to be given higher priority than has been the case in recent years. In doing so, Council recommends that officers take account of the, Access to the Belfast Hills –Promises, Betrayals and a Call to Action. Following this, Council requests that officers prepare an indicative plan and timescale for addressing these issues.”

Councillor Matt Collins addressed the Committee and outlined the context of the motion. He referred to Mr. Gray from the Belfast Hills Access Campaign and his presentation to the March meeting of the Council in regard to the report ‘Access to the Belfast Hills – Promises, Betrayals and a Call to Action’ and he commended the report. He suggested that when the matter was being considered further by the Committee that Mr. Gray be invited to attend to enable him to answer any queries that the Members might have.

A number of Members also spoke in support of the motion

The Committee adopted the motion and agreed that a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee. It was further agreed that the report would consider any potential external funding opportunities that might exist and that Mr. J. Gray, representing the Belfast Hills Access Campaign would be invited to present to the Committee.

**Response from Department of Infrastructure –
Access to the Belfast Hills**

The Democratic Services Officer reminded the Members that, at its meeting on 12th January, it had agreed that it would write to the Department for Infrastructure regarding the motion passed by Council to create better access to the Belfast Hills which had been proposed by Councillor Donnelly and seconded by Councillor Garrett. She drew the Members’ attention to the response that had been received from Minister Mallon.

In the correspondence, Minister Mallon advised that she was keen on improving access for walking and cycling and encouraging people to move away from driving. She stated that she was aware of the popularity of the Belfast Hills for many but unfortunately most people arrived there by car. She would like to see better active travel access to this destination, particularly for the benefit of the 33% of Belfast residents who did not have access to a car.

The Minister outlined that she believed that greenways and similar community paths would ultimately create public spaces that would enhance people’s quality of life and leave an enduring legacy to be enjoyed by future generations. She noted that the actual development of greenway projects was, in general terms, the responsibility of local Councils rather than the Department, however, the Department were keen to work closely with local Councils and other stakeholders to support the development of active travel routes.

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The Minister noted that her Department had committed £20 million for blue / green infrastructure and to working with Councils and other partners in identifying and delivering active travel and greenway projects and advised that £750,000 from that fund had already been allocated for the development of the Forth Meadow Community Greenway, which would provide part of an important active travel link to the Belfast Hills.

She further advised that, in addition, in January, the Walking and Cycling Champion, Ms. L. Loughran, had held initial discussions with the National Trust and Belfast City Council regarding the potential for developing better walking and cycling access to this area, particularly for the benefit of the nearby communities of North and West Belfast.

She referred to the parking situation on the Divis Road and stated that she felt that this highlighted the importance of developing better ways of travelling to the Belfast Hills. She concluded by stating that the Department would continue to work with the National Trust and other partners to try to address the congestion difficulties.

The Committee noted the response.

**Response from Department of Infrastructure –
Gritting of Greenways and Minor Roads
throughout the City**

The Democratic Services Officer reminded the Members that, at its meeting on 12th January, it had agreed that it would write to the Department for Infrastructure regarding the lack of gritting of Greenways and minor roads throughout the City. She drew the Members' attention to the response that had been received from Minister Mallon.

The Minister advised that to assist the safe movement of traffic in wintry conditions, the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) set aside sufficient funding to salt the main through routes across Northern Ireland, however, it was not possible to salt all of the roads given the competing demands on DfI's finite resources, many of which were safety related. She added that footways were not included in the gritting schedule.

The Minister advised that in periods of extreme conditions, following heavy snowfall or prolonged freezing conditions, the Department worked in partnership with local Councils to remove snow and ice from footways and pedestrian areas.

In respect of greenways specifically, she advised that the majority of greenway type paths throughout Northern Ireland were owned by local Councils and she stated that the responsibility for maintenance of those paths was that of the local Councils. The small number of greenways owned by the Department did not currently meet the criteria for inclusion in the salted network. She advised that although she would like to be able to expand the gritting service to these greenways and many other routes, unfortunately it was simply not practicable to do so at present, due to the severe budget constraints and many other pressures being faced by the Department.

Councillor McReynolds expressed disappointment at the response.

The Committee noted the correspondence.

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**Referred back from Council - Knockbreda Road
entrance to Cherryfield Playing Fields**

The Committee was reminded that, as advised earlier in the meeting, the Council at its meeting on 1st March, had agreed that the minute of the meeting of 9th February, under the heading "Knockbreda Road entrance to Cherryfield Playing Fields", be taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

The Committee then considered further the minute of the meeting of 9th February, an extract of the minutes is set hereunder:

"The Committee considered the report, during which a number of Members expressed concern at the potential road safety concerns should the gate be re-opened, following which it was:

*Moved by Councillor Baker,
Seconded by Councillor Garrett,*

"This Committee agrees in principle to the opening of the gate, subject to internal financing being secured. This agreement will also be subject to safe road crossing/road safety measures being considered and agreed in advance by the Department for Infrastructure and approved through a statutory public consultation."

Amendment

*Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth,*

"In order to adequately address the road safety concerns expressed in the survey responses, Belfast City Council will write to the Department for Infrastructure requesting that a pedestrian crossing adjacent to the Knockbreda Road and Ravenhill Road gates to Cherryvale be funded as part of the blue and green Infrastructure fund.

Pedestrian crossings at this location, along with the opening of the gate, would help to link pedestrian and cyclist routes from Cregagh Glen to the Lagan Gateway greenway, across the planned crossing on the A55, through Rosetta, Knockbreda Road, Cherryvale Playing Fields, Ravenhill Road, Ormeau Road, Sunnyside Street, Annadale Embankment, Governors Bridge, Stranmillis Embankment, Lockview Road to the Lagan Towpath."

The Proposer of the motion advised that he was content to accept the amendment but the proposer of the amendment stated that he wished for it to be taken as a separate proposal and requested a recorded vote:

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

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<u>For 6</u> <i>Councillor De Faoite, Flynn, M. Kelly, McCusker, McReynolds and Smyth.</i>	<u>Against 12</u> <i>Alderman Rodgers, and Councillors Baker, Black, Bunting, Michael Collins, Corr, Garrett, Magee, McAteer, Newton, Pankhurst and Verner.</i>
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A further Member requested that a site visit to the location be organised with DfI representatives to enable further consideration of the road safety concerns.

The Proposer of the original Motion, Councillor Baker, advised that he was content to accept the aforementioned amendments, as proposed by Councillor de Faoite, and also acceded to the request to convene a site visit and the Committee unanimously agreed:

- in principle to the opening of the gate, as outlined in Option 2 of the report, subject to internal financing being secured;*
- that the agreement would be subject to safe road crossing/road safety measures being agreed in advance by the DfI and approved through a statutory public consultation;*
- that the Committee would write to the Infrastructure Minister to outline the position and to stress that, whilst the survey was positive, road safety concerns remained a major issue and request that to try and alleviate these concerns that a pedestrian crossing be installed at the location (adjacent to the Knockbreda Road and Ravenhill Road gates to Cherryvale) with the funding for the proposed crossing being sought from the blue and green Infrastructure fund; and*
- to write to the DfI to request a site visit to the location to discuss and further consider the road safety concerns raised.”*

Councillor de Faoite stated that in an effort to progress the matter the local Councillors from the area had been working together to try and progress the outstanding concerns and he made the following proposal:

“In order to adequately address the road safety concerns expressed in the survey responses, Belfast City Council will write to the Department for Infrastructure requesting that a pedestrian crossing adjacent to the Knockbreda Road and Ravenhill Road gates to Cherryvale be funded as part of the blue and green Infrastructure fund.

Pedestrian crossings at this location, along with the opening of the gate, would help to link pedestrian and cyclist routes from Cregagh Glen to the Lagan Gateway greenway, across the planned crossing on the A55, through Rosetta, Knockbreda Road, Cherryvale Playing Fields, Ravenhill Road, Ormeau Road, Sunnyside Street, Annadale Embankment, Governors Bridge, Stranmillis Embankment, Lockview Road to the Lagan Towpath.

Furthermore, to address the anti-social behaviour concerns an assessment shall be carried out in consultation with adjacent residents who will be

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affected on the possible options to prevent anti-social behaviour including new lighting options, anti-graffiti paint and anti-climb paint.”

The Chairperson stated that, whilst he did not agree in principle with the proposal, he was willing to accede to the wishes of the Councillors for the area but asked that his concerns in regard to road safety and specifically in regard to the opening of the gate before a pedestrian crossing was installed be recorded.

The Committee:

- agreed in principle to the opening of the gate, as outlined in Option 2 of the report, subject to internal financing being secured;
- agreed that, in order to adequately address the road safety concerns expressed in the survey responses, the Council would write to the Department for Infrastructure requesting that a pedestrian crossing adjacent to the Knockbreda Road and Ravenhill Road gates to Cherryvale be funded as part of the blue and green Infrastructure fund;
- noted that a pedestrian crossing at this location, along with the opening of the gate, would help to link pedestrian and cyclist routes from Cregagh Glen to the Lagan Gateway greenway, across the planned crossing on the A55, through Rosetta, Knockbreda Road, Cherryvale Playing Fields, Ravenhill Road, Ormeau Road, Sunnyside Street, Annadale Embankment, Governors Bridge, Stranmillis Embankment, Lockview Road to the Lagan Towpath; and agreed that, in an attempt to address the anti-social behaviour concerns, that an assessment be carried out in consultation with adjacent residents who might be affected on the possible options to prevent anti-social behaviour including new lighting options, anti-graffiti paint and anti-climb paint;
- noted that due to current Covid restrictions and the desire to carry out face to face consultations that the consultation process would take time to progress; and
- agreed that the response from the DfI and outcome of the antisocial behavior assessment, with residents in the immediate area of the gate location, be tabled at a future meeting of the committee for consideration.

Committee/Strategic Issues

**Multi-Agency Demonstrator –
Supporting those at risk**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 To further update on the progress of Phase 1 and the Phase 2 Department of Justice offer of funding to Belfast City Council to**

undertake a multi-agency demonstration project supporting those at risk of paramilitary attacks in West Belfast and their families.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Note the Phase 1 update and support the extension of this demonstrator as detailed in the report.**

3.0 Main report

Background

- 3.1 A number of years ago the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) requested Belfast City Council (BCC) to act as Lead co-ordinating agency for organisations who had a role in addressing the systemic issues associated with paramilitary style assaults in the Lower Falls geographical area of Belfast.**
- 3.2 It was hoped that the sharing of such information would provide an opportunity for early intervention by the organisations to protect victims, their families and improve how organisations involved could react and provide an adequate co-ordinated service and the following work has been undertaken in progressing this.**
- 3.3 As the Tackling Paramilitarism work (arising from the Fresh Start Agreement) developed in central government they met regularly with Belfast to better understand if the work in the city adds value and the Department of Justice subsequently asked Belfast City Council to make an application for funding to further develop this work as they believed there were important lessons to be learned from it.**
- 3.4 DoJ allocated £69,000 for this work to be undertaken in Belfast in the 20/21 financial year and Members were updated in February 2020 through Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the Phase 1 approach.**
- 3.5 No funding is used to cover the support from existing statutory services, but to bolster the support needed from the community. Additionally, all funding is conditional on working only with accredited (by DoJ) restorative justice schemes as there are high degrees of vulnerability and safeguarding/legal issues with individuals at risk and their families and the appropriate levels of assurance need to be in place.**

3.6 The agreed objectives of the DoJ funded programme are to:

Deliver a targeted, co-ordinated piece of work to address the needs of those under or at risk of threat from paramilitary groups with a particular focus on:-

1. Improve communication, co-ordination amongst service providers creating a process, which allows the sharing of information, whilst meeting all legislative requirements.
2. Improve the management and flow of information between agencies, administer, monitor and measure threat levels and support for individuals and their families. Update and liaise with all statutory partners recording actions and progress.
3. Gather the required data and statistics to demonstrate the impact of the PSA multi-agency group.

3.7 Phase 1 Progress to Date (April 2020 – March 2021)

- Memorandum of Understanding developed and signed by all relevant statutory partners clarifying roles and responsibilities and information sharing arrangements agreed
- Inclusion of Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI) as the accredited restorative practitioner and lead community partner for Phase 1
- All partners agreed a safeguarding approach to a community information/intelligence reporting process. The core objectives of the process was to safeguard the individual, their family and protect the community;
- Fortnightly case management meetings have taken place throughout (including during COVID-19) with both statutory partners and CRJI sharing information regarding young people at risk of paramilitary style attacks and more importantly taking action to minimise that risk
- Academic from Queens University Belfast currently undertaking an evaluation with early feedback extremely positive

3.8 Phase 2 (April 21 – March 22)

Given the very positive feedback from the Phase 1 demonstrator, the Department of Justice have offered a further £95,000 for the 21/22 financial year to cover the following:

- Continuation of the existing work in West Belfast lead by CRJI;
- Extend the work in to North Belfast; and
- Extend the DoJ accredited restorative practitioner involved in the work to include Northern Ireland Alternatives

- 3.9 The Phase 2 objectives continue as per Phase 1 and are entirely focused on preventing paramilitary style attacks in North and West Belfast and supporting/protecting those affected**

Financial Implications

- 3.10 The allocated budget for Phase 2 is £95,000 during 21/22 and is entirely provided by external funding received from the Department of Justice.**

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

- 3.11 None at present, but given the sensitivity of this work, this will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Belfast Healthy Cities (Review and Funding 2021/22)

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 8th September 2020, it had agreed to extend the current partnership agreement with Belfast Healthy Cities until 31st March 2021, to allow for the submission of the application for Phase VII of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network and the completion of a value for money review of partnership arrangements with Belfast Healthy Cities, which facilitated the City’s membership of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reported that good progress had been made on the review of the partnership arrangements, with a comprehensive research, review and engagement plan having been developed and agreed across funding partners. In addition, a wide ranging consultation process was currently underway. However, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated mitigating restrictions had resulted in slower than anticipated progress and had negatively impacted the timescale for the work to be completed.

He advised that it was now envisaged that the review would be completed by late March 2021, with a report due to be submitted to the both the People and Communities Committee and Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in May 2021, which would detail the outcome of the review, recommended actions and proposed implementation timescales.

Permission from the Committee was therefore sought to approve an extension of the current partnership agreement with Belfast Healthy Cities, until 30th September 2021, which would enable the completion of the review and also provide an initial period for transition and implementation of the potential review recommendations. The Director advised that all other partners had also agreed to extend their funding agreements to end September 2021.

The Committee agreed to extend the current Partnership agreement with Belfast Healthy Cities to 30th September, 2021.

Parks Programming - New Parks and Open Spaces

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 To seek Members consideration of a citywide pre-policy position in relation to the programming of new transferring open space assets to inform future policy positions on how to effectively programme those assets in partnership with the stakeholders and communities.**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- Agree the proposed citywide pre-policy position for programming new transferring open space assets using the approach detailed in the report; and
- Agree the maximum budget of £15K per asset, up to a maximum of £45K per annum for animation and programming;
- Note this pre-policy position and budget is only proposed until a formal policy position is developed and agreed by Council on the management of community based assets.

3.0 Main report

Background

- 3.1 Members will be aware our assets play a significant role in supporting meaningful outcomes for individuals, families and communities at a local level, in particular the role our community based assets have played throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.**
- 3.2 Members will also be aware through a range of central government grants (Building Successful Communities, Urban Villages etc.) and private funds like The Heritage Lottery, Council has secured significant amounts of capital investment in our community based assets and has taken ownership of strategically important community based assets previously owned by DfC, DfI, NIHE, etc.**
- 3.3 Officers recognise the importance of developing a more coherent policy approach to how Council assets are used to support meaningful outcomes for communities, particularly taking in to account the rich partnership arrangements we have in place with a number of community and voluntary partners who play significant roles in managing and positively programming our assets across the city.**

- 3.4 However, it is also recognised the development of a future policy position will take time, particularly given our strong commitments to co-design and the genuine participation of communities in our work but that operational pressures in relation to COVID-19 may also delay the commencement of this work.
- 3.5 Taking all of the above in to account, however, there remains a number of new community based assets and investments transferring to Council as a result of external funding in 21/22 and 22/23. Experience has demonstrated the importance of ensuring those spaces are animated and programmed from day one. This ensures they are well used by local people to reduce the anti-social behaviour and vandalism, but many of these assets and investments are coming on board without additional external revenue funding to support animation and programming.

Proposed Pre-Policy Position

- 3.6 Given all of the above, the following is proposed as the citywide pre-policy position in relation to new open space assets coming in to the ownership/responsibility of Council and/or where significant investments are being made to enhance existing Council assets.

- 1) That every new community based asset or significant investment in an existing community based asset would require an initial one year animation plan
- 2) Where existing external revenue funding is available, that should be used to support the animation plan
- 3) Where existing external revenue funding is not available, Council agrees a maximum one year animation budget of £15K per site from within existing revenue budgets.

3.7 **Key Elements of the Animation Action Plan Process**

- Develop a local stakeholder group, with agreed terms of reference to support the development of an action plan to animate the space for the first year following the opening of new asset;
- Work with the local community and elected members to develop an action plan to include elements that can be delivered by the community, Council Officers and other statutory partners;
- Assign a maximum revenue budget of up to £15,000 per year for each site, but with a focus on bringing forward partner match funding;
- The financial management of the action plan will be managed by Council officers within the agree financial and procurement policies of the Council;
- Council officers will work closely with the local stakeholder group in a collaborative way to ensure there is joint ownership to deliver the plan;

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- Work is undertaken throughout to ensure the animation and programming can be mainstreamed into normal Council service after one year.

3.8 Financial Implications

Based on timelines for assets coming on board, the expected budget for this is estimated at approximately £30,000 for 2021/2022, which can be met within existing revenue budgets.

3.9 Equality or Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment

None at present, this will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

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:

Proposed Name	Location	Applicant
Moyard Grove	Off Moyard Parade, BT12	Choice Housing

Boxing Strategy Quarterly Update and 2021 - 2022 Action Plan

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 This report is to provide an update on progress on implementation of Belfast Boxing Strategy for October to December 2020 (Quarter 3).

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- (i) Note Quarter 3 progress report and the impacts of Covid-19 restrictions on agreed KPIs.
- (ii) Approve the 2021 – 2022 action plan and budget.

3.0 Main report

Background

- 3.1 Council agreed, through the January 2018 Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, to provide £200,000 to the Irish Athletic

Boxing Association Ulster Branch (IABA) for delivery of an agreed annual action plan supporting the Belfast Boxing Strategy.

- 3.2 The IABA provided SP&R with a detailed breakdown of programmes to be delivered under six main areas. Salary – Development Officer and Coaches, Pathways, Events, Coach Education, Club Support, Governance.
- 3.3 Following this decision the Belfast Boxing Strategy Steering Group has met quarterly, with the most recent meetings held online due to Covid-19 and associated regulations. This Steering Group is chaired by the Director of Neighbourhood Services with Council Officers, IABA Officers and Officials and Co. Antrim Board Officials attending. Small variations to the budget across the six areas have been agreed to assist prioritisation in line with the agreed annual action plan.

Monitoring

- 3.4 The Leisure Development Unit works directly with IABA officials to verify reporting on performance and finance and provides detailed reports for discussion at the Steering Group.

Performance

- 3.5 Council agreed a total of 37 Indicators with IABA to monitor delivery of the programmes. IABA have complied with reporting requirements and their performance report 20/21 Q3 is at Appendix 1. As can be noted, achievement of targets in-year to date (Qtrs 1-3) has been significantly impacted by Covid-19 regulations and restrictions as imposed by NI Executive with many previously deferred to take place within Qtr 4. IABA have provided narrative against each of the KPIs to describe progress against each indicator and have advised that current restrictions will prevent most targets from being achieved at year end.
- 3.6 Much of the focus has therefore been on availing of online training and workshops for both committee members and coaches, as well as delivering online workout sessions, supporting clubs with accreditation or reaccreditation, as well as with funding applications and providing ongoing advice and support.

21/22 Action Plan

- 3.7 In line with normal process the IABA have developed their programme action plan relating to 21/22 (copy attached) which outlines the key programmes, initiatives and planned targets. The group have also take cognisance of the support that will be required in terms of recovery from COVID 19 and have plans to introduce a new grants scheme for Belfast Club to support with

member retention and re-engagement through support for online coaching and resources.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.8** A total of £200,000 is available within the current financial year to support the Action Plan. It is likely that up to approximately £124,000 will be expended from the 2020 – 2021 budget.

For the 2021 – 2022 action plan, an amount of £200,000 is allocated within existing estimates

Equality Impact/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.9** The strategy was equality screened in line with the Council's equality process. The screening showed that there were potential adverse impacts on a number of groups including females and people with a disability and mitigating actions were added to the strategy. Members agreed that an equality screening be undertaken prior to a decision being made in relation to funding for 19/20. Officers have finalised this screening and initial findings show that progress has been made in increasing the participation of underrepresented groups and this has been reported separately through the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. The IABA continue to target underrepresented groups in its delivery of the 20/21 programme with particular focus on the events and non-contact programme. IABA have also advised that the three Belfast clubs which had been affiliated to the Northern Ireland Boxing Association (NIBA) have re-joined the IABA and are now in a position to be fully supported through the Strategy action plan and Council Sports Development funding."

The Committee noted the Quarter 3 progress report and the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on the agreed KPIs and approved the 2021 – 2022 action plan and budget.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Pest Control – Councillor Pankhurst

Councillor Pankhurst addressed the Committee and outlined the difficulties that home owners were experiencing with pest control issues and sought clarity as to when home visits and the overall reintroduction of the pest control service was likely to resume.

The Committee was updated by the Director of City Services that, in line with the Council's health and safety responsibilities and creating COVID secure working environments and services, internal household pest control visits were still unable to take place. She undertook to submit to a future meeting an update regarding when internal Pest Control services might resume.

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Cat Fouling – Councillor McReynolds

Councillor McReynolds addressed the Committee and sought information in regard to the current legislation that existed around cat fouling.

The Director of City Services undertook to liaise directly with Councillor McReynolds to provide an update on the current legislation that existed.

Chairperson

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City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 3rd March, 2021

REMOTE MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Brooks (Chairperson);
Aldermen Dorrian and Kingston; and
Councillors Beattie, Donnelly, Gormley,
Hanvey, Heading, Howard, T. Kelly, Lyons,
Maskey, McLaughlin, McMullan, Mulholland,
Murphy, 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. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager;
Ms. E. Henry, Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

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

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 10th February were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st March.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Donnelly declared an interest in relation to item 2.c) Department for Communities (DfC) COVID19 Revitalisation Fund, in that he was an employee of the Upper Springfield Development Trust, an organisation which had been a successful grant applicant.

Councillor T. Kelly declared an interest in relation to item 2.c) DfC COVID19 Revitalisation Fund, in that her husband was a staff member of one of the organisations which had been allocated funding.

In respect of item 2.c) Councillor Gormley also declared an interest in that he was a Board member of Lower Ormeau Resident's Action Group.

Councillor Murphy declared an interest in relation to item 7.a) Belfast Bikes - allocation of stock to social enterprises and charities, in that he was a Board Member of

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the Legoniel Improvement Association, an organisation which had been a successful applicant.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the report associated with the following 3 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 Strategic Director of Place and Economy provided an overview of the monthly finance update and the Quarter 3 finance report.

The Committee:

- Noted the contents of the report which had been presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in February, including the forecast update and the Quarter 3 Finance Report (Appendix 1); and
- Noted the re-instatement of financial reporting arrangements based on Financial Regulation G12.

Festival 2022 Commission

The Director of Economic Development explained that Festival 2022 was an initiative funded by the UK Government in partnership with relevant departments in the devolved governments. The focus of Festival 2022 was a celebration of creativity and innovation, with a global outlook.

He advised that the Festival would bring together creative teams of scientists, artists, engineers and technologists to create ten large-scale extraordinary, public engagement projects; each commissioned with the goal of reaching 66 million people globally. He explained that, of these ten commissions, six would be driven by collaborations from across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and contracted by Festival 2022 Ltd; the special purpose vehicle established to curate, manage and promote the Festival. However, the remaining four commissions would be delivered by Strategic Delivery Bodies and led by creatives from each of the four areas. All ten commissions were expected to be global in ambition.

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The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in October 2020, it had been agreed that the Council, in partnership with the other councils, would act as a Strategic Delivery Body alongside equivalent organisations in England, Scotland and Wales.

The Director explained the process of the public open call for organisations and individuals from across the STEAM sectors to come together and form Creative Teams. He described the three staged Research and Development process which culminated in the submission of a feasibility report and a presentation to the assessment panel in February 2021. He highlighted that a summary of the feasibility format and criteria was included at Appendix A, together with details of the assessment of each of the teams was included at Appendix B.

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development and the Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism confirmed the importance of the legacy of the project, including its evaluation, building capacity and community outputs of the project

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the contents of this report;
- Agreed the recommendation that the commission, as part of Festival 2022, be awarded to the Nerve Centre led team, subject to confirmation of funding from Department for Communities; and
- Agreed the recommended governance structure for the delivery of the project as set out in Appendix C.

Department for Communities (DfC) COVID19 Revitalisation Fund

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided an overview of the work packages and budget envelopes which had been agreed through the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in relation to the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme.

She highlighted the collective programme of projects that, through the Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme, officers had been working with city stakeholders to help rebalance the use of public space, to safely promote economic recovery and provide a people focused approach. She presented some of the ongoing physical and streetscape improvements in the city such as new parklets, public realm and environmental schemes including outdoor seating areas, proposed community gardens and shop front improvements.

She tabled an update in relation to the Business Cluster and Community Grant Scheme applications. She explained that officers had now re-engaged all applicants through the Small Business Grant Scheme and, due to reasons including applicants withdrawing from the scheme and actual claims totalling less than originally requested, there was now an underspend of approximately £95k within this budget line of the DfC Revitalisation Programme.

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The Director of City Regeneration and Development highlighted that, in addition to the recommendations outlined in the report, the Committee was asked to also consider the reallocation of the aforementioned £95k of underspend, and any future underspend within the Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme, to the Business Cluster and Community Grant Scheme to meet the funding gap as identified within the report. She pointed out that this underspend would be allocated to extinguish the remaining City Centre Business Cluster fund, followed by assessing the application in the order in which they were received as previously agreed by Committee.

She reminded the Committee that the Council's request for additional support from DfC for the Business Cluster and Community Grant scheme would be issued to the Minister for Communities, as agreed by the Committee at its last meeting.

During discussion, the Director of City Regeneration and Development provided further information in relation to sustainable active travel and advised that a report on the outcome of the feasibility study on additional city wide infrastructure to support the cycling network and to inform potential capital interventions would be submitted to a future meeting. In response to a Members query she confirmed that this included the potential for a temporary Active Travel Hub at Cathedral Gardens.

In response to a Member's query on the success of the pop up park at Cathedral Gardens, the Director City Regeneration and Development also confirmed that work was being undertaken in relation to a permanent park, as agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted that £4.039m of funding had been provided to the Council through the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme to date;
- Noted the progress update on the various agreed strands of work underway through this Revitalisation Programme with the developing designs for the proposed physical improvements and streetscape improvements presented at the Committee meeting;
- Approved the reallocation of this £95k of underspend, and any future underspend within the Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme, to the Business Cluster and Community Grant Scheme to meet the funding gap as identified within the report. The Committee noted that the underspend would be allocated to extinguish the remaining City Centre Business Cluster and Community Grant fund, followed by assessing the applications in the order in which they were received, as previously agreed by Committee;
- Noted that a request for additional support from DfC for the Business Cluster and Community Grant scheme would be issued to the Minister for Communities, as agreed by the Committee in February and ratified at Council on 1st March, 2021; and

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- Noted that a report on the outcome of the feasibility study on additional city wide infrastructure to support the cycling network and to inform potential capital interventions, as previously identified as part of the DfC Revitalisation Fund, would be submitted to Committee for consideration in the near future.

Presentations

Visit Belfast

The Chairperson introduced Ms. K. Thomson, Chief Executive, National Museums NI, Mr. G. Lennon, Chief Executive, Visit Belfast, and Mr. H. Hastings, Managing Director, Hastings Hotels, to the Committee and they were admitted to the meeting.

Ms. Thomson highlighted Visit Belfast's vision and long-term commitment to improving tourism in Belfast and thanked the Council for its support over the last decade.

Mr. Lennon provided a presentation on Visit Belfast's strategic plan 2021/22 which focused on supporting tourism recovery. He explained the impact which the Covid-19 pandemic had had on city tourism, with a reduction in Hotel Room Revenue by 69.7% and a reduction in Air Passenger Transit by 72%.

He highlighted that tourism was a pillar of the city's economy and should be prioritised in the economic recovery plans for the City. He pointed out that Belfast was a region of strategic importance and provided a summary of its significance in relation to visitor numbers and spend.

He provided an example of a new regenerative model for Belfast, which included: Building a resilient economy; Delivering inclusive growth; and Protecting the environment. Mr. Lennon explained their plans for future destination marketing, with a focus on drawing demand and a variety of offerings through collaboration and cohesion.

He summarised Visit Belfast's Guiding Principles and Objectives, together with the operating challenges it needed to overcome. He explained the organisation's Policy Framework and highlighted the excellent data and research which had been provided by the Council.

Mr. Lennon suggested what tourism might look like in Belfast, post covid-19, and explained changing visitor behaviours and preferences for the future and how this would influence marketing, sales and new initiatives.

He provided an overview of priority markets and segments, together with key business tourism and travel trade priorities. He informed the Committee of its Visitor Servicing work and change project outcomes.

Mr. Hastings explained further the three year tourism recovery strategy and the vision for Belfast to become even more competitive post Covid-19. He also highlighted the objective for Belfast to become a low carbon economy.

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During discussion, the representative's answered a range of questions in relation to the demand for travel after the pandemic, predicted occupancy rates, the impact of Brexit on tourism, data sharing across the industry, air travel rates, the demand for business tourism and conferences, the importance of neighbourhood tourism, post covid-19 preparedness of hotels and its staff, accessibility and inclusion for disabled people and their families, the employment market, environmental and societal metrics, green tourism, the promotion of Council assets, and diversity and shared history events. One Member also suggested that Members of Council could also contribute different ideas for future neighbourhood tourism plans.

The Director of Economic Development stated that a report on the Council's 10 year tourism plan would be submitted to Committee in June and would include an update on neighbourhood tourism. He also highlighted the need to build capacity and capitalise on the cities tourism assets to align with anchor products.

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

The Director of Economic Development drew the Members' attention to the report which had been published alongside the presentation which outlined the request for funding from Visit Belfast for the 2021/22 financial year and set out the organisation's strategic plan, which focused on supporting tourism recovery.

He advised that it provided further information in relation to rebuilding city tourism and future tourism outlook which highlighted that Visit Belfast sought to re-purpose and re-structure its operations and activities to adapt to the changing environment and operating context. He provided an overview of the activities which aimed to maximise efficiencies and prioritisation of resources to facilitate an appropriate and rapid response to dynamic market, customer and operating challenges.

He reported that, in 2021-22, Visit Belfast's core objective continued to be driving the visitor economy through securing trips to the city and visitor spend. This would be achieved through the ongoing delivery of main service areas:

- Marketing, Communications, Partnership and Commercial;
- Business Development; and
- Visitor Servicing.

He explained that, in the current financial year, the Council's funding arrangement with Visit Belfast was £1,997,465 and an allocation of £1,997,465 had been set aside within the Departmental estimates for the financial year 2021/22.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the draft Visit Belfast business plan 2021/22 and that the overall funding requirement for Visit Belfast in the coming financial year had been taken account of in the revenue estimates that had already been approved by the Council.

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- Approved the funding allocation of up to £1,997,465 for 2021/22 expenditure, subject to the development of a funding agreement confirming priority areas of activity as outlined in the presentation and agreed targets.

**York Street Interchange Alternatives –
Mr. M. Hackett**

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. M. Hackett to the meeting.

Mr. Hackett provided a presentation which detailed an alternative design solution to the planned York Street Interchange project – a Department for Infrastructure scheme to address a major bottleneck on the strategic road network, replacing the existing signalised junctions at York Street with direct links between the Westlink, M2 and M3.

He stated that the alternative vision intended to get the roads design resolved as soon as possible, since the congestion was causing local pollution. He suggested that the scale and delays to the current scheme was holding back the city. However, repair was only possible with better design.

Mr. Hackett presented illustrations of alternative options to the main routes of the scheme and described how changes to traffic, lighting and street realignment could reimagine the York Street Interchange. He highlighted that the suggested alternative solution removed traffic lights, so that evening traffic could clear, phases 1 and 2 could be implemented with no disruption and final bridges could be implemented quickly. He stated that the design would also be lower carbon and cost that could unlock renewal and create sustainable transport. He provided examples of how the introduction of walkways and street allocations to pedestrians and cyclists might promote safer spaces.

He stated that the current scheme suggested temporary road closures which could be damaging to the city and suggested the alternative design would use less land, giving way for further development opportunities, whilst reconnecting North Belfast to the River Lagan.

He suggested that the alternative design would have no underground routes, used more of the existing structure and would be faster and cheaper, with an overall better result for the city. He advised that the York Street Interchange could become an 'Infrastructure for all' reconnecting whole sectors.

He concluded that he wished to work with the Minister for Infrastructure and the Assembly to reach a consensus of design.

During discussion, Mr. Hackett explained further the potential risks of the current design, the background and current status of the scheme including the public enquiry and reviews of the scheme.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Hackett for his informative presentation and he retired from the meeting.

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The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting to provide an overview and background of the Council's decision to support the current York Street Interchange design.

Requests to Present

Requests to Present to Committee

It was reported that a request had been received from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) to provide the Committee with an update in relation to the Belfast Rapid Transport (Glider) Phase 2 Scheme and the Ulster University in regards to the new City Centre Campus.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that, given the strategic, city wide importance of the next phase of this public transport infrastructure scheme, it was recommended that Members received a presentation from DfI senior officials on the BRT Phase 2 Scheme and the emerging proposals. It was anticipated that a presentation would be provided to the Committee at its meeting in April, subject to confirmation by DfI.

She informed the Committee that Ulster University also intended to provide an update on the ongoing development works and the migration strategy for the new City Centre Campus, to include an update on the University's progress in opening the city centre campus in 2021, the regenerative impact of the new campus, the Migration Strategy and the ongoing Transport and Travel and Campus Impact Study.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Agreed to receive a presentation from Department for Infrastructure (DfI) senior officials on the Belfast Rapid Transport (Glider) Phase 2 scheme and requested that the presentation included an update in relation to the Safe Cycle Route Network; and
- Agreed to receive a presentation from the Ulster University providing an update on the ongoing development works, the migration strategy for the new City Centre Campus, and campus impact study. The Committee also requested an update in relation to the impact of its purpose built managed student accommodation, and how, as an anchor tenant of the Inclusive Growth Strategy, it was contributing to the inclusive growth and investment for the local community.

Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

Connectivity Issues - Letters to Ministers

The Committee was provided with an update on the responses which had been received to recent letters that had been sent to Ministers at the request of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

The Strategic Director of Economy and Place highlighted the following points:

York Street Interchange (YSI)

The Council had received a response from the Minister for Infrastructure (Appendix 1) indicating that the review was now complete and that the Minister was currently considering the findings. The Minister went on to promote a collaborative approach between the Department and the Council in terms of the future development of the York St. Interchange Scheme and other infrastructure solutions in line with the City Centre Connectivity Study.

Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme: Connectivity Related Projects

The Council had received a response from the Minister for Infrastructure and the Minister for Communities (Appendix 2 and 3) outlining the £19.3m of urgent funding to Councils to prepare town and city centres to reopen safely. The Ministers also reiterated the departmental commitment to providing assistance, support and partnership working in delivering the programme of works.

Public Realm Schemes at Shankill Gateway and Fredrick Street

The Council had received a response from both the Minister for Communities and the Minister for Infrastructure (Appendix 5 and 6). These responses refer to the ongoing work of the joint Junctions Stakeholder Group to review the designs with the Minister for Infrastructure stating that *'officials would work at pace to bring forward proposals for alternative junction layouts that would better reflect the priority that we all agree needs to be given to public transport, pedestrians and cyclists'* with a further update to be provided to the Council in due course.

Increasing Sustainable Transport in Belfast

The Council had received a response from the Infrastructure Ministers office (Appendix 8) which confirmed the Departments commitment to creating more opportunities for active travel and making our roads safer for those who walk, wheel and cycle. The Minister referenced the importance of reimagining our city and town centres with a focus on making them greener, more walkable and more connected with commitments from the Department including the establishment of a Walking and Cycling Champion, a £20m capital funding for Blue and Green Infrastructure, progression of two key sustainable transport projects in the BRT Phase 2

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and the Ormeau Road Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge, and the pending publication of the final Belfast Bike Network.

During discussion, the Senior Development Manager advised that the designs in relation to the Shankill Gateway would be submitted to the Committee once they had been received by the Department.

In response to a Members question in relation to the lack of information provided in the letter to the Department for Infrastructure, and the response received, regarding Increasing Sustainable Transport in Belfast, the Strategic Director of Economy and Place advised that the letter for DfI had been sent following an amendment to the minutes at Council, however, feedback would be provided to Democratic Services on the issue.

The Committee noted the responses which had been received in relation to letters which the Council had issued regarding connectivity related matters as follows:

- I. York Street Interchange;
- II. Covid 19 Revitalisation Programme: Connectivity Projects;
- III. Public Realm Schemes at Shankill Gateway and Fredrick Street; and
- IV. Increasing Sustainable Transport in Belfast.

Growing Business and the Economy

Economic Inactivity Research

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide the Committee with an update on the key findings of a report into barriers experienced by economically inactive residents within the Urban Village areas across Belfast.**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- **Note the key findings and barriers of this research; and**
- **Note and agree the way forward, based on this research.**

3.0 Main report

- 3.1 Members will be aware that economic inactivity is one of the most significant challenges for Belfast – and has been so for**

some time. Economic inactivity rates in the city are regularly ahead of the Northern Ireland average and, in some parts of the city, can be almost double the regional figure. A key element of the council's work on employability is to focus on supporting inclusive growth by targeting our interventions on those furthest from the labour market – including those who are long-term unemployed and economically inactive. In order to understand the barriers faced by those individuals in finding work, the council undertook a research project in collaboration with The Executive Office's Urban Villages programme. The data gathering element of the research was largely undertaken in advance of Covid-19. However, it is important to acknowledge that the pandemic is likely to exacerbate the barriers to economic activity as identified in the results of this research.

- 3.2 The research process was initiated through a series of meetings with representatives of the Urban Village Local Reference Groups and included desk research; 36 one-to-one interviews, 252 questionnaires and 12 focus groups to qualitatively explore any perceived barriers to economic inactivity in depth. Those engaged in the research are currently engaged within community provision within their local communities (through Urban Villages).
- 3.3 Of those individuals who were involved in this research, 1/3 have been out of work for between 2-5 years and 27% were out of work for over 5 years. Over half of respondents are living with a health condition or disability. Almost 3/4 of those aged between 19-49 years reported having no qualifications.

Overview of key findings

- 3.4 While respondents were not specifically engaged on employability or skills-based projects when they were interviewed, over 75% considered securing employment to be important. Just under half stated that the salary level required for an individual to leave the welfare system in favour of paid employment was between £16,000 and £24,000. The two key driving factors for finding a job were for financial gain and also to have a sense of purpose.
- 3.5 The preferred employment sectors for female respondents were retail, office and administration. For males, the preferred employment sectors were manufacturing and construction. Only 2% view finance; and 6% IT as preferred employment sectors – while these are recognised as two key growth sectors for the city. 24% of respondents have considered the option of self-employment or starting their own business.

3.6 The main barriers identified by respondents include:

- **Qualifications:** two thirds feel they require skills training and almost two thirds have been unable to resource this and feel this is exacerbated by a lack of employment experience and not being able to identify referees to provide to prospective employers
- **Intergenerational Economic Inactivity:** three quarters indicated that the potential impact on their benefits, or those of their household, is a challenge to securing and remaining in a job and 87% reported that they do not have family support and encouragement to help them get a job
- **Capacity and Confidence:** over two thirds described themselves as not being confident in presenting themselves at job interviews and 60% worried their communication skills would be a barrier in a job environment
- **Caring Responsibilities:** two thirds of respondents have dependent children or care for other family members and 81% of those with primary care responsibilities cannot afford the childcare to work. Half of these respondents indicated they would need to work part time or secure flexible working arrangements
- **Health & Disability:** almost a fifth of respondents stated that they live with a physical health condition and almost all of these stated they consider their physical health to be a barrier to employment. 26% of respondents stated they live with a mental health condition and all considered their mental health to be a barrier to employment
- **Age:** almost two thirds of those aged 50+ years believe that age is a barrier to getting and remaining in a job
- **Legacy Issues:** the research illustrated that 65% of respondents felt confident about working in a community not considered to their own although this was predominantly by those from ethnic minority/migrant communities
- **Language and Recognition of International Qualifications:** just under 80% of black and minority ethnic (BAME) respondents feel that their ability to speak English is a challenge to getting and remaining in a job and 84% of BAME respondents have been unable to access certain types of training because they couldn't afford to pay.

3.7 The research also identifies a key roles for local authorities in tackling long-term economic inactivity and notes that place-

based solutions are necessary to reach those who are out of work for a long period and/or economically inactive. This confirms the rationale behind the ongoing work on the Labour Market Partnership for Belfast in partnership with the Department for Communities, as reported at the November meeting of this Committee.

3.8 Taking account of the findings, officers plan to use the insights in a number of ways:

- Share with the Department for Communities in order to explore the potential for additional support to address barriers – particularly the provision of support for childcare both during training and in the early stages of employment, in order to ensure that an individual can confidently take on a role
- Ensuring that these findings shape all of our employability interventions for these target groups as part of our development approach
- Continue to work with employers through our Employment Academy model, including negotiating with the employer to explore how the qualification/experience levels normally expected at recruitment stage can be adapted to provide opportunities for people within these target groups, with the Employment Academy packaging together the skills/qualifications required as well as employability support for the individual
- Engaging with local communities around opportunities within the digital sector – including youth engagement support, school engagement activity and the co-design of Employment Academies and other bespoke solutions within this sector
- Continuation of the Enterprise Pathway programme as a way of engaging with those who are economically inactive/long-term unemployed and helping them move into self-employment by providing intensive wrap-around support
- Disseminating the research finding across Council, for example in the development of the Inclusive Growth City Charter through to our approach to Social Value and Developer Contributions as well as the economic, social and community recovery plans within Council
- Continue to influence the scope and remit of the emerging Shared Prosperity Fund and other large-scale interventions to ensure that they are informed by the specific needs of these target groups and that eligible activity reflects their needs.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.9 No specific financial or resource implications**

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

- 3.10 The unit undertakes equality screening on the overall work programme to ensure consideration is given to equality and good relation impacts throughout the delivery of each project. The Urban Villages programme covers targeted areas across Northern Ireland.”**

The Committee noted the key findings and barriers of this research and agreed the proposed way forward, based on this research.

The Committee also noted that a workshop would be held at the end of March to discuss the issues further.

Update on Tourism

The Committee considered the following report, together with associated appendices:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the development of a new tourism plan and set out key actions for quarter 1 of the 2021/22 financial year.**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- Note the contents of the report and progress made to date on the development of the new tourism plan with agreement to receive a full draft in June 2021.
- Agree to progress the key actions as set out in appendix 1 and supported by 2021/22 departmental budget for tourism development.

3.0 Main report

- 3.1 Members will be aware that at a meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in August 2020, it was agreed that a new ten-year plan for tourism was to be developed. The purpose of this plan is to:**

- Deliver on the tourism priorities set out the *Belfast Agenda*, recognising the importance of tourism to *Growing the Economy* and *City Development*.
- Align to the ten-year cultural strategy *A City Imagining*, in order to ensure that tourism development supports cultural development and is based on an authentic and sustainable Belfast offer.
- Support economic and social recovery in the context of Covid-19 including stabilisation, recovery and growth with the opportunity to build back better.
- Provide strategic context to the Belfast City Region Deal.

3.2 A further update was provided to Committee in December 2020 setting out findings of the initial research and development phase and the emerging four draft strategic themes:

- Grow Belfast
- Experience Belfast
- Position Belfast
- Sustainable Belfast

3.3 An initial timeframe had aimed to present a full draft plan to Committee in March 2021. However due to ongoing challenges facing the tourism and hospitality sectors it is proposed that this is now extended to June in order to facilitate sectoral engagement and to better understand the recovery trajectory. This report therefore provides an update on further progress made during the development phase of the plan and sets out key foundation actions to be taken forward in quarter one of the 2021/22 financial year.

3.4 Experience Belfast – developing neighbourhoods

The cultural strategy recognises the importance of cultural tourism and the role of Council in supporting the development of local destinations and quality products across the city. In particular the strategy commits to:

- Developing cultural tourism through building capacity and opportunity for citizen and culture led approaches to tourism development and infrastructure (e.g. local tourism programme).

3.5 This will be further expanded in the ten year tourism plan through one of the four draft themes, Experience Belfast. This will include experiences that can be brought to life through the development of an optimal mix of ‘anchor’ and

ancillary products that get people into an area and keep them there. This also increases connectivity between all parts of the city raising the visibility and appeal of the breadth of the tourism offer with a focus on encouraging international visitors to immerse themselves actively in the locale, interacting with people and learning the history and stories of the places.

- 3.6 Further work will be undertaken to embed neighbourhood tourism into the overall experience plan with proposals for a competitive funding scheme to be developed in line with the investment approach to the cultural sector. Details will be included in future Committee reports for consideration from 2022/23 onwards. However to ensure continuity and to build on local tourism development provided to date it is proposed to provide interim support for key programmes such as the City Connections local tourism programme and other ongoing partnership agreements. In 2020/21 these local conduits have continued to deliver support programmes throughout COVID-19 including:

- Insights and research into impact of the pandemic on tourism businesses at a localised level.
- Public events and activities – adapting to restrictions including hybrid models of digital content and on the ground activity during summer months when permitted.
- Developing linkages between heritage programmes and community tourism.
- Connecting local regeneration to tourism development.

- 3.7 It is proposed that these ongoing partnerships can be utilised to ensure that recovery plans are pivoted to consider local needs and opportunities with the focus of activity for 2021-22 to include:

- Increase engagement and promote the benefits of participating in local networks including identifying new and emerging partners delivering local tourism experiences.
- Investing in local programmes that engage directly with visitors including support to attract target markets during phase one of recovery such as domestic staycations as well as UK and Ireland.
- Capacity building and development work on clustering approaches with involvement of industry experts and practitioners to develop geographic and thematic models.

- Supporting and commissioning robust evidence base to increase understanding of the market including consumer testing of local products.

Programme Development supported by the Global Destination Sustainability Index

- 3.8 Members will be aware that Belfast has completed its year one benchmarking as a member of the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDSI). The Index is based on 69 Indicators broken down into four categories:
- Environmental Performance
 - Social Performance
 - Supplier Performance
 - Destination Management Performance
- 3.9 As previously reported to Committee in December 2020, a series of recommendations for action have been identified for Belfast to take forward to increase our ranking position in the Index in advance of the benchmarking review which is due for submission in August 2021. A number of these specifically relate to the Destination Management Organisation and will be taken forward as part of Visit Belfast's business plan for 2021-22. In addition to this, under Council's contract with the GDSI, they have been engaging with the ICC (as the City's Congress venue) to identify a suitable 3rd party accreditation scheme, likely to be the globally recognized Earthcheck scheme.

Environmental research

- 3.10 Belfast's Resilience Strategy with its alignment to UN Sustainability targets was commended by the GDSI as exemplary. It was noted that although great progress has been made in terms of recycling over recent years, overall Northern Ireland has a relatively high landfill rate and export of waste remains high. Officers wish to understand the overall contribution of the tourism industry to this process in greater detail in order to make informed decisions on future plans. It is proposed that a piece of research is carried out to establish baselines and future areas of action specifically in relation to landfill and the export of waste.

Social and cultural initiatives

- 3.11 In 2020 Belfast City Council partnered with QUB to host a student placement from QUB's MSc Leadership for Sustainable Development programme to analyse sustainable

practices currently used by festival and event organisers in Belfast, highlight best practice and identify areas for improvement. Officers facilitated engagement with events and festivals through BCC's Festivals Forum. The output of this project was a Sustainable Events Toolkit aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. It is hoped that once events and festivals re-open that this toolkit can be mobilised to enable both Council and our partners in the cultural sector to assess their accountability in the context of sustainability and begin to adapt.

3.12 This year, our delivery partner Visit Belfast are hosting a further student placement to develop a Sustainable Events Framework. Due to complete in April 2021, this project will map the current sustainable initiatives which are underway in Belfast and identify best practice in terms of sustainable destinations globally. The outcome of this project will be the creation of a Sustainable Events Framework which will be used to assist Visit Belfast, Council and clients to connect to, produce and promote events and cultural activities which have sustainable environmental, community, social and economic impacts.

3.13 Working from this framework, we will identify and curate 'Green Stories' for businesses in the Belfast City Council area for promotion in a range of media to inspire, motivate and further incentivise engagement.

3.14 Supporting Suppliers

The GDSI benchmarking exercise identified a number of gaps in relation to the city's supply chain. Officers have been working in partnership with the GDSI, Visit Belfast and the Resilience Team to progress a third party accreditation strategy for the hospitality industry and events and festivals sector. This will involve a strategic partnership with Green Tourism and a scheme to incentivise 3rd party accreditation across the Visit Belfast partnership and Council client portfolio.

3.15 In addition to the accreditation strategy, officers have identified a lack of capacity building initiatives and programmes which assist and encourage the industry to commit to sustainability in the long-term. A number of initiatives will be developed to address this gap:

- Officers will establish a pilot scheme for the hospitality industry encouraging the reduction of food waste (aligning with the UN sustainability target of reducing

food waste by 2030). Previous successful pilot schemes in other cities have involved initiatives such as training kitchen staff in food reduction techniques which also bring financial benefits to the business.

- Officers will work in partnership with key stakeholders to enhance reduce, reuse and recycling initiatives both internally (across our own tourism assets) and externally across the tourism and hospitality industries and related sectors.
- Early discussions have taken place with the Resilience team and other Council Departments to look at the potential for co-designed schemes with a specific focus on sustainable food.
- Officers are discussing the potential for a Belfast showcase at the 26th UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) which will take place in November 2021 in Glasgow.

Creating new digital content to support the positioning of Belfast

3.16 As part of the development of the new tourism plan and in support of the concept development for the Belfast Destination Hub, research has been commissioned to:

- Better understand consumer attitudes and motivations to visiting Belfast
- Establish a baseline for perceptions of the city as a cultural tourism destination
- Receive feedback on the proposed cultural tourism narrative and themes included in the cultural strategy.
- Test the Belfast Stories concept and the wider product in the Belfast Destination Hub

3.17 The final report identified an opportunity to strengthen and broaden the emotional connection of the market to Belfast beyond those that are seeking a niche experience. The key recommendation coming out of this research is the role that Council can play in transforming perceptions of Belfast by enabling the creation of much richer and diverse digital content that represents the breadth of the city's tourism experience and authentic Belfast offer.

3.18 **Summary of feedback**

- Unless people had some prior connection, the majority of participants did not know enough about Belfast to include it in their sub-list of choices for a city break destination. In particular there were limited emotional

connotations required to make it a destination of choice.

- Some of participants were aware of Belfast marketing most notably those from ROI – however this is not necessarily their preferred format for influencing where to go. Formal marketing is considered insufficient of itself to prompt action. Searching digital content does not provide the necessary supplementary information to set Belfast apart in a competitive marketplace or to challenge established perceptions of the city. Setting this in context against digital content of other cities such as Edinburgh, Galway, or further afield but of similar population size to Belfast, Aarhus (Denmark), or Varna (Bulgaria) presents a difficult first hurdle for potential tourists to overcome.
- In the absence of strong positive digital content, potential tourists must rely on formal communications, opinions of others and prior knowledge. This leaves Belfast open to generalisation.
- Internationally, people see Belfast as a potential destination, but not quite yet and this is in part based on a lack of curated digital content.

- 3.19 COVID-19 has amplified the importance of digital spaces. At the appropriate time consumers will return to making decisions of future destinations of preference. It is important that Belfast develops a digital strategy that can spark and sustain global dialogue about the city to create the connections that ultimately will move from a digital space to experiencing the place through city breaks. In turn the production of digital content supports of the positioning of the city internationally in all sectors including investment, events and education.

Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.20 The activities outlined in this report will be resourced from the 2021/22 budget for the Culture and Tourism section of the Economic Development division of the Place and Economy Departmental budget.
- 3.21 All programmes will be subject to ongoing review with cost savings identified where projects cannot proceed due to Covid-19. The breakdown is detailed below with further detail provided at appendix 1.

GDSI Membership	£7,500
Capacity building including Green Tourism accreditation	£75,000

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Research and development	£10,000
Local tourism support	£200,000
Digital content	£60,000

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

- 3.22 The cultural strategy, *A City Imagining* has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNA). The ten year tourism plan will include a further equality screening.”**

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development provided further information on funding agreements and confirmed that further detail in relation to inclusivity and accessibility would be provided in the 10 year tourism plan being submitted to the Committee in June.

The Committee:

- Noted the contents of the report and progress made to date on the development of the new tourism plan with agreement to receive a full draft in June 2021; and
- Agreed to progress the key actions as set out in appendix 1 and supported by the 2021/22 departmental budget for tourism development.

Sunday Opening Hours for Large Retailers

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy advised the Committee of the request to extend the current approach on Sunday opening hours for large retailers for a period of three months from the current proposed end date (5th April 2021) in order to support the management of shopper numbers as part of ongoing social distancing measures as the city prepared for re-opening.

The Committee was reminded that the current Northern Ireland Executive guidance – which became operational on 26th December 2020 – confirmed that only those retailers deemed as “essential” retail were permitted to remain open at this time, until at least 1st April 2021. In January 2021, the Council considered and acceded to a 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 5th April 2021, as part of the efforts to manage shopper volume and support social distancing.

It was reported that, on 2nd March, 2021, the Northern Ireland Executive had produced “Moving Forward: the Executive’s Pathway out of Restrictions” which outlined the first step in the Executive’s Roadmap to Recovery and set out how it would approach the relaxation of restrictions. The first formal review by the Executive would take place on 16th March and there would be subsequent reviews every four weeks thereafter. The Executive had also confirmed that, while it would formally review and make decisions

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on restrictions every four weeks, the monitoring cycle provided them with the ability to move more rapidly on emerging priorities should the need arise before the next review point.

The Strategic Director explained that, following the announcement on 2nd March, it was likely that the restrictions on capacity within retail and services would remain in place for some time in order to maintain some level of social distancing in indoor premises. He stated that one of the issues that had been raised by the businesses and the representative organisations was that it would be helpful to have some flexibility on the current Sunday trading hours, in order to support recovery efforts and enable retailers to manage their footfall better over a slightly extended trading period on a Sunday.

He highlighted that Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council had extended its current approach to enforcement until the end of June 2021.

During discussion, Members raised issues in relation to consultation with retailers and the demand for extending opening hours.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to accede to the request from Belfast City Centre Management (BCCM) to support extended Sunday opening hours (in line with Northern Ireland Executive guidance) on a temporary basis, to be reviewed on 5th July, 2021, as part of the efforts to manage shopper volume and support social distancing.

The Committee also agreed that officers consult with Trade Unions, Retail NI and relevant stakeholders on the matter and report its findings at the next Committee.

Strategic and Operational Issues

**Belfast Bikes - allocation of stock to
social enterprises and charities**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in November 2020, it had been agreed that officers should take forward a programme of work to distribute some of the Belfast Bikes that were due to be replaced, and it was agreed that these were to be offered to the Social Economy, Co-operative and Charity sectors in Belfast.

The Director of Economic Development advised that 100 bikes were made available for distribution and organisations were able to use the bikes for a range of uses, including but not limited to; stripping the bikes for parts; repairing them to sell or gift out; and upcycling them. The Council's main stipulation was that the handover of these bikes created a positive social impact in the communities across the city.

He explained the expression of interest process to allocate the bikes on a first come, first served basis, with a final closing date of 29th January, 2021. He confirmed that the bikes had now been allocated to the following 15 successful organisations, each receiving between 5 and 10 bikes:

- East Belfast Mission;
- Saints Youth Centre;

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- The Turnaround Project;
- 18th Belfast Scout Group;
- Forward South Partnership;
- Lyric Theatre;
- Tools for Solidarity;
- Belfast South Community Resources;
- Failte Feirste Thiar;
- Mount Merrion Parish Church;
- Sudanese Community Association Northern Ireland;
- Salvation Army;
- Kith and Kin Financial Wellbeing for Employers;
- Concerned Residents of Upper Ardoyne; and
- Ligoniel Improvement Association.

The Director of Economic Development advised that organisations would be using the bikes for a variety of purposes, with many refurbishing them to promote healthier lifestyles within their communities and to support them to access employment by cycling to work. Others wanted to gift these to the vulnerable, homeless and newly-arrived asylum seekers to help them get to appointments whilst others planned to refurbish the bikes to sell or lease through the use of a pop-up shop.

He confirmed that, if further bikes became available, they would be allocated to the remaining organisations who expressed an interest on a first come, first served basis as per the guidelines.

He highlighted that, overall, this model worked extremely well, and officers were now considering how a similar model could be used to distribute reusable items in the future to deliver local impact. The sectors had not only shown great interest in obtaining these items but were also able to showcase how they would create a positive social impact in our local communities.

The Committee:

- Noted the work which had been undertaken by the Enterprise and Business Growth Team to allocate the stock of bikes to date;
- Noted the recipients and proposed use of the old bikes; and
- Noted the opportunity to utilise this model to create further opportunities to create positive social impacts through the distribution of materials and products.

Update on Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update on progress to date, on work to support the development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and to provide an overview of plans for the official launch of the Corridor Partnership.

2.0 **Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the contents of this report and progress to date to develop the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.
- Approve the budget allocation to be managed by Fingal County Council to support the delivery of the work programme aligned to the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

3.0 **Main report**

- 3.1 At its meeting on the 7 November 2020 members were provided with an update on progress to support the development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor. At the meeting members noted the progress to date, endorsed the emerging plans and member representation for participation on the political advisory group as part of the governance structure of the partnership.
- 3.2 Members will be aware that since the establishment of the partnership, partner councils have been working to shape its future direction and to find ways to work collaboratively to realise the potential benefits of the further development of the Corridor. In 2019 DCU and UU were commissioned to carry out research on behalf of the councils to inform how the councils could collaborate for mutual benefit between the cities of Dublin and Belfast and the regions between. The report detailed the current economic performance of the Corridor and the prospects for the region based on current trends. The report also began the work of identifying potential areas for cooperation which could create a stronger trajectory for growth.
- 3.3 However, since this initial research was undertaken the global economy has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in monumental declines in levels of economic activity across the board. The pandemic has also had an impact on the speed of the partnership's plans to support economic regeneration across the corridor area, however the pandemic has highlighted the interdependencies across the area and reinforces the need for a coordinated

commitment to enhancing the future economic potential of the corridor.

3.4 Officers continue to work in partnership to progress the recommendations of the research and have been engaging with councils along the economic corridor on a monthly basis. These specific areas for collaboration included;

- Opportunities for branding and promoting the area to attract private and public investment;
- Identification of areas of complementary policy and objectives to support collaborative opportunities and the development of joint interventions;
- Skills development to ensure that the skills pipeline is appropriate to meet future demand;
- Use of sectoral strengths to influence of FDI pipeline;
- Further development of sectoral concentrations which already exist in tradeable services, Agri-Food and high-tech Manufacturing and Construction;
- Cooperation in the development and delivery of enterprise supports to increase the number of new businesses along the corridor area;
- Development of joint policies on infrastructure to enhance transport, innovation, education;
- Enhancing Research and Innovation through the development of cross border complimentary research, access to funding, access to students etc e.g. joint internships;
- Collaboration to collectively address the shared challenges which are not confined by spatial or administrative boundaries such as Environmental resilience and management.

3.5 Thus far the partnership has agreed/progressed the following;

- The governance structure including roles and responsibilities for the partnership at an advisory, strategic, operational and political level.
- Engagement with the North South ministerial Council, and the shared Island Unit to draw their attention to the important and ongoing work of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor Network and its efforts at promoting cross-border economic development. Highlighting the importance of our collaborative endeavours in maximising the potential of the network to kick-start the economic recovery in each of our respective areas. The initiative was positively welcomed by the NSMC and the Shared Island Unit are keen to engage in further dialogue with the partnership

to identify opportunities to bid for funding for cross border research, research infrastructure etc.

- Newry, Mourne and Down District Council have taken the lead in developing the branding and suite of marketing material for the partnership. This is now complete, and work is underway to develop a website showcasing the partnership, key projects and linking to the work in each of the council areas.
- Development of the Corridor Research Seminar Series which aims to grow the knowledge base among partners and enhance the potential of the corridor. The series will provide a platform for regional, national and international sharing of ideas and initiatives designed to maximise the assets of corridors.
- Review of existing policies in areas of R&D, Skills, Tourism, Infrastructure, Trade and Investment to identify areas of alignment and areas for immediate collaboration and development of joint interventions.

3.6 At the meeting of the Chief Executives in December 2020 it was agreed that there would be an official launch of the partnership on the 24 March 2021 which would highlight the current profile of the corridor, potential in recovery and opportunities for cooperation. The aim of the launch is to position the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor in the minds of decision-makers in government and other state agencies and in the business community to present a cohesive, regional approach to economic development along the corridor among the 8 local government bodies.

3.7 The format of the event will include a range of segments highlighting reasons to collaborate which will outline the key findings from the research undertaken to date to profile the corridor area and provide an outline of the strategic vision of the partnership. The event will also include a range of panel discussions with businesses, agencies and politicians from across the corridor area which will focus on opportunities for collaboration. This section will set out the possibilities across the area for innovation and collaboration, the role that agencies will play in supporting the messaging and the role of politics in strengthening the Economic Corridor and making the strategic vision into a reality through strong decision making. The details of the launch event are currently being finalised, at that point members will be issued with an invitation to attend.

3.8 To support the development and delivery of the launch event and the programme of work completed to date it has been agreed that each council would be required to make a

contribution to Fingal County Council as the current chair of the partnership of £27,000 in to cover activity in 2020 and 2021. This budget would be retained by Fingal County Council and utilised to cover the cost of any partnership activity approved by the Strategic Oversight Group of Chief Executives.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.9** The activities outlined within this report will be resourced from the 2020/21 Economic Development budget agreed by this Committee on 4 March 2020.

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

- 3.10** The unit is currently undertaking a process of equality screening on the overall work programme, this will ensure consideration is given to equality and good relation impacts throughout the delivery of this project.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations and noted that an update report on the Peace Plus EU cross-border programme would be provided to the Committee in due course.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

**Developing Clean Technology in the City
(Alderman Dorrian to raise)**

Following the request from Alderman Dorrian in relation to the development of clean technology, levels of engagement, and the types of clean technology the Council was working on, 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, 10th March, 2021

MEETING OF LICENSING COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Donnelly (Chairperson);
Alderman Sandford; and
Councillors Bradley, Bunting, Collins, Howard, Hussey,
M. Kelly, T. Kelly, Magee,
Magennis, McAteer, McCabe, McCullough,
McKeown, Nicholl and Smyth.

Also attended: Councillor Gormley.

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

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland and Councillor Hutchinson.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 17th February were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st March, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Delegated Matters

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

Consideration of Designating Resolutions for Street Trading Sites

The Building Control Manger reminded the Committee that, at its meeting of 18th November, approval had been granted to initiate the statutory process for the designation

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of seven new street trading sites across the City, which had been identified as a result of internal application or expressions of interest received from individuals wishing to trade from new sites.

He reported that three of those sites were before the Committee for consideration and reminded the Members that, should a proposed site become designated, the Committee would further consider any subsequent applications received for a Street Trading Licence on any of the sites.

He advised that the designation process had involved seeking comments from interested parties and relevant statutory bodies, through public advertisement and consultation and that officers had consulted with the PSNI, Department for Infrastructure (Roads), Belfast City Centre Management Company for city centre sites, and local residents and businesses.

The Building Control Manager outlined the proposals, and highlighted comments which had been received from interested parties, for the following three sites:

- Castle Place, adjacent to an existing kiosk;
- 12 Lockview Road at Belfast Boat Club; and
- King Street, second parking bay moving away from Castle Court.

Based on the information presented, the Committee agreed to:

Approve the proposal for a site to trade in commodities to be determined, but excluding the sale of hot food at Castle Place, adjacent to an already existing kiosk; and

Approve the proposal for a site to trade in hot and cold non-alcoholic beverages, confectionary, ice cream and cold food or similar commodities at 12 Lockview Road, at Belfast Boat Club.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Smyth,
Seconded by Councillor McCullough,

Based on in the information presented, including concerns which had been raised by both the PSNI and Belfast City Centre Management, that the Committee refuses the proposal for a site to trade in hot and cold food and non-alcoholic beverages at night time, at the second parking bay, moving away from Castle Court, on King Street.

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

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

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

**Applications for a New Licence to operate a House of
Multiple Occupation for 17 Balfour Avenue**

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.

He reported that on the 23rd February 2021, pursuant to Paragraph 9 of Schedule 2 of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, officers had issued a notice of proposed decision to the applicant setting out the terms of the proposed licence.

He further reported that the notice of proposed decision had stated that the Council proposed to refuse the licence as the Council could not be satisfied that the owner was a fit and proper person, and he referred to the following statement of reasons for refusal:

“The Council may grant a licence only if it is satisfied, in addition to other considerations, that the “...the owner of the living accommodation, and any managing agent of it, are fit and proper persons (see section 10)...” (Section 8(2)(b)).

Section 10 of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (“the 2016 Act”) provides that in deciding whether a person is a fit and proper person, the Council must have regard to (a) the matters mentioned in subsections (4) to (7), and any other matter which the council considers to be relevant.

Following a referral to the NIHMO service an authorised officer called at the property on the 19th October 2020 and spoke to an individual at the front door of the property, that individual confirmed he resided in the property with 3 other unrelated individuals and paid rent to the owner Mr Michael Clarke.

On the 22 October 2020 an evidence of household notice was served on Mr Michael Clarke in accordance with Section 5(2) of the 2016 Act, inviting him to supply to the Council, within the period of 28 days beginning with the date of service of the notice, evidence that the occupants form no more than two households.

On the 26 October 2020 Mr Michael Clarke submitted an application to licence the property.

On the 17 November 2020 a response to the evidence of household notice was received in which Mr Clarke confirmed “that the current occupants of the property do form more than two households”.

Included with the response to the evidence of household notice Mr Michael Clarke indicated that he had applied in August 2019 for, and in, November 2019 a certificate of lawful use or development (CLEUD) was granted. The evidence submitted in support of the

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application included rental agreements which confirmed that the property had been rented out annually, to at least 3 persons, since August 2014, thereby establishing the lawful use of the property as a HMO.

On the 7 December 2020 an authorised officer from the NIHMO Unit inspected the property and established that the property was occupied as an HMO by 4 individuals who form more than 2 households. The officer further established that rent was being paid by those individuals.

Section 7 of the 2016 Act states that “Every house in multiple occupation (“HMO”) must be licensed under this Act (unless a temporary exemption notice under Section 15 is in effect in respect of it). The property is not licensed as an HMO nor is there a temporary exemption notice in effect in respect of it.

It is clear that the property was let as an HMO from 01 August 2014 until 31 March 2019 without registering it with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (“NIHE”) as an HMO in accordance with the Statutory Registration Scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, the property was let as an HMO from 1 April 2019 until 7 December 2020 without licensing the property as an HMO pursuant to the 2016 Act.

Therein, the Council is satisfied that such matters are relevant in deciding whether Mr Michael Clarke, in his capacity as the owner of the HMO, is a fit and proper person.

Subsequently, the Council cannot be satisfied that Mr Michael Clarke is a fit and proper person, in accordance with Section 8(2)(b) and Section 10 of the 2016 Act.”

Having taken into account the information presented to Committee, and following representations made on behalf of the Applicant, and hearing from Councillor Gormley as the Objector, the Committee agreed to refuse the application.

Non-Delegated Matters

Update on the Review of Licensing Legislation

The Building Control Manager presented the Committee with an update in respect of the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 To update Members on the review of Entertainments Licensing legislation, which was commenced by Minister of the Environment, Mark H Durkan MLA, in 2015.**

- 1.2 The process did not progress as in 2016 the Minister for Communities decided not to do any further work on the review. Following the resumption of the Assembly in 2020, the new Minister for Communities, Deirdre Hargey MLA, decided that further work on the review should be taken forward.

2.0 **Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the report.

3.0 **Main Report**

Key Issues

- 3.1 The Department for Communities has responsibility for the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, the legislation governing Entertainments Licensing. This legislation was previously the responsibility of the Department of the Environment.
- 3.2 The current entertainment licensing scheme has been in place since 1985 and was reviewed in 2015 when the Minister invited key representatives from the entertainment industry to review and make recommendations on changes to the licensing system.
- 3.3 Members are reminded that the Committee granted approval for Trevor Martin, former Head of Building Control and Nora Largey, Divisional Solicitor, to sit on the Entertainments Licensing Review Group comprising representatives from the entertainment sector, local government, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and the Department of Health.
- 3.4 The purpose of the review was to put in place a system that did not place an undue burden on businesses and local community groups but also ensure that the public are not put at risk and that entertainment does not cause unreasonable disturbance to people living in the area.
- 3.5 The aim of the review was to update both the legislation and the Model Terms and Conditions, to remove outdated provisions that no longer have beneficial effect and introduce new ones to deal with innovative issues.
- 3.6 The Review Group reported its findings in February 2015, making 36 recommendations for a future licensing regime. Although recommendations were subject to a public consultation and an indication given that more detailed

proposals would be developed by the Department the review ceased in 2016.

3.7 The Council, further to a Special meeting of the Licensing Committee on 23 June 2015, agreed a response to the consultation on 1 July 2015.

3.8 Some of the key recommendations of the Entertainment Licensing Review Group and the Department's response included:

- **There should be a single licence covering both indoor and outdoor entertainment at a venue;**
- **A new Temporary Licence should be introduced to allow for one-off events by businesses or community groups;**
- **An entertainment licence should remain in place unless surrendered by the licence holder or revoked by the council;**
- **To ensure that action can be taken in response to any problems, local residents, the PSNI and NIFRS would be able to request that the council review the licence at any time over the duration of the licence;**
- **When considering a licence application, councils should give due consideration to preventing, or minimising, any crime and disorder issues associated with the entertainment;**
- **To amend the types of entertainment regulated by the Order;**
- **To remove the requirement to advertise in local newspapers and replace this with a notice displayed on the premises and details published on the council website;**
- **To enhance the powers of enforcement for councils to deal with those who fail to comply with the law; and**
- **Model terms, conditions and restrictions for entertainment licences should be provided by the Department.**

- 3.9 As almost six years have passed since the recommendations for a new licensing regime were made the Department has re-established the Review Group to re-examine its previous work.**
- 3.10 Stephen Hewitt, Building Control Manager and Nora Largey, Divisional Solicitor represent the Council on the Review Group. It is expected that the Department will consider the previous recommendations and start to formulate proposals for consideration by the Group in advance of further consultation on proposed amendments to the legislation in due course.**

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.11 None.**

Equality or Good Relations Implications

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

The Committee noted the report.

Department for Communities On-Line Questionnaire as part of the Review of Houses in Multiple Occupation Licensing Scheme

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

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The Department for Communities has commenced its review of the Houses in Multiple Occupation (‘HMO’) Licensing Scheme as the scheme has been in operation for almost two years having come into effect on 1st April 2019. A draft response to the Review which is being conducted via an on-line Questionnaire was previously considered by members who expressed concerns that the proposed response did not adequately address the concerns and frustrations encountered by the Council in trying to regulate the existing HMO housing stock and impacts on local communities. To facilitate a revised response, officers requested a further extension of time (previously extended by Department for Communities (‘DfC’) from the 5th February to the 19th February) until 11th March 2021.**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Taking into account the information presented, Committee is asked to note and agree the Council’s proposed response to**

the on-line questionnaire issued by DfC in respect of their review of the HMO licensing scheme.

- 2.2 Committee is also asked note and agree an additional submission to DfC to be considered as part of their review highlighting legislative anomalies and omissions with suggested amendments to improve the delivery and administration of the HMO licensing scheme.

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

- 3.1 DfC wrote to Belfast City Council on 22nd December 2020 to indicate that it wished to seek views in relation to the review by means of an online questionnaire on the NI Direct website on the following link <https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/dfc-analytical-services-unit/review-of-houses-of-multiple-occupation-hmo-licenc/>.
- 3.2 The review questionnaire poses 9 questions and the proposed answers to the questions have been provided in Online Questionnaire response.

The HMO Review is seeking views in the following areas;

1. Improvements to the management of the HMOs
 2. Improvements to the overall standards of HMOs
 3. Improvements to the current fitness standards expected in HMOs
 4. Improvements to the safety standards associated with living in an HMO
 5. The value for money associated with the HMO licensing scheme
 6. The effectiveness and accessibility of the HMO Guidance
 7. Effective and timely communication between councils and landlords and councils and Department
 8. Views on the administration and delivery of the scheme
 9. Identification of respondent.
- 3.3 Officers have considered the views and representations of the Licensing Committee regarding the concerns and frustrations encountered by the Council in trying to regulate the existing HMO housing stock and their impacts and effects on local communities. The following views are now reflected in the proposed response to the Review of HMOs;

- 3.4** The Council welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the review of the HMO Licensing Scheme being undertaken by the DfC. In seeking to provide answers to the questions posed in this questionnaire, taking account of the Council's lead role in administering and delivering the scheme on behalf of all councils in Northern Ireland, the Council believes that the review also gives DfC the opportunity to review housing policy and provision through a wider lens, as the HMO licensing scheme alone does not afford the Council the opportunity to shape the city and enhance local communities.
- 3.5** Belfast City Council notes the DfC assertion within the letter accompanying the questionnaire that "the licensing regime sought to properly and effectively regulate Houses in Multiple Occupation to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of occupants and at the same time to minimise any negative impacts upon the neighbourhood and surrounding area". The Council wishes to highlight that the new licensing regime has failed to achieve that aim, particularly in those areas where there is a high density of HMOs already in existence. The ongoing and live issues associated with the high density Houses in Multiple Occupation areas are well documented in terms of environmental impact and antisocial behaviour requiring significant additional resources by the Council to manage on an on-going basis. Events such as Fresher's week, Saint Patrick's Day, end of term/tenancy clear outs provide additional pressure points and heightened impacts for residents in areas of HMO intensification as well wider resource implications for the Council and other statutory agencies such as the PSNI.
- 3.6** It was noted that the HMO Review questionnaire did not afford local residents the opportunity to adequately reflect their views within the structured questions posed. The Council believes it is necessary that DfC have cognisance of the views of occupants and residents when assessing and referring to improvements associated with the new licensing regime as a narrow focus will not give a full and representative view of the HMO Licensing scheme which as highlighted above aims to take account of the impact on residents and the wider community interests.
- 3.7** It is considered that as presently drafted, the licensing scheme does not deliver on DfC's common purpose of 'Supporting People, Building Communities, Shaping Places' for the reasons set out in this report and requires fundamental review.

- 3.8** One of the main concerns emerging in Belfast since the introduction of the new licensing regime has been the inability of deal with the cumulative impacts of a disproportionately high amount of HMOs in some areas due to unnecessary limitations placed upon the council by the Act. In particular the issue of over-provision of HMO properties resulting in high density clusters remains an area of concern as the new licensing regime does not address such areas already in existence. The ramifications of over provision manifests in many ways in these affected areas resulting in the on-going problems of excessive waste generation and waste management challenges, additional street cleansing resources, fly-tipping, lack of environmental management and traffic congestion. Council has previously suggested that DfC should consider the introduction of special licensing areas, which are provided for in England pursuant to the Housing Act 2004. This would require all private rented properties to be licensed within a designated area and Council reiterates its support for such an approach to be provided for within the Act.
- 3.9** As the Department for Communities will be aware, there are a significant number of HMO properties which have not been assessed through the planning permission process (which assesses applications against The Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) Subject Plan for Belfast City Council Area 2015) but instead either do not have planning permission at all or have established immunity from prosecution because they have been illegally operating as a HMO for more than 5 years and can therefore avail of a Certificate of Lawful Use
- 3.10** This means that owners can effectively evade the strict limits which are placed on HMO provision in certain areas and seems fundamentally unfair to the Council in circumstances where there are demonstrable problems associated with these high density clusters. It seems perverse that the Council must address its mind to a whole raft of matters which go to the fitness of an applicant but is explicitly directed to disregard the use of the premises as a HMO for a number of years without the benefit of planning permission, particularly where there may be a disproportionately high number of HMOs in an area.
- 3.11** It is the Council's position that the whole issue of planning permission insofar as it relates to the Act should be revisited. The legislation as drafted, i.e., by referring to 'a breach of planning control' has created uncertainty and it is submitted that the only reasonable basis upon which it can be determined that the operation of the premises would not be a

breach of planning control is through the determination of a formal application for a Certificate of Lawful Use by Planning Service. Council would therefore recommend, at the very least, that this provision should be amended to state that the Council must be satisfied that the property has planning permission or a Certificate of Lawful Use at the time of applying regardless of whether it is a grant or renewal application.

- 3.12** Notwithstanding the Council's view in relation to the need for clarity around planning permissions for the processing of all HMO applications (both renewals and new), the Council notes with concern that the current system of granting a Certificate of Lawful Use for established HMOs circumvents the ability for the Council to assess the impact of a proposed HMO, including issues such as impact on the amenity of the area, parking issues and importantly whether the proposal breaches the thresholds placed on HMOs as part of the Subject Plan. The ability to apply for a Certificate of Lawful Use effectively prevents the ability to achieve the aim of sustainable development and balanced communities.
- 3.13** The Council accepts that the system of granting a Certificate of Lawful Use falls outside the scope of the DfC Review but wishes to highlight the issue due to the impact on Houses in Multiple Occupation intensity in certain areas in Belfast. However it is aware that DfI have issued a call for evidence for review of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 and the Council asks that DfC engages in that process to highlight the difficulties caused by immunity from enforcement in respect of HMOs and the incompatibility with this given the provisions of the HMO Subject Plan and the Council's Draft Local Development Plan which also seeks to designate Housing Management Areas in which planning permission will only be granted for HMOs and/or flats/apartments where the total number combined would not exceed 20% of all dwellings within that area (see Policy HOU10 https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/getmedia/473f71a1-e0d2-431a-971b-def39e550934/DPS001_DPS.pdf)
- 3.14** The challenges of addressing anti-social behavioural (ASB) activity in certain areas of high density properties are well rehearsed and widely known. It is accepted that the density of HMOs are not the only factor in the level of ASB but they undoubtedly contribute. It is also accepted that ASB does not occur in every HMO. However this has to be balanced against the ability of the Council to deal with ASB which is associated with areas where there is a high number of such properties, well in excess of the limits which were considered acceptable in the HMO Subject Plan.

- 3.15 Under the existing transitional arrangements from the Northern Ireland's Housing Executive's Registration Scheme to the new HMO licensing regime, it will take five years to bring all licenses under the new standard licensing conditions which includes a condition placing responsibilities on landlords to manage anti-social behaviours of their tenants. Whilst it is acknowledged that councils have the power to vary individual deemed licences, the process is cumbersome and resource intensive. The Council is requesting as part of this review that the Department for Communities consider amending the Houses in Multiple Occupation (Commencement and Transitional Provisions) Order (NI) 2019 to apply the standard conditions around ASB to all deemed licences. This would allow much more decisive action on the part of the Council and landlords alike.**
- 3.16 In relation to environmental management associated with HMO properties, there has not been a noted improvement in how such properties are managed by their owners with the Council receiving on-going complaints about litter, graffiti, garden maintenance etc. resulting in the need to engage with owners. This highlights that the need to ensure that owners and agents discharge their responsibilities more effectively and will require an additional resource to continue to ensure compliance with the standard licensing conditions in this regard.**
- 3.17 The costs associated with the delivery and administration of the HMO Licensing scheme are addressed as part of the review in question 5 and whilst it is acknowledged that the wider costs such as policing, waste management, enforcement and engagement fall outside the scope of the review, these costs are nonetheless significant in high density HMO areas. The Council would welcome further consideration by DfC to explore ways in which existing areas of high density HMOs can re-coup these costs.**
- 3.18 In light of the concerns expressed by members in relation the HMO licensing regime, the Council have agreed that it would be beneficial for Department for Communities representatives and other relevant statutory bodies to attend a workshop to allow for further collaboration and engagement in relation to the review of the HMO Licensing scheme.**
- 3.19 During the first two years of the implementation of the new HMO licensing scheme, officers have identified a range of legislative omissions and anomalies which would benefit from a review and revision, so that there is better clarity to assist**

the Council to regulate and administer the scheme more effectively. Officers have compiled a table detailing the relevant sections of the HMO Act 2016 that have been identified for consideration as part of the review.

- 3.20** In conclusion, the new HMO licensing scheme has not delivered the anticipated benefits for communities and neighbourhoods where there are existing high density clusters of HMOs which in turn adversely impact on neighbourhoods and their residents resulting in environmental deterioration and anti-social behavioural activity.
- 3.21** A wider programme of multi-agency commitment and intervention such as the recently designated Special Action Area under the Council's community planning for The Wider University and The Lower Ormeau area and ongoing work through the Belfast Agenda may provide the platform to bring about transformational change through neighbourhood regeneration and tailored solutions at a local level but that should be in conjunction with a fit for purpose Act regulating the HMO Sector incorporating the changes recommended in this report and the table of suggested legislative changes as an immediate priority through this review.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.22** There are additional costs that have been borne by BCC in the administration, support and governance of the new regime that have impacted on budgets and resources. Therefore as part of this review Council is urgently calling for DfC to undertake a review of the financial and resource elements as highlighted in the response.

Equality or Good Relations Implications

- 3.23** There are no equality or good relations issues associated with this report."

A number of Members intimated their frustration regarding a response which had been received to the Committee's request to engage with the Minister for Communities, regarding to the review of the implementation and operation of the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Act (2016). The Members expressed that, whilst they were happy to engage with the officials from the Department for Communities, they would continue to pursue a meeting with the Minister.

The Committee noted the report and agreed to the Council's proposed response to the on-line questionnaire issued by DfC in respect of their review of the HMO licensing scheme.

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The Committee further agreed that an additional submission would be made to DfC, to be considered as part of their review, highlighting legislative anomalies and omissions with suggested amendments to improve the delivery and administration of the HMO licensing scheme.

Chairperson

Planning Committee

Tuesday, 23rd February, 2021

PRE DETERMINATION HEARING HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Hussey (Chairperson);
Councillors Matt Collins,
Garrett, Groogan, Hutchinson,
Maskey, McCullough, McKeown
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;
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Brooks, Carson, Hanvey, Murphy and Nicholl.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Pre Determination Hearing

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 pumphouse, 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

The Planning Manager provided the background to the application and explained that it had been due to be considered by the Committee on 18th August 2020, but that it

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had been deferred due to correspondence received from an objector's legal representative. He explained that the Committee had undertaken a site visit in respect of the application in September 2020 and then, at its meeting on 19th January, 2021, the Committee had subsequently agreed to defer the application for further information on the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), which had been carried out by Shared Environmental Services (SES), and to hold a non-mandatory Pre Determination Hearing.

He advised the Members that SES had completed the HRA in December 2020 but they had not submitted the HRA Appropriate Assessment to the Council until just before the Planning Committee meeting in January, 2021. The Committee was advised that the HRA Appropriate Assessment had concluded that, provided the mitigation measures detailed in the assessment were conditioned in any planning approval, there would be no adverse effects on site integrity of the Belfast Lough Open Water SPA, Belfast Lough SPA/Ramsar site and East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine Proposed SPA.

The Committee was advised that the proposal was for a Central Anaerobic Digestion (CAD) facility capable of processing up to 99,999 tons of brown bin waste per year. The Planning Manager explained that a CAD plant would turn household waste into gas, and then electricity, which would feed the adjacent Combined Heat and Power (CHP) plant and grid. The Members were advised that it would produce 4.1MW renewable energy per annum.

The Planning Manager outlined that the site was un-zoned "white land" within the Belfast Area Urban Plan (BUAP) 2001 and was located within the development limits of Belfast in the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (dBMAP 2015) with a number of relevant zonings. It was within BHA 05 - Mixed Use Site North Foreshore, within close proximity to a National Designated Site (Inner Belfast Lough Area of Special Scientific Interest), within close proximity to two European Designated Sites –Belfast Lough Special Protection Area (SPA) and Belfast Lough Open SPA and it was within close proximity to an International Designated Site Belfast Lough Ramsar Site.

The site was within Zoning BHA 07 Employment/Industry for North Foreshore in the draft BMAP 2004 and was within the mixed use site North Foreshore Zoning BHA 05 in draft BMAP 2015. He explained that both zonings listed a number of Key Site Requirements (KSRs) and, given the advanced stage that draft BMAP 2015 had reached, it was considered to hold significant weight.

The Committee was also advised that an overall Comprehensive Masterplan had been agreed by the DOE Planning Service in January 2010. The Planning manager explained that the Masterplan recommended waste management facilities in the area and also promoted economic development on the site. It was therefore considered that the proposal complied with the overall aspiration of the Masterplan to seek the regeneration and development of the site and wider North Foreshore land.

The Planning Manager explained that, following the Planning Committee of 19th January, the applicant had provided additional information in relation to the 'need' for the proposal, with particular regard to regional policies set out in Planning Policy Statement 11 (PPS11) and the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS).

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In that correspondence, the applicant had stated that the proposed CAD facility was consistent with the objective of regional policy of promoting such proposals. It referred to regional policy, which stated that the need was identified in the Waste Management Strategy/ Waste Management Plan and that the proposal was consistent with those documents, the overarching waste policy and the future direction of travel in diverting organic waste from landfill. The applicant had advised that the need to identify the source of the feedstock that would supply the CAD facility was beyond the requirements of planning policy and that ongoing discussions in relation to potential sources were commercially sensitive. Furthermore, they added that further progress with feedstock contracts could not be advanced until planning permission had been granted.

The applicant had also provided a response to the further objection from Giant's Park Belfast Limited (GPBL), as had been reported to the Committee, on 19th January, in the Late Items pack. He explained that the information had been uploaded to the Planning Portal and a copy had been sent to the objectors.

The Planning Manager provided the Committee with the proposed plans for the site and showed a number of views of the proposal from different locations.

The Committee was advised that there were two objectors to the application, GPBL and Belfast Harbour. GPBL stated that they were the preferred bidder for the development of 250 acres of land at the North Foreshore. GPBL objected to the proposal as it was immediately adjacent to the site for their major leisure-based development, and expressed significant concerns that the proposed CAD facility could impact on the deliverability and success of it. GPBL stated in their objections that the proposal was contrary to planning policy and should be refused.

GPBL also advised that they believed that the CAD proposal was not in accordance with the agreed masterplan because the site of the CAD proposal was identified in the agreed masterplan for logistical warehousing, and not waste management. They believed that the CAD proposal was therefore incompatible with the other identified uses in the masterplan and would undermine the development of the North Foreshore site.

Belfast Harbour had concerns that the proposed CAD facility would be incompatible with the film studios and raised issues regarding noise, environmental and ecological impact, future expansion of the film studios and with the process.

He explained that DFI Roads, NI Water, Rivers Agency, NIEA Marine and Fisheries Division, NIEA Water Management Unit, NIEA Land, Soil, and Air, NIEA Natural Environment Division, Shared Environmental Services and Belfast City Airport had all been consulted as statutory consultees and had no objections.

He also advised that officers had consulted the Council's Environmental Health Unit, the Tree Officer, the City and Neighbourhood Landscape Team and the Economic Development Team, as non-statutory consultees, and that they also had no objections.

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The Members asked the Planning Manager a number of questions, including:

- what precisely the Committee was being asked to make its decision based upon, given that there had already been deviations from the overall Masterplan adopted in 2010 by DOE, and that Giant's Park had subsequently been designated as the "preferred developer" for the leisure aspect of the site;
- the need for an Anaerobic Digestion facility and how it had been assessed;
- where the 99,000 tons of waste per year would be coming from and whether it would require a significant number of HGVs making numerous trips to and from the area, along the Shore Road;
- whether there was, in fact, 99,000 tons of brown bin waste per year that needed processing, and where it was currently going;
- how the Transport Assessment had been carried out - was it assessed as the site was currently, or was it assessed for the whole Masterplan area;
- whether the potential negative economic impact on the Giant's Park plans or on the Film Studios had been considered by the Economic Development unit;
- under section WM2 of PPS11, how had the need for the facility been established;
- the impact of the facility on the air quality;
- the noise generated from the site and whether it would impact on the recently approved Phase 2 Film studios;
- the Masterplan and the compatibility of the proposed uses;
- whether the facility was of regional significance and therefore whether it should be considered by the Department for Infrastructure; and
- the long-term viability of the application.

The Planning Manager advised the Committee that, in respect of issues surrounding the compatibility of various uses and the economic impact of the application, very limited weight should be given to the Giant's Park application as a Pre Application Notice (PAN) for it had been submitted one month ago. It was therefore not reasonable to delay consideration of the CAD plant application which had been in the Planning system since 2019. He added that the impact on the nearby Film Studios had been considered as part of the application and that Environment Health had considered issues such as noise and had concluded that the application would not have adverse impact on the studios.

In relation to where the waste for the site would be coming from, he explained that the applicant had stated that negotiations were ongoing and commercially sensitive, but that the agent might be able to provide further information. The Director of Planning and Building Control added that DFI Roads' assessment of the application would focus on the highway safety and capacity issues in relation to the site, and the number of vehicles coming in and out of it, rather than where the HGVs were coming from.

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In terms of the zoning of the site, the Planning Manager explained that the Masterplan was one of a number of relevant material considerations as previously outlined. He explained that the Masterplan included an aim to bring forward a waste management facility and that the Film Studios were on a part of the site which had originally been zoned for a waste management facility. The Committee was advised that the previous permissions for the film studios had already deviated from the Masterplan. The adjacent uses to the immediate north, south, east and west of the proposed CAD plant were for commercial use.

In respect of Policy WM2 of PPS11, he explained that the need for the facility been established as the applicant had demonstrated that the proposal was consistent with the wider aims of the waste management policy, insofar as AD moved waste up the hierarchy from disposal to recycling and recovery, thereby diverting organic waste from landfill.

The Planning Manager confirmed to the Members that the application did not exceed the thresholds to be considered by the Department for Infrastructure as regionally significant.

In response to a Member's comment regarding Belfast City Council's current waste contract, the Director of Planning and Building Control advised the Committee that officers would seek to provide confirmation of that at the next meeting. In response to a further Member's query as to how and where food waste across Northern Ireland was currently being processed, the Director suggested that the agent might be able to provide that information. However, if the agent was unable to, he agreed that officers would make enquiries to provide that information at its next meeting.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Whyte to the meeting, who wished to speak against the application. He advised the Committee that:

- no independent economic analysis had been carried out on the figures which had been provided by the applicant;
- visual impact was not suitable
- there was a lack of demand, well known that other sites were not operating at full capacity;
- it was unclear where the waste would come from;
- DfI Roads had based its decision on what lorries would be entering and not where they were coming from and that it was not sure of the volume of traffic for the site;
- with regards to Appendix 6 – Air Quality and Odour, the dispersion assessments were based on meteorological data taken at Aldergrove, and not at Belfast City Airport, which was 15 miles away from the site. He highlighted that the geography and wind patterns were entirely different and the particular impact the proposal could have on sites R5, R6 and R7.

The Chairperson then welcomed Mr. K. Carlin, Project Manager, and Mr. T. Clifford, Environmental Advisor, who were representing Giant's Park Belfast Limited (GPBL) and objecting to the application. They advised the Members that they were objecting to the proposal for the following reasons:

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- GPBL had been appointed as the preferred developer by the Council in September, 2018;
- at the same Council meeting, reference was made to a potential Anaerobic Digestion Plant on lands adjacent to the Giant's Park proposals, which was the first they knew of the proposal, and which they had opposed from the outset;
- for two years GPBL had worked on a detailed vision for the site that addressed a comprehensive set of social and economic requirements set by the Council, which had required significant time and financial resource;
- they had progressed with their commitment and, following submission of their Proposal of Application Notice, they had commenced a comprehensive programme of public engagement with local community groups, having held their first public meeting last week;
- if the CAD plant was to be approved it would have a significant impact on the vision of GPBL for the site, in planning terms, as PPS11 included policy that could restrict future development in the vicinity of existing or approved waste management facilities;
- that they had consulted both CBRE and Colliers International, who advised that it would be almost impossible to attract investors and potential tenants if the AD plant went ahead at that location;
- Policy BHA 5 of Draft BMAP required the preparation of a comprehensive masterplan for the site, to consider detailed aspects of the site layout and design, not just land uses;
- there was no established need for the facility;
- Policy WM2 required that need be established through the Waste Management Strategy and the relevant Waste Management Plan, both of which were now a decade old;
- in Northern Ireland, the annual tonnage of Local Authority collected waste was steadily falling, and would continue to do so;
- the Granville Eco Park at Dungannon, a CAD plant of a similar scale, was struggling to attract NI based feedstock 8 years after it opened;
- only half of the incoming waste would be handled via the AD process, whereby the other half would be handled by an operation akin to MBT (Mechanical Biological Treatment) and MBT operation produced less electricity and more landfill waste, than the AD process;
- Arc21 held the brown bin waste contract for Belfast and 5 adjacent Councils until 2029 which suggested that waste would need to be transported from across NI and even other countries;
- they questioned the proportion of output which would be sent to landfill, and that it could be significantly higher than claimed;
- the proposed plant's contribution to renewable energy, of 4.1MW, was equivalent to one large wind turbine; and
- the carbon benefits from renewable energy production needed to be considered against the carbon impacts of the vehicle

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movements associated with waste delivery and by-product removal/disposal.

A Member stated that they were concerned that the representatives from GPBL had stated they were not aware of the waste facility until September 2018. He stated that the Council had always talked about the creation of green jobs in respect of the site and had advertised for private sector operators to submit proposals for such a plant in 2011.

Mr. Carlin stated that, in 2011, the Council had put out an expression of interest for a “clean tech” development and that it did not have a definition in terms of what that was.

In response to a further question as to what detrimental impacts they felt the proposal would have on the Giant’s Park site, Mr. Carlin stated that they were concerned about odour, spillages, traffic movements, vermin and the visual impact within the site, given that the Council wanted to attract 1 million people to visit the site each year.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr S. Beattie QC and Ms C. McParland, planning agent, to the meeting who were representing the applicant.

Mr. Beattie advised the Committee that:

- the application had been the subject of an Environmental Statement (ES) and Further Environmental Information (FEI) and that none of the statutory consultees had objections to it;
- the masterplan was mere guidance and was subordinate to the zoning. The zoning had been known since it was whiteland under BUAP and mixed used development since BMAP 2004;
- that Zone 4 was marked for a “waste recovery facility” on the leisure park site, so it did not add up that GPBL were unaware of the waste management;
- their client wished to place the CAD plant beside the existing rock credited CHP engines;
- in respect of ammonia and nitrogen, it was a zero baseline, and there would be no harmful impact on Belfast Lough and both DAERA and SES were content with the modelling;
- in terms of waste, the facility was strategically important and needed, as demonstrated in the Waste Management Plan and Strategy, and, in terms of landfill, between July – September 2020, 62,000 tons of waste from local councils went to landfill;

Ms. McParland advised the Committee that:

- the leisure proposals were purely aspirational at that point and they were not wholly in accordance with the uses identified in the masterplan or in planning policy, and that you could not therefore assume that permission would be granted if an application was to be submitted and therefore minimal weight should be afforded to it;

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- the Giant's Park site was a mixed-use site zoning which expressly included a waste management facility and that there had always been a presumption and expectation that a proposal like the AD plant would be acceptable;
- there was the additional benefit of producing renewable energy making best use of the existing CHP engines;
- the Council's expression of interest for a clean tech hub and environmental resource recovery park had been publicised long before the application for an AD plant had been submitted;
- a capital investment of £40million had already been committed to its delivery;
- there was no policy basis for the City to lose out on this opportunity.

Mr. Beattie advised the Committee that a number of expert witnesses were in attendance at the Hearing in order to answer any technical questions from the Members.

In response to a Member's question as to why the air quality analysis had been carried out at the airport at Aldergrove, Mr. S. Carr, Irwin Carr Consulting, explained that the Local Air Quality Technical Guidance 9 set out very specific guidelines, where sequential hourly data had to be carried out over a period of three to five years. He clarified to the Members that all assessments for Belfast were based on data coming from the measuring station at Aldergrove airport, and that the data was then applied to the specific topography of the site.

In relation to the Traffic Assessment, Mr. R. Agus, MRA Partnership, advised the Committee that Belfast Metropolitan Area was the greatest source of existing household waste and also had the best road network. All traffic had been assessed coming via Dargan Road and that the impact on the road network was 0.6% and that there was considered to be no significant impact on Dargan Road or the surrounding area. He added that the cumulative impact of the site had been factored in, including Phase 2 of the Film Studios, and that there was still considered to be considerable capacity for further development. He added that the Giant's Park had its own access and would not be used by traffic heading for the AD plant.

In relation to the Municipal solid waste product which would end up in landfill, and the environmental impact of that, it was estimated that 5,000 tons out of 99,000 tons would be the worst case scenario.

In response to a question regarding the nitrogen and ammonia emissions and the impact on European designated sites within the vicinity of the application, Mr. Beattie advised that both Belfast Lough SPA were not ammonia sensitive as they were tidal, and that the modelling, even at its maximum, would not reach anywhere near the maximum.

Dr. J. O'Neill, JONA, explained that the data in relation to the nitrogen and ammonia emissions, within the tables 6.28 and 6.29, were post-mitigation. Mr. S. Carr advised the Members that the emissions containing ammonia would come through the air filtration system.

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In response to questions regarding the need for the facility, Ms. McParland advised the Committee that PPS11 was met through the Waste Management Plan and Strategy. She added that the need focused on the waste hierarchy, it was a renewable energy proposal, it made best use of CHP engines and that it would contribute to future renewable targets.

Ms. McParland advised the Members that, between July and September 2020, 62,000 tons of waste from local councils had been sent to landfill. She added that a report entitled "Reducing Emissions in Northern Ireland" stated that 95% of emissions from waste were methane gas created from the anaerobic decomposition of materials. The Committee was advised that the proposed AD plant would essentially divert biodegradable waste from landfill, thereby reducing methane gas emissions.

In response to a question regarding the objectors' statement that the proposed plant's contribution to renewable energy would be equivalent to one large wind turbine, Mr. S. Hegarty, Energia, outlined that wind turbines would normally generate 2.3 – 3 Mw, operating between 20 – 25% capacity. He explained that an AD plant would operate at up to 85% capacity and did not have the variability of wind power.

A Member questioned the foul drainage from the site during the construction phase. Dr. S. Wise, Energia, advised the Committee that any foul liquid on site during construction would be collected, put into sealed containers and taken off the site to a licensed waste water treatment facility.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Beattie, Ms. McParland and the expert witnesses that had provided the Committee with clarity in relation to a number of queries.

He advised the Committee that Ms. S. Allen, Principal Environmental Planning Officer at Shared Environmental Service (SES), was in attendance in order to answer any questions from the Members.

A Member sought further information on how SES had carried out the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA); information relating to the critical loads, and the different policy positions for SES and DAERA; and, given the current levels of nitrogen or ammonia, what the rationale was for allowing anything additional at the sites.

Ms. Allen advised the Committee that SES required the applicant to provide the initial information that went into the HRA, including an Air Quality Impact assessment. She explained that SES had satisfied themselves that anyone carrying out the assessment had the necessary qualifications and experience, and that they therefore did not replicate it. The Members were advised that, in this case, the applicant had provided a shadow HRA. However Ms. Allen explained that, when they were working on behalf of a Council, they carried out their own robust, independent assessment and that was what had taken place in this case.

In relation to thresholds, she explained that the predicted environmental concentrations of ammonia were significantly lower than the guideline level as provided by NIEA. Therefore they were satisfied that the level of emissions resulting from the project were well within the environmental capacity of the site.

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In relation to nitrogen loading, she advised that the additional amount for the site was 0.9% which was well within the range. She provided further clarity in relation to the NIEA's policy in relation to nitrogen loading in comparison with the approach by SES.

The Chairperson then welcomed to the meeting Mr. K. Finegan, NIEA, who was available to answer questions from the Committee. He explained that NIEA applied the same protocol to all designations, whereby if the process contribution of the development was under 1% of the critical load or level, no further consideration was required.

He added that there was the potential for marine habitats to be sensitive to ammonia and nitrogen deposition. He confirmed that it was not NIEA which set the critical loads, rather, they were derived from the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP), which used updated scientific evidence and literature.

In relation to further questions regarding nitrogen, he advised the Committee that the 1% figure came from the UK Conservation and Regulatory bodies as a means of identifying the projects which would most likely have an impact. He explained that there was no scientific basis for the use of 1% and that it was currently under review in order to bring it more into line with the evidence of damage and case law.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Allen and Mr. Finegan for their contributions to the meeting.

Mr. Beattie was permitted to provide a response to what had been discussed. He advised the Committee that the applicable law, as approved by the Courts in Judicial Review in NI over last two years was that the decision maker was entitled to place considerable weight on the opinion of the expert National Agency with the responsibility for oversight of nature conservation and ought to do so. He explained that expressing a mere doubt without providing reasonable objective evidence was insufficient. He added that the DAERA/NIEA policy did not matter, as the SES criteria was significantly more robust, and that all three experts with international reputations, were content with the proposal beyond reasonable scientific doubt.

The Chairperson thanked all the speakers for their attendance.

The Director of Planning and Building Control advised the Committee that the officers would endeavor to bring the application to the next monthly meeting, depending on gathering the requested information by then.

Chairperson

Planning Committee

Tuesday, 16th March, 2021

MEETING OF PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Hussey (Chairperson);
Councillors Brooks, Carson, Matt Collins,
Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey, 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;
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 16th February were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st March, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Collins declared an interest in Item 6f, namely LA04/2020/1864/F - Application under Section 54 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 in respect to planning permission Z/2014/0077/F (erection of new pavilion, new 3G all-weather pitch with associated perimeter and spectator fencing, ball catch nets, floodlighting and improvements to pedestrian and vehicular access to include new access, footpath and car parking) to vary Condition 13 at Glassmullin Gardens / Slieveban Drive, in that he had been involved in a campaign relating to the green space in the area, and, upon receiving legal advice, he advised that he would not participate in the vote on the application. He stated that he wished to address the Committee on the application before he retired from the meeting.

Councillor McCullough declared an interest in Item 6l, namely LA04/2020/0798/F - Youth and Community Centre, with fenced 3G Pitch on a vacant site, with associated parking and landscaping on site of former Grove Swimming Pool Complex bound by York

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Road North Queen Street and Grove Place, in that he had been involved in some work around it and would withdraw and not participate in the discussion or vote.

Committee Site Visits

The Committee noted that, on 2nd and 10th March, site visits had been undertaken to:

- **LA04/2020/1022/F** - Demolition of existing vacant buildings and structures to the rear of the site and alterations, refurbishment and extension to existing terraced dwelling at 1 Canada Street to provide 6no. apartments plus associated site works at 1 and 1a Canada Street;
- **LA04/2020/1158/F** - Demolition of existing building and erection of 65No Apartments including 20% social housing at- 1 – 5 Redcar Street;
- **LA04/2020/0845/O** - Outline planning permission for a mixed use regeneration proposal with all matters reserved for retirement living at plot 6, medical or health services at plot 9, multi storey car park, local retail uses, restaurant and cafe uses, leisure and gym facilities at plot 8, associated internal access roads, associated new public realm and amenity open space including central plaza and access from Upper Lisburn Road (as per planning approval reference LA04/2018/0040/F); and no matters reserved for residential development (81 apartments) at plot 3 with ground floor local retail use/restaurant and cafe uses/leisure and gym facilities, associated landscaping, car parking and access from Upper Lisburn Road (as per planning approval reference LA04/2018/0040/F) and reconfiguration of temporary car park to the rear of King's Hall (approved under LA04/2018/0040/F); and
- **LA04/2020/1943/F and LA04/2020/1944/LBC** – Residential conversion of the existing listed structures to form 57 apartments, including maisonettes and loft style studios ranging from 1-3 bedrooms in size to include 20% social housing at 3-19 (Former Warehouse) Rydalmere Street.

Pre-Emptive Site Visits

At the suggestion of officers, the Committee agreed to undertake a pre-emptive site visit in respect of the following application:

- **LA04/2020/2200/F** - Demolition of Nos. 27 to 37 Linenhall Street and Nos. 8-10 Clarence Street and erection of seven storey office building 8-10 Clarence Street, 27-37 Linenhall Street and existing car park at the corner of Linenhall Street and Clarence Street.

The Planning Manager advised the Committee that a late objection had been received in relation to application 6k, namely **LA04/2020/0857/F** - Demolition of existing hostel building and redevelopment to provide four-storey building comprising 15 No.

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residential units, office space and ancillary development at Ormeau Centre, 5-11 Verner Street. The Members noted that the application had therefore been withdrawn from the agenda and the Committee agreed to hold a pre-emptive site visit to familiarise itself with the location.

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

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 9th February and 8th March.

Abandonment

The Committee noted that the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) proposed to abandon 253.24 square metres of former footpath, consisting of two areas at Dunbar Link and Great Patrick Street, under Article 68 of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993.

Mr. Aidan Thatcher

The Chairperson reminded the Committee that this would be the last meeting at which the Director of Planning and Building Control would be in attendance as he would be leaving the Council to take up the post of Assistant Director (Growth and Housing) in Wigan Council. On behalf of the Committee, the Chairperson thanked Mr. Thatcher for his contribution to the Planning Department during his time in the Council and wished him well in his future role.

Miscellaneous

Regional Property Certificate Fee Increase

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise the Committee about an increase to the fee charged for a Regional Property Certificate.**

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2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Committee is asked to:

- **Note the revised fee structure for Regional Property Certificates.**

3.0 Main report

Background

- 3.1 Fermanagh and Omagh District Council co-ordinate and manage the Regional Property Certificate Service on behalf of the 11 Councils and other statutory partners. This includes collection of fees which are subsequently distributed on a net basis to each Council, based on the number of certificates issued for each respective area, normally on a bi-annual basis.**
- 3.2 The last fee change was in July 2019 when VAT was introduced following a HMRC ruling that this represented a chargeable service. It was confirmed at that time that this was not a statutory fee and Councils had the powers to amend at their discretion.**

Key Issues

- 3.3 It is proposed that the fee is increased from £60 to £70, inclusive of VAT, which is in line with the Local Council Property Certificate fee as this will avoid any confusion amongst the shared customer base. Other aspects of charges, including the charge for other sites and maximum fee, will not be affected. The proposed change to the fee structure is set out in Appendix A.:**
- 3.4 SOLACE has been consulted and has approved this change and it will also be advised to the Law Society as the representative organisation for solicitors in NI, with an effective date of 1 April 2021.**

Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.5 As per the report.**

Equality or Good Relations Implications

- 3.6 None associated with this report.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Review of the Implementation of the
Planning Act 2011**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report and Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The Department for Infrastructure (DFI) is carrying out a review of the implementation of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. DFI has issued a ‘call for evidence’ to key stakeholders asking them to respond (see Appendix 1 on mod.gov).
- 1.2 The Planning Committee is asked to agree the Council’s response at Appendix 2, which will inform the Department’s review.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to agree the draft response to DFI’s call for evidence at Appendix 2 regarding the Departmental review of the implementation of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

3.0 Main Report

Introduction

- 3.1 DFI is conducting a review of the implementation of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. DFI has issued a ‘call for evidence’ to key stakeholders asking them to respond. The Planning Committee is asked to agree the Council’s response, which will inform DFI’s review. A draft response provided at Appendix 2.

Background

- 3.2 The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (‘the Act’) was implemented in 2015 following the reform of local government and decentralisation of the majority of planning powers from the former Department of Environment to the 11 new councils.
- 3.3 The key aims of the reform of the planning system were:
- deliver Northern Ireland Executive’s decision to transfer the majority of planning functions to the newly formed councils thus creating a two tier planning system; and
 - bring forward short, medium and long term process improvements to modernise the system.

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- 3.4 The Department is required by law to undertake a review of the Act.
- 3.5 DFI stresses that the focus of the review is on the 'implementation' of the legislative provisions of the Act itself and the extent to which the original objectives of the Act have been achieved. This will then inform whether there is a need to retain, amend or repeal any provisions of the Act. The review will also provide opportunity to consider any improvements or 'fixes' which may be required to the way in which the Act has been commenced and implemented in subordinate legislation. DFI says that it is likely that issues with the planning system that have surfaced as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic will be considered as part of this review.
- 3.6 DFI issued the call for evidence on 15 February 2021. The deadline for responses was originally 15 March 2021. However, at the behest of Belfast City Council and other councils, DFI has agreed to extend the consultation period to 16 April 2021 to allow consideration by the Planning Committee and subsequent ratification at Full Council.
- 3.7 A link to the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 is provided below:
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2011/25/pdfs/nia_20110025_en.pdf

Key Issues

- 3.8 This is a very significant opportunity for the Council to influence much needed change and improvement to the planning process in Northern Ireland.
- 3.9 The planning system in NI is underperforming. In 2019/20, the average processing time for determining Major applications in Northern Ireland was 52.8 weeks – a modest increase over 59 weeks for 2018/19 and still almost double the statutory target of 30 weeks. Whilst the statutory target for Local applications was achieved for Northern Ireland as a whole there remains much scope for improvement.
- 3.10 There is widespread frustration experienced by users of the NI planning system that DFI retained too many 'checks and balances' when planning powers were transferred to councils. The structure of councils being legally reliant on central government Departments to make planning decisions causes difficulties, uncertainty and delays. There is considerable 'red

tape' and unnecessary administrative processes for Planning Authorities to follow. The bar for information requirements for applications at the beginning of the process is far too low and encourages 'bad' applications to enter the system. Planning fees do not come close to covering the costs of council planning services and Planning Authorities are far from cost neutral.

- 3.11 There is opportunity to address these and other issues to some degree through the Department's review. However, it is considered that much more fundamental reform is required if the NI planning system is to effectively support Belfast and the wider region. It is essential that Northern Ireland has a fit for purpose planning system if Belfast is to meet the needs of its communities, prosper and compete with other cities in these Islands and around the world. To this end, officers advise that an independent review of the NI planning system should be carried out by an outside body with particular expertise in international land-use planning and governance.**
- 3.12 The Council's proposed response to the Department's 'call for evidence' is provided at Appendix 2. Members are asked to endorse this response.**

4.0 Finance and Resource Implications

- 4.1 The proposed changes to the Planning Act 2011, as identified at Appendix 2, are aimed at reducing 'red tape' and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning system in Northern Ireland. These changes will in turn have a positive impact in terms of reducing costs and improving performance.**

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 5.1 There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this report."**

The Committee agreed the following minor changes to the draft response. The final draft response, as amended, follows:

- in respect of the notice of applications, that public awareness should be encouraged and increased where possible, including that notices on site should be complementary to, and not instead of, direct neighbour notification;
- to acknowledge that the different levels of resource in Planning Committees across N.I. was not equal;

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- the Local Development Plan amendments must ensure it is adaptable to change and fit for purpose; and
- ensure that fee amendments resulted in graduated fees to ensure that smaller schemes paid a lower fee.

Final Response

**“Call For Evidence
Review Of The Implementation of The Planning Act (NI) 2011**

Response Form

Please provide us with your comments below. Please be as concise as possible and where appropriate provide evidence to support your comment.

Local Development Plans

Q.1. Do you believe there is a need to retain, amend or repeal any provisions of Part 2 of the Act or associated subordinate legislation with regard to the delivery of Local Development Plans?

Detail relevant provisions:

The following changes to the legislation should be made or considered. The relevant section of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 (‘the 2011 Act’) has been provided where relevant, as has any specific Regulation where possible. The response has been grouped under general headings to assist the Department.

LDP Preparation

The LDP statutory process should provide the scope to allow councils to respond to the consultation submissions and consider changes during the plan development stage, prior to its formal submission for Independent Examination (IE). Whilst it is acknowledged that DPPN10 now seeks to remedy this, further clarity (and a clear statutory basis) for this approach should be embodied in the relevant primary and secondary legislation. Given the long timescales involved in the current LDP process and given the desire to take into account any submissions received, it is important that councils have an opportunity to amend or fine tune the development plan document before its submission for IE, including for minor matters that seek to clarify or improve the document that do not change the overall policy direction and objectives. Where a more substantial change is desirable, then a further public consultation process on the proposed changes only would be appropriate. This approach requires a clear legal basis.

The current role of the Department of Infrastructure ('the Department') is not clear in relation to the preparation/adoption of development plan documents (DPDs) – at both the DPS and LPP stages. It is unclear as to the purpose of submitting the draft DPDs to the Department, rather than to the PAC directly. In addition, following the IE, the ability of the Department, having already taken part in the IE process, to veto the report and findings of the PAC is undemocratic and conflicts with the Department's other roles in terms of its service departments. The PAC should report directly to the councils following the IE and council elected members should then decide to adopt or modify the DPD in light of any recommendations. This does not, of course, remove the power of the Department or Minister to intervene at any stage in the process up to adoption.

Planning legislation should set out the scope and procedural requirements of any guidance prepared by the Department that relates to the preparation of LDPs and the policies therein. There should be a clear time bar for considering new guidance issued (either as draft or finalised guidance) in the relevant DPD as a clear point in time has to be set for practical reasons. Departmental guidance should also be subject to proper process, including stakeholder consultation and any relevant impact assessment that may be required prior to its finalisation and publication.

In reviewing the planning legislation, the opportunity should be taken to consider whether the two-stage process in NI, which is unlike the processes in GB and RoI, is effective and beneficial. Whilst it is accepted that the overall development plan should comprise, inter alia, a core strategy, operational policies, local policies, site requirements and land allocations/designations, these may be best considered contemporaneously rather than having a significant time period, inevitably at least 1-2 years, between the DPS and LPP stages. It was evident at our recent IE hearings that the 2-stage process is causing a degree of frustration with some parties and it is not evident that there is any significant benefit in separating the DPS and the LPP in terms of process and time.

LDP Consultation

The consultation arrangements, timescales and use of appropriate media for both stages of new LDPs need to be reviewed and simplified across the provisions in the 2011 Act and The Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015. In particular, clarity, consistency and simplification across the different requirements in respect of the consultation process, including statutory adverts. In the latter regard, it is suggested that the public consultation periods for each relevant stage in the LDP process should be statutory period of 8 weeks minimum (as opposed

to maximum) and the statutory dates for accepting submissions should be clarified in relation to the current requirement for public notices during two consecutive weeks. Indeed, it is suggested that this two consecutive week requirement is omitted as a statutory requirement and that councils' Statements of Community Involvement specify the intended public notification at each stage, subject to any statutory minimum requirement.

The current definition of statutory consultation bodies set out at Regulation 2 of the LDP Regulations 2015 results in an unduly onerous and unnecessary notification of a long list of utility providers and licencees under Reg 2 (1) (f, g and h). The current reliance on UK lists for such providers, in the absence of a bespoke list for NI, has resulted in the issuing of statutory notices to many operators that are irrelevant to NI. The Department should take responsibility for managing a local list reflecting those operating in NI or, alternatively, the consultee body should be named as the relevant umbrella regulator body, such as the Utility Regulator and Ofcom.

The opportunity should also be taken for a more up to date and clear approach in relation to the use of digital media and websites for the use of different media for the purposes of consultation and advertisement.

It is considered that all amendments to the LDP process must ensure that it is adaptable to change and remains fit for purpose to enable quick and responsive plan production and review.

LDP Adoption and Independent Examination Process

The 2011 Act only refers to whether a plan is "sound" in Section 10 para 6 (b). The main issues lie with the tests transposed by the Department and set out in DPPN06 which, whilst "based" on practice elsewhere, fails to take account of the important differences in the NI system. In particular, the tests include elements over which councils have little control due to the particularities of the NI LDP process and the role of the Department. This clearly includes the LDP Timetable which, naturally accepted as good practice and a useful guide for all participants in the process, is inevitably subjected to significant changes as the many stages in the process are advanced. Whilst it is also accepted that the Department has indicated some flexibility (up to 6 months due to Covid, for example), the strict adherence to a proposed timetable should not be a matter of soundness.

Tree Preservation Order Matters

Section 124 of the 2011 Act affords the Department the power to, inter alia, vary or revoke a TPO. This power is not afforded to councils in

Sections 122-123 of the 2011 Act. Whilst Regulation 8 of The Planning (Trees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 refers to the revocation of TPOs by councils, the primary legislation does not align with this. The power for councils to vary or revoke TPOs, including those made by the Department and its predecessors, should be expressly included in the primary legislation.

Built Heritage/Conservation Matters

Section 104 of the 2011 Act allows the authority that originally made a conservation area designation to vary or cancel the designation. Therefore, this power does not afford councils the power to vary or cancel a conservation area designated by the Department and its predecessors. The primary legislation should be amended to afford councils such powers.

The Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 and The Planning (Fees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 should be amended to allow councils to set aside fees or charges where the application fee arises as a result of a decision to remove the permitted development rights under the Article 4 procedure.

In addition, in terms of the Article 4 process, the general procedure as set out in the current Regulations should be reviewed in relation to the degree of the process undertaken by the Department and the level of oversight.

Section 81 of the 2011 Act affords councils the power to serve a Buildings Preservation Notice. However, unlike other statutory notices, including those that take immediate effect in particular circumstances, such power was not also retained by the relevant government department (HED in this case). This oversight should be corrected to provide the Department with the ability to take proactive and urgent action in relation to buildings that it considers could have value that would merit statutory listing.

Other Matters

Whilst not directly related to planning legislation, it is important that the Department addresses the ongoing review of the existing planning policy statements – i.e. Countryside, Renewables and Minerals - as councils are still awaiting the outcome of these reviews and they may have an impact on future local policy development. In addition, the Department is still to publish guidance on the assessment elements of new LDPs, including for EQIA and HRA. We also acknowledge that the Department undertook to review the SPPS within five years and this timeframe has clearly passed.

In view of the change to LDPs and the SPPS as the primary focus for policy and the abandonment of PPS guidance, the opportunity should be taken to give greater clarity in relation transitional provisions, including the materiality and weight to be given to extant development plans and previously progressed draft development plans.

Q.2 Do you believe there are any improvements which may be made to the way in which local development plans are implemented?

Supporting Comments:

No comments on the implementation of LDPs at present as this is post-adoption and, thus far, the Belfast LDP is still at the independent examination stage.

Currently, at this pre-adoption stage, we are generally satisfied with our obligations in terms of the statutory requirements around annual monitoring and periodic review of LDPs.

Planning Control and Additional Planning Control

Q.3 Do you believe there is a need to retain, amend or repeal any provisions of Part 3 or Part 4 of the Act or associated subordinate legislation with regard to the Planning and Additional Planning Control?

Detail relevant provisions:

The following changes to the legislation should be made, acknowledging the different level of resource in different Councils across NI. The relevant section of the 2011 Act has been provided below but the Department should cross reference with the related parts of subordinate legislation (such as the Planning (Development Management) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015).

Part 3

Hierarchy of Development

S25 – consideration should be given to the creation of a third “Minor” category of development to be more representative of the range of applications. These would include minor application types such as “Householder” applications, Advertisement Consents and applications for Listed Building Consent. At the moment the spectrum of Local applications ranges from a domestic porch to a large residential scheme comprising 49 units – this is far too wide for any meaningful measurement and analysis of Local applications.

Furthermore, consideration should be given to mirroring the categorisation of planning applications in GB (Major, Minor and Other) to aid comparison with neighbouring jurisdictions in areas such as performance and efficiency.

Call in of applications to the Department

S29 – The Department has retained far too many checks and balances in the planning application process when planning powers were transferred to councils. This has led to an unnecessarily bureaucratic process which disempowers councils and undermines local decision making. Furthermore, it increases uncertainty and risk for developers and investors, extends determination times and has a detrimental impact on performance. It is essential to eliminate bureaucracy and significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the NI planning system in order that Belfast and wider region can be economically competitive.

The requirement for councils to notify the Department where it intends to approve permission for Major development and there has been a significant objection from a statutory consultee should be removed. Despite numerous notifications to the Department, no such applications have been ‘called in’, which demonstrates that the rationale for such decisions by the Council have been sound. There is no reasonable justification for retaining this provision, particularly given the free standing ability of the Department to call in an application at any time. If another statutory agency is sufficiently concerned about the proposed decision they can contact the Department directly to request that the decision be ‘called in’. Examples of unacceptable delays include Major planning applications at Academy Street (LA04/2017/2811/F – the notification process took 4 months), Tribeca (LA04/2017/2341/O – 4 months) and Bedford Yard (LA04/2020/0659/F – 3 months).

The requirement to notify the Department of a council’s intention to approve Conservation Area Consent should be removed for these same reasons.

The Department should issue clear and explicit guidance on retained notification and call-in processes to aid transparency.

Pre-Determination Hearings

S30 – the requirement for councils to hold mandatory Pre-Determination Hearings should be removed. This requirement is unnecessary administration which adds further delay, confusion and uncertainty to the planning application process; increases risk for developers and investors; hinders performance against the statutory

targets; and increases costs for both councils and applicants. The removal of the mandatory requirement would not preclude councils from holding discretionary Pre-Determination Hearings either of its own motion or following consideration of a request from an interested party. Councils already provide public speaking rights at their Planning Committees and so interested parties would already have had opportunity to appear before and be heard by Elected Members. Mandatory Pre-Determination Hearings unnecessarily repeat the process and have no meaningful purpose. Notwithstanding that position the legislation in relation to this issue is complicated and confusing so the wording should be reviewed.

Schemes of Delegation

S31 – Schemes of Delegation – and how councils apportion delegated powers to officers and Elected Members through their respective Planning Committees – is entirely a matter for those individual councils and local decision making. The requirement for the Department to approve council Schemes of Delegation must be removed as it is unnecessary interference and bureaucracy adding unnecessary delay and costs.

Form and content of planning applications

S40 (and Article 3 of the Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015) – the bar for a valid planning application in Northern Ireland is plainly far too low. Applications are invariably not submitted with all the information required by planning policy and good practice, and necessary for councils to make a positive determination at the first time of asking. This results in excessive delays to the application process as the council waits for the outstanding information, significantly contributing to under-performance against the statutory targets for determining Major and Local applications. It adds considerable costs to councils and wastes time for already over-stretched statutory consultees who are asked to comment on information deficient applications.

The Council published its *Application Checklist* in 2018, which provides guidance to customers on which information they should submit with planning applications in order to front-load the process, speed up the determination process and improve the chances of permission being granted. However, the Application Checklist carries no statutory weight and is essentially a “work-around” of the legislation. The Council recently carried out a review of its Application Checklist which demonstrated that it has had a marked positive impact on performance and efficiency, and has been well received by applicants, statutory consultees and staff. A copy of the review has already been provided to the Department and is sent again alongside this response. The review should form part of the evidence

base for much needed legislative change to improve information requirements at validation. The Council would therefore welcome an express statutory provision permitting councils to require applications to be accompanied by such additional information and/or documentation as the council specifies by general notice. This would mirror the current process in GB where planning authorities publish a “Local Validation List”, setting out minimum information requirements for applications. The Council would also request that such a provision should include the power to refuse an application for failure to provide the information within a certain timeframe (as may be determined by the council) unless the council has expressly agreed to extend that period.

Notice etc. of applications for planning permission and appeals

Article 8 of the Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 – Planning Authorities should have the option of erecting a site notice as an alternative to direct neighbour notification. That is the current approach in GB and works well as it gives Planning Authorities flexibility in tailoring public notification to best meet the particular circumstances of the application. Site notices can often be more cost effective (for example where it is an alternative to neighbour notifying a whole residential apartment block with hundreds of residents – a particular issue in dense built-up areas such as Belfast City Centre). Site notices also publicise applications to a much greater audience than neighbour notification as they can be widely seen from public vantage points close to the site.

The requirement to publicise planning application in the press is outdated and very costly for councils. Belfast City Council’s current advertising budget is £50,000. The legislative requirement to publicise applications in the press should be removed in its entirety and substituted by a combination of electronic consultation, neighbour notification and site notices as set out above. At the very least, the extent to which applications must be advertised in the press must be reduced significantly to only certain types of applications which have the potential for greater impacts, as in GB. This would be limited to applications for Major development, development affecting a Listed Building, development in a Conservation Area and EIA development.

It is consider that the consultation process should increase public awareness, and if site notices are proposed that these are complementary to the exiting forms of notification.

Determination of applications

S40 – a council should only be obliged to determine the application as made (cross reference with Article 3 of the GDPO 2015). A council may accept additional information and amended plans once the application has been made only at its discretion. At the moment many planning applications are generally of poor quality either because information is incomplete or the scheme is obviously deficient in some way. This means that far too many “bad” applications enter the system, wasting council and statutory consultee resources, and significantly contributing to underperformance. Some agents have admitted that they sometimes submit applications in a very basic form “just to get it on the books”. Far too often the planning application process is used by customers as an “MOT check” with councils having to identify numerous areas where applications need to be improved.

Indeed, agents/applications often expect to be able to improve their planning application once submitted, notwithstanding the fact that the application process is far from the correct forum for negotiating significant changes to a proposal once in the system. This adds considerable delay and burden on councils, statutory and non-statutory consultees and is fundamentally a disservice to their clients who are often paying significant fees. It is plainly good practice for councils to advise customers as soon as they know that there is a problem with their planning application. However, where those issues are significant and go to the heart of the proposal, the ability to submit amended plans and/or additional information in response to those substantial concerns must be removed. Instead amended plans and/or additional information should only be permitted where they are of a more minor nature and at the discretion of a council. This will improve efficiency, timeliness of decisions and performance. It will also significantly reduce costs for applicants, councils and statutory consultees.

Planning Authorities should be able to “agree an extension” of time for individual planning applications, like in GB. This would take pressure off Planning Authorities having to make a determination in line with the statutory target and enable more modest changes to be made to a planning application by mutual agreement between the Council and applicant. This would result in less conflict in the process, better respond to the requirements of customers, result in more positive decision making and, very importantly, support better quality outcomes on the ground. This new provision would require statutory targets to be redefined to the percentage of decisions achieved within the statutory target rather than average processing time (as in GB).

Matters which may be raised in an appeal

S59 – Belfast City Council considers that this provision should be revised to reflect what the Council considers was intended by its insertion, namely to prevent new information being routinely introduced at appeal. The Planning Appeals Commission continues to accept amendments to proposals and/or new information subsequent to the council's original refusal decision. The rationale for this is that the Council is represented at the appeal and therefore is not prejudiced by the introduction of the new information. This is fundamentally at odds with the way in which planning decisions are now made as part of a democratic process and administratively unfair. Firstly, it encourages the submission of poor applications as applicants know they have a “second bite of the cherry” to modify their proposal at appeal following refusal of permission by the council. It also means that the appeal is decided on a proposal which was never before the council, had not been considered by its Elected Members in accordance with the relevant Scheme of Delegation, and was not subject to consultation with local people and communities. Section 59 of the 2011 Act should be amended to ensure that appeals can only be determined on the basis of the application as original refused by the council, as in GB. No amendments or new information should be permitted or considered unless of an extremely minor nature.

S76 – in appropriate circumstances, developers should be able to submit a Unilateral Undertaking as a substitute to a Bi or Multi Party planning agreement under Section 76. Unilateral Undertakings can be quicker to arrange and more cost effective, thereby speeding up the planning application process, particularly for Major applications.

The Council is also of the view that Section 76 (15) (a) should be removed as it is unnecessary. This provision requires the Department to be a signature to a Planning Agreement where the application has been made to a council, and the council has an estate in the land to which the proposed agreement relates. There is no such equivalent provision in either GB or the Republic of Ireland.

Part 4

Control of demolition in Conservation Areas

S105 – the requirement for councils to refer an application for Conservation Area Consent to the Department, where it intends to grant permission, is completely heavy handed, disproportionate and unnecessary administrative burden. Demolition in a Conservation Area invariably present only local and not regional issues. The legislative requirement to notify these applications to the Department must be removed.

Other

The Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 must be amended to allow a council to procure its own in-house expertise in areas such as Listed Building; transport and road safety; and local ecological issues, in place of consulting the relevant Government Department and statutory consultee. The existing structure with local government being legally reliant on central government to make planning decisions is exceptionally disjointed, contributes significantly to underperformance and makes the planning system in Northern Ireland highly ineffective. The Department should have transferred greater powers to the new councils in 2015 including responsibility for transport, the majority of Listed Buildings, consideration of ecological issues and regeneration. The recommendations of the “John Irvine report” (2019 review of the effectiveness of the planning system in Northern Ireland, commissioned by the Department) are welcomed, however, they essentially only “paper over the cracks” and fail to address the core systemic issues. Belfast City Council must be a unitary authority with increased planning powers if it is to compete with other cities in these Islands and internationally.

Pre Application Discussions (PADs) are of fundamental importance to front-loading the planning application process, especially for Major and complex Local applications. Statutory consultees are already overburdened and over-stretched and unable to effectively support statutory consultation on planning applications. They therefore frequently struggle to properly engage in the PAD process due to lack of resources. Legislative change is necessary to enable statutory consultees to charge their own PAD fees with the income ring-fenced to improve capacity. Belfast City Council’s experience is that that developers would be willing to pay statutory consultees for PAD advice if it would improve the quality of their applications and significantly improve processing times.

Article 4 of the Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 should be amended to make it clear which matters may be “reserved” i.e. layout, scale, design, access and landscaping.

Q.4. Do you believe there are any improvements which may be made to the way in which planning control is implemented?

Enforcement

Q.5 Do you believe there is a need to retain, amend or repeal any provisions of Part 5 of the Act or associated subordinate legislation with regard to the Enforcement?

Detail relevant provisions:

Issue of enforcement notices by Councils

S38 – Planning Authorities should be able to issue Enforcement Notices, Planning Contravention Notices and other formal notices by electronic means (such as email) as a more efficient and cost effective alternative to issuing such notices by post or in person.

Q.6. Do you believe there are any improvements which may be made to the way in which planning enforcement is implemented?

COVID-19 Recovery

Q.7 Do you believe there are any changes to planning procedures in general which could safeguard the system against potential future adverse impacts associated with emergency situations, such as that currently being experienced as a result of COVID-19 pandemic?

Detail relevant procedures:

Planning register

S242 – during the COVID-19 pandemic, Planning Authorities have had restricted access to their offices meaning that planning registers have been unable to be viewed in person by the public. Legislative change is required to suspend these requirements during emergency situations.

Other Parts of the 2011 Planning Act

Q.8 Do you believe there is a need to retain, amend or repeal any provisions of other parts of the 2011 Planning Act, or associated subordinate legislation?

Detail relevant provisions:

Correction of errors in decision documents

S219 – this provision should be enacted to give Planning Authorities the ability to address correctable errors in decision notices.

Fees and charges

S223 – the Planning (Fees) (Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 must be fundamentally reviewed. The net cost of the Belfast City Council's Planning Service is £1.2m – planning fee income falls well short of the service being cost neutral. This means

that rate payers are unfairly subsidising the Council's delivery of its Planning Service. We have raised this specific concern with the Northern Ireland Audit Office who are currently conducting an audit of the NI planning system.

Any amendments to fees should result in a graduated fee system to ensure smaller schemes pay a lower fee, and vice versa, ensuring that there is full cost recovery as set out above.

In addition, charging must be introduced for current non-fee paying applications such as Discharges of Condition; Non Material Changes; Proposal of Application Notices and Listed Building Consent (where there is no accompanying planning application). These applications represent a significant proportion of the Council's overall workload yet there is no charge for these services. Work has previously been carried out by the SAO Group at the behest of the Strategic Planning Group to quantify the significant levels of non-fee playing application work undertaken by Planning Authorities. Belfast City Council estimates that approximately 25% of applications attract no fee.

Measurement of statutory performance

The way in which planning application performance is measured should be reviewed. The approach in GB of measuring the percentage of applications determined within the statutory target should be adopted. This would facilitate the introduction of the provision allowing Planning Authorities to agree an extension of the determination with the applicant. Combined with the re-categorisation of planning applications in line with the GB model, this would allow direct comparisons to be made with GB, aiding assessment of performance and efficiency.

Withdrawn applications should be removed from the statutory measures since they are not decision made by the council but by the applicant. It is manifestly unfair to measure the performance of councils on decisions which are out of their hands.

Final disposal of an application

Article 40(13) (a) of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 allows Planning Authorities to "Finally Dispose" of applications where an application had not been determined and the statutory time limit for lodging an appeal has expired. At the moment, councils have no ability to remove an application from the system if it has stalled indefinitely and in a state of flux. Final disposal effectively allows a council to "withdraw" an application itself without the additional cost of having to process it to completion."

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Issue Raised in Advance by a Member

That DFI Planning be invited to present on their review of Community Engagement in the Planning Process – Cllr Groogan

At the request of a Member, the Committee agreed to invite DFI Planning to engage with the Committee in relation to the ongoing examination of community involvement in the planning process.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the report 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 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.

**Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council –
Local Development Plan - Focused
Changes Consultation**

The Committee noted the submission of comments to Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council's Local Development Plan Focused Changes Consultation, which would be subject to approval by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

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 Items

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

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- **LA04/2019/1833/F** - New dwelling to replace previous dwelling on site at 11 Ashley Park, Dunmurry;
- **LA04/2020/2200/F** - Demolition of Nos. 27 to 37 Linenhall Street and Nos. 8-10 Clarence Street and erection of seven storey office building 8-10 Clarence Street, 27-37 Linenhall Street and existing car park at the corner of Linenhall Street and Clarence Street;
- **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; and
- **LA04/2020/0857/F** - Demolition of existing hostel building and redevelopment to provide four-storey building comprising 15 No. residential units, office space and ancillary development at Ormeau Centre, 5-11 Verner Street.

(Reconsidered Item) LA04/2020/1022/F - Demolition of existing vacant buildings and structures to the rear of the site and alterations, refurbishment and extension to existing terraced dwelling at 1 Canada Street to provide 6no. apartments plus associated site works at 1 and 1a Canada Street

The Committee was advised that the application had previously been listed for Committee consideration on 16th February, 2021. The application had not been presented and was deferred for a site visit to be undertaken to allow the Committee to acquaint itself with the location and the proposal at first hand. A site visit for Members had taken place on 2nd March, 2021.

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

She reminded the Committee that it was up to the applicant to furnish the Authority with information, plans and drawings to demonstrate the acceptability of their proposal and that the applicant had failed to do that. The Members were advised that the sections and shadow analysis which had been received confirmed officers' concerns regarding the unacceptability of the proposal in terms of scale, mass; limited separation and proximity to neighbours.

The Committee was advised that, on Monday, 1st March, the applicant had submitted additional information and an amended scheme. The amendments included:

- the creation of a point of access from the public street to all apartments;
- the reduction of overall numbers from 6 apartments to 5; The proposal had removed the ground floor apartment from 1 Canada Street and instead proposed that to be used as an access corridor to the proposed apartments, stores, bicycle parking and bin store located under the 1st floor of 1 Canada Street which was

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previously proposed to be the entrance courtyard to the apartments;

- amendments to provide external bin access to the houses which backed onto it on Canada Street; the relocation of bin storage areas to a larger area where all bins could be accessed more easily to both apartments and to the street; and
- the bin access arrangements for the houses on My Lady's Road maintained

The proposal of the amended scheme now included some changes to the elevations as well as work to properties outside the site address and ownership of the applicant.

The agent had also referred to other back lands developments in east Belfast which they deemed comparable to the proposal, however, officers felt that they were not directly comparable with the site.

The Principal Planning officer outlined that the proposal had removed the entrance courtyard and now provided an access corridor through the existing ground floor of 1 Canada Street. She explained that officers still had concerns regarding the layout, limited separation distances, the outlook and surveillance as outlined in the original case officer's report.

In relation to amenity, it was acknowledged that the amenity garden area would be communal, however, it could not be considered private amenity space and would be overlooked by existing dwellings from Canada Street and London Road. Whilst a degree of overlooking was expected in any inner city location, she highlighted that the proposal would result in overlooking to an unacceptable degree, and would detrimentally impact on the residential amenity of prospective residents.

The Committee was advised that the scheme was not reflective of the character of the area and failed to provide a quality residential environment and was considered to be contrary to policies QD1 of PPS 7 and LC1 of the Addendum to PPS7. The proposal failed to maintain the character and appearance of the proposed ATC and was considered contrary to paragraphs 4.26 and 6.21 of the SPPS for NI.

The Committee was advised that NI Water and DFI Roads had offered no objection to the proposal, subject to conditions.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Dorrian to the meeting, who wished to address the Committee in support of the application. He outlined that:

- he was familiar with the site as it within his District Electoral Area and had been derelict for a number of years;
- it was a current hotspot for anti-social behavior;
- that residents in the area wanted to see regeneration of the site;
- he urged the Committee to support the scheme.

The Chairperson thanked Councillor Dorrian for his contribution.

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He then welcomed Mr. N. Kohner, applicant, to the meeting. He advised the Committee that:

- he had tried to bring a positive change to the area with a good scheme to create highly desirable homes;
- he did not want to see the site continue as a wasteland;
- that, if the Committee was minded to refuse the application as per the officers' recommendation, the Committee and the Planners would work with him to help regenerate the site.

A number of Members stated that they had sympathy with the applicant in that the site was a difficult space and was in need of development and encouraged further engagement with the Planners in respect of the site.

The Committee agreed to refuse the application and delegated power to the Director of Planning and Building Control for the final wording of the refusal reasons.

**(Reconsidered Item) LA04/2020/1803/F - Change of use
to House of Multiple Occupancy at 60 Springfield Road**

(Councillor Murphy did not participate in the vote on this item as he had not been present for the duration of the officer's presentation when it had been presented previously, on 15th December, 2020.)

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting of 15th December, 2020, it had agreed to defer consideration of the application to request that DfI Roads would carry out a site visit to observe traffic and for representatives to attend the next Meeting. She explained that Mr. G. Lawther, DfI Roads, was in attendance.

The Principal Planning officer reminded the Committee of the details of the application for a change of use from a single dwelling to a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO). She explained that DfI Roads had since stated the following with regards to the assessment of the application:

- in assessing development applications proposing Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMO), DfI was informed by the HMO Subject Plan for the Belfast City Council Area 2015. Whilst the various policy requirements of the Subject Plan sought to encourage regeneration, address need and demand, and also protect against residential amenity, it was noted that the provision of car parking was not a requirement of the assessment process;
- Existing Regional Planning Policy and supplementary planning guidance, including the published 'Parking Standards', did not incorporate car parking as a requirement for HMO development.
- in light of the above, DfI Roads position was unchanged, it had raised no objection to the proposal and it had confirmed that it did not intend to carry out a site visit.

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The Committee was advised that five representations and a signed petition had been received in opposition to the application, raising issues including antisocial behaviour, lack of parking, dirt/smell, not informed as direct neighbours and a lack of family housing provision.

She explained that DFI Roads and Environmental Health had been consulted on the application and had no objections.

In respect of the principle of the proposal at this location, the Principal Planning officer outlined that the application site fell within an HMO Development Node HM 4/07 Falls Road/Springfield Road, as designated within the HMO Subject Plan for Belfast (2015). She reported that Policy HMO 3 stated that planning permission would only be granted along the frontages of designated HMO Development Nodes, providing it did not include HMO development at ground floor level within a designated commercial node or shopping area. She clarified that the proposal was situated within the frontage of a designated HMO Development Node, and was also in line with Policy HMO 6, as the criteria within the policy was either met or was not relevant.

A Member expressed concerns and stated that she did not feel that the Committee had all of the relevant information, particularly regarding how PPS3 had been assessed, how they worked alongside the HMO Subject Plan, and how DFI Roads had made its assessment in respect of the application.

The Principal Planning officer explained that the HMO Subject Plan did not set out any standards for parking and, while PPS3 set out general requirements for development, there was nothing specific in the parking standards relating to HMO development and that, therefore, you could not apply a standard which did not exist. She acknowledged that there was a gap in terms of assessments of HMOs, but that they could not demand parking from an applicant when there was no standard.

Mr. Lawther added that there was no target or policy to meet in terms of parking standards for HMOs.

The Member queried how officers could be satisfied that the application had been adequately assessed against PPS3 if there was no mechanism for assessing such an application against it.

The Director of Planning and Building Control clarified to the Committee that the highways implications are assessed against the PPS 3 requirements by DFI Roads. He added that DFI Roads had advised that it had carried out a desktop analysis of the impact of the application and that it did not warrant a site visit, given that it was a small scale development.

Accordingly, the Chairperson put the officer's recommendation to approve the application to the Committee, with delegated authority granted to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of conditions subject to no new substantive planning issues being raised by third parties.

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On a vote, no Members voted for the proposal, four against and nine no votes, and it was accordingly declared lost.

As there were no counter proposals, the Divisional Solicitor and the Director of Planning and Building Control advised the Committee that it might be helpful for the Committee to defer the application so that further information could be provided to the Committee in relation to PPS3 and the policy position in respect of HMO applications.

In response to a Member's query as to whether the Committee could request that DFI Roads would undertake a comprehensive review of parking standards, the Divisional Solicitor advised the Committee that it would take some months for DFI Roads to carry out such a review. She explained that the Committee could request that DFI would review the standards, but to note that it would not be undertaken by the time the application was brought back to the Committee.

Moved by Councillor Garrett

Seconded by Councillor Hussey and

Resolved – that the Committee agrees to:

- defer consideration of the application to enable further information to be provided in respect of PPS3 and the policy position in terms of HMOs; and
- that DFI Roads be formally requested to undertake a site visit in respect of the application; and
- to separately write to DFI Roads, requesting that they undertake a comprehensive review of parking standards in due course.

(Reconsidered Item) LA04/2020/0845/O - Outline planning permission for a mixed use regeneration proposal with all matters reserved for retirement living at plot 6, medical or health services at plot 9, multi storey car park, local retail uses, restaurant and cafe uses, leisure and gym facilities at plot 8, associated internal access roads, associated new public realm and amenity open space including central plaza and access from Upper Lisburn Road (as per planning approval reference LA04/2018/0040/F); and no matters reserved for residential development (81 apartments) at plot 3 with ground floor local retail use/restaurant and cafe uses/leisure and gym facilities, associated landscaping, car parking and access from Upper Lisburn Road (as per planning approval reference LA04/2018/0040/F) and reconfiguration of temporary car park to the rear of King's Hall (approved under LA04/2018/0040/F) on lands at Kings Hall and RUAS site

(Councillors Carson and Hanvey did not participate in the vote on this item as they had not been present for the duration of the officer's presentation when it had been presented previously on 16th February, 2021.)

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The Planning Manager reminded the Committee that it had originally considered the application at its meeting on 16th February. He reminded the Committee further that it had resolved to defer the application in order to carry out a site visit and to seek clarification on Air Quality issues from Environmental Health. The site visit had taken place on 10th March.

He advised the Committee that one further objection to the application had been received on 18th February, raising concerns relating to the impact of traffic using the Balmoral Avenue access, in particular the impact on a neighbouring property to that access. He provided the officer's response to the issue and outlined that no new planning concerns had been raised. He added that DFI Roads had been notified of the late objection and that it had offered no objection, subject to conditions.

The Planning Manager drew the Committee's attention to the Late Items pack whereby, following receipt of DFI Roads final consultation response which recommended the provision of a minimum of 4 additional car club spaces, the applicant had confirmed that they were willing to provide 4 additional spaces resulting in an overall provision of 6 car club spaces. The Planning Manager explained that, while the additional car club spaces were not required to make the development acceptable, they did provide greater opportunity for sustainable transport modes for users of the site. He added that those spaces, along with discounted membership (50%) of a car club for a period of 3 years, would be secured through a Section 76 Agreement.

In respect of the air quality issues, the Members were advised that the Technical Note, available on the Planning Portal, stated that "the air impact quality assessment had robustly assessed the impacts of traffic emissions in the Air Quality Management Area. Due to the improvements in vehicle emissions with time; the phased nature of the development; and the mitigation measures included within the proposed development, which would reduce vehicle trips and encourage sustainable travel, the residual air quality effects as set out in the ES Chapter were not significant". The Planning Manager confirmed that, having assessed the Air Quality Impact Assessment, Environmental Health had offered no objection to the Air Quality Impacts, subject to a condition relating to the installation of any combustion plant.

The Members were advised that Environmental Health had prepared an additional report, also available on the planning portal, to provide further information for Members as to how the consultation process in relation to ambient air quality impact was undertaken by the Council's Environmental Health staff, and the conclusions reached in respect of the ambient air quality impact of the regeneration proposal.

The Committee was advised that the report stated that, at each stage, the proposal had assessed the information provided against local air quality management technical guidance and planning policy and emphasised that extensive consultation had been undertaken in relation to the AQIA methodology, between Air Quality Consultants and the Council's Air Quality Technical Officer. Environmental Health was satisfied that the AQIA had been undertaken in accordance with relevant government guidance, including the Environmental Protection UK and Institute of Air Quality Management guidance document, 'Land-use Planning & Development Control: Planning For Air

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Quality' (January 2017) and the UK Local Air Quality Management Technical Guidance document LAQM.TG(16).

The Planning Manager outlined that the AQIA employed traffic flow data for relevant local roads, converted into Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) flows and provided by the project transport consultants. He outlined that the Council's Air Quality Technical Officer had requested confirmation of the accuracy of the road traffic data utilised within the AQIA as part of the planning consultation process and was satisfied that the additional traffic emissions, associated with the proposals, had been assessed correctly and in accordance with relevant guidance.

In its conclusion, the report stated that, apart from the Stockman's Lane monitoring station, Environmental Health currently monitored nitrogen dioxide annual mean concentrations at Stockman's Crescent, Balmoral Avenue and at the Upper Lisburn Road and none of those three monitoring sites had recorded exceedances of the nitrogen dioxide annual mean objective during 2019. As a result, Environmental Health had a good understanding of air pollution concentrations in the vicinity of the regeneration proposal and were therefore able to provide comprehensive advice to the Planning Service.

The Members were advised that Environmental Health had acknowledged that the air quality predictions for 2021 had been based on worst-case assumptions regarding the increase in local traffic flows. It had been assumed that the whole scheme would be completed and be fully operational in 2021, whereas the development buildout and occupation were to be phased over a 5-year period; 2021-2026. The Planning Manager explained that the further analysis undertaken by the consultants had demonstrated that the impacts associated with the proposed development were predicted to be negligible before 2026, when the proposed development was to be fully operational.

It was reported that Environmental Health had noted that the consultants had indicated a series of mitigation measures were to be implemented, aimed at enhancing the attractiveness of sustainable travel, which would further reduce the impact of road transport sources. The measures included the provision of secure cycle storage facilities and public transport information as prescribed within the Travel Plan.

The Planning Manager added that Environmental Health had considered the proposed mitigation measures and advised that they would reduce associated emissions from road transport users and that they were appropriate and achievable.

The Chairperson advised the Members that Ms. E. Barszczewska-Lyner, Environmental Health officer, was in attendance to answer any technical questions from the Members.

In response to Members' questions, Ms. Barszczewska-Lyner provided the Committee with clarification in respect of the process by which Environmental Health had carried out a detailed assessment of traffic emissions in the area, particularly given the scale of the proposal and its location which was close to an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). She reiterated that the assessment had been based on the worst case scenario with the whole site operational and with the 4,000 additional car journeys mentioned within the report.

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The Chairperson advised the Committee that Mr. G. Pellizzaro, Air Quality Consultant, Mr. B. Pope and Ms. N. Semple, Transport Consultants, and Ms. E. Walker, agent, were also in attendance.

In response to a Member's question, Mr. Pellizzaro advised the Committee that the Stockman's Lane AQMA monitor had shown a decrease of nitrogen dioxide concentrations, by 11 micrograms, between 2014 and 2019. He advised that the figures tied in with data from across the U.K and explained that Air Quality was predicted to continue to improve due to older vehicles having been retired from the road.

He added that, for the Air Quality Assessment, they did not take into account any behavioural changes in terms of an increase in users cycling, walking or using car clubs, and that it had been carried out based on the worst case scenario of everyone driving to and from the site.

In response to a further question, Ms. Semple provided the Committee with details on the use and operation of car clubs.

In response to a further Member's query on the Green Travel Plan, Ms. E. Walker, agent, advised the Committee that the developer would include an electric vehicle charging point within the multi-storey car park element of the scheme. In relation to the Travel Plan measures, she explained that there would be monitoring to ensure that the mitigation measures were demonstrating an increase in the use of sustainable transport.

The Director of Planning and Building Control added that the Travel Plan was not a static document and that it was required to be reviewed over the development period. He explained that the document was still not finalised as the end users had not yet been agreed.

Accordingly, the Chairperson put the officer's recommendation to approve the application to the Committee, with delegated authority granted to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the Section 76 Planning Agreement and the wording of conditions, subject to no new substantive planning issues being raised by third parties.

On a vote, six Members voted for the recommendation, two against and four no votes, and it was declared carried.

LA04/2020/1864/F - Application under Section 54 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 in respect to planning permission Z/2014/0077/F (erection of new pavilion, new 3G all-weather pitch with associated perimeter and spectator fencing, ball catch nets, floodlighting and improvements to pedestrian and vehicular access to include new access, footpath and car parking) to vary Condition 13 (seeking to vary the scheme of landscaping to be implemented) Glassmullin Gardens / Slieveban Drive

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(Councillor Collins, having declared an interest in the item, advised that he wished to address the Committee on the application but that he would not participate in the vote on the application.)

The Principal Planning officer advised the Committee that the application sought to vary condition 13 of planning permission Z/2014/0077/F under Section 54 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. He explained that the variation of the condition proposed to amend the landscaping plan which had been previously approved. He outlined that the proposal would result in a reduction in the amount of tree and shrub planting. The change was to address community concerns about the impact of the original planting scheme on the open character of the green and concerns around surveillance and anti-social activity.

He advised the Members that the Council's Tree Officers, Landscape Planning and Development Teams, as well as the PSNI, had been consulted in relation to the amended proposal and that they had all responded with no objections to the proposed variation.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that Councillor Collins wished to address the Committee before leaving the meeting.

Councillor Collins advised the Committee that:

- he had been involved in a campaign with local residents in trying to retain the green space in the area;
- residents did not feel that there had been good communication from the developer at the beginning of the process;
- the changes in front of the Committee reflected the impact of the campaign and that the negotiations had been somewhat successful in achieving a better scheme; and
- there had been an agreement with the school to form a management committee for the facility, to include local residents and community representatives, and, while he recognised that it could not be conditioned, he encouraged the Committee to consider attaching recommendations in respect of the management of the site going forward.

(Councillor Collins left the meeting at this point in proceedings)

Councillor Carson stated that:

- he concurred with a lot of what Councillor Collins had said;
- it had been a very divisive proposal initially, and had caused major concerns for residents but that community engagement and the new proposals around the landscaping of the site had satisfied many of the local community's concerns;
- he was pleased that the school had agreed to form a management committee, particularly to oversee the community use of the pitch;

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- the pitch would be an important facility for young people in the surrounding area; and
- he welcomed the application.

The Committee was advised that Mr. S. McKee, agent, was in attendance to answer any questions from the Members.

In response to a Member's question, the agent confirmed that, as the site was nearing completion, the management company would be set up at the earliest opportunity and he would contact the school to confirm those arrangements.

A Member stated that, while they had no issue with the current application in particular, there was a large number of applications for 3G and 4G pitches throughout Belfast. The Member queried to what extent the Committee could assess the need for them, to ensure that there was not a proliferation in certain areas, and suggested that there were also issues in terms of access to the whole community as well as environmental concerns.

The Director of Planning and Building Control advised the Committee that a lot of the applications were for areas which were already designated as recreational use and that creating 3G/4G pitches increased the use of those sites. He explained that the pitches were spread across the whole of Belfast and that they had a range of user types and were not reserved for elite sports. He confirmed that, in terms of the overall need for them, the emerging Local Development Plan contained policies in relation to Open Space and Sports Provision, which sought to encourage the development of such facilities, as they were beneficial for residents' health and wellbeing.

While he acknowledged that there were concerns regarding the environmental impact of 3G/4G pitches, particularly in terms of floodlighting, that the Committee did not have the ability to refuse an application on the basis of overprovision as there was no current policy basis to do so.

A further Member stated that he believed that there was a high demand for 3G/4G pitches within communities. He stated that they were likely self-regulating, given that they were costly to install and that if the owner or other groups were not using them, they wouldn't be viable.

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.

LA04/2020/1666/F - Demolition of existing two storey building and erection of a 14. storey office development with landscaping, parking, and associated development on lands at 102-127 Grosvenor Road and adjoining The Westlink/Grosvenor Road junction

(Councillor Collins re-joined the meeting at this point in proceedings)

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The Principal Planning officer provided the Committee with an overview of the proposals. He explained the main issues which had been considered in its assessment, including the principle of offices at that location, the principle of demolition, the economic benefits, the impact on built heritage, the scale, height, massing and design, traffic and parking, the impact on amenity, site drainage and the consideration of developer contributions.

He advised the Committee that there were two previous approvals for offices on the site, Z/2005/1236/O, which was approved in 2011, and Z/2014/0997/O, approved in 2015. Both of those applications had now expired.

The Members were advised that the application had been subject to a Pre Application Discussion.

He reported that the site was located within the Belfast City Centre, the City Centre Area of Parking Restraint, the Great Victoria Street Character Area and the Main Office Area. The application site was also located within a City Centre Gateway and Development Opportunity Site.

The Members were advised that DfI Roads, Environmental Health, NIEA, Rivers Agency, HED and NI Water had all been consulted in addition to the Urban Design Officer, the Economic Development Team and the City Regeneration and Development Team within the Council. He reported that the consultees had no objections subject to conditions.

The Principal Planning officer reported that the proposal would generate an estimated 115 direct construction jobs, and it was estimated that 2500 employees would attend the building once operational.

He outlined that the applicant would provide a developer contribution in the form of public realm improvements along the site frontage of Grosvenor Road. He added that the applicant had also volunteered to provide a Belfast Bike dock. While that was welcomed by the Council, he explained that it was not required to mitigate the proposal and, as such, had not been included in the Section 76 Agreement. He added that the Transport travel cards would be provided and would be dealt with by a planning condition.

The Economic Development Team had also requested that a Section 76 clause be included to require an employability and skills plan to be submitted to the Council to detail mitigations and interventions that would be put in place to ensure the viability of the development.

It was reported that there were a number of listed buildings or structures of special architectural and historic interest in the immediate vicinity, including the Former Tobacco Works on Linfield Road, St. Peter's Cathedral, Royal Belfast Academical Institution, Christchurch Centre of Excellence, the Former Health Centre, 89 Durham Street and a Former warehouses at 4-6 Murray Street & 13-17 Grosvenor Road.

The Historic Environment Division (HED) had advised that it was largely content with the proposals but requested that further consideration be given to the articulation of

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the tallest element. The Principal Planning officer explained that the Urban Design Officer and Case Officer agreed, and that several meetings were held to discuss the finer details of design articulation. An amended scheme was then submitted and all officers were in agreement that the matter was fully addressed.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the Late Items pack, where a formal response had been received from HED stating that it was content with the amended proposals.

The Principal Planning officer explained that a response from NI Water had referenced a technical matter in reference to a pre-development enquiry by the developers. He clarified that officers were seeking delegated authority in order to deal with the matter.

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, including the technical consultation with NI Water, and to finalise the Section 76 Agreement.

LA04/2020/2230/F - Section 54 application to vary conditions attached to Z/2014/1768/F as follows: Condition 2 relating to provision of samples of external finishes from prior to commencement of development to prior to construction of any buildings. Condition 8 relating to provision of full landscaping details from prior to commencement of development to prior to the development becoming operational. Condition 14 and relating to provision of details for disposal of storm water and foul sewage from prior to commencement of development to prior to the development becoming occupied or operational and verified by the Local Planning Authority. Removal of condition 12 relating to requirement for provision of protective fencing around retained trees for the duration of the development, Newforge Country Club, 18b Newforge Lane

The Committee was advised that the following two applications were before the Committee for consideration as they were seeking variations to a major application.

The Principal Planning officer outlined that the proposal sought to vary 3 conditions and remove 1 condition under Section 54 of the Planning Act, regarding a previous approval for a new clubhouse and tiered seating area, new 3G surface to pitch to including floodlights, dugouts, fencing, security tower, turnstiles, stands, toilet blocks and ground works. That permission, under reference Z/2014/1768/F, had been expired in September, 2021.

He advised the Committee that consultees had confirmed that the proposal was acceptable subject to conditions and/or informatives. He reported that Rivers Agency had also confirmed that the proposal would not result in, or be subject to, Flood Risk. NI Water and the Council's Landscape section also had no objections to the application. No representations had been received from third parties.

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The Committee was advised that the proposal was considered compliant with the development plan and other relevant policies, also taking account of the history of the site. The Principal Planning officer advised that all other conditions would remain unaltered as set out in the original decision notice.

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.

LA04/2020/2231/F - Section 54 application to vary conditions attached to LA04/2015/0266/F as follows: Condition 5 relating to provision of full landscaping details from prior to commencement of development to prior to the development becoming operational. Condition 10 relating to provision of details for disposal of storm water and foul sewage from prior to commencement of development to prior to the development becoming occupied or operational and verified by the Local Planning Authority; Newforge Country Club, 18b Newforge Lane

The Principal Planning officer outlined that the application sought to vary 2 conditions under Section 54 of the Planning Act, in relation to a previous approval for an indoor training facility including changing and fitness facilities, flood lit synthetic hockey pitch and two 5-a-side football pitches, fencing, parking and landscaping. The Committee was advised that the permission, under reference LA04/2015/0266/F, had also expired in September 2021.

He advised the Members that Condition 5 related to landscaping details, whilst condition 10 related to the provision of details for the disposal of storm water and foul sewage. Both conditions, as approved, required the details to be agreed prior to commencement of development. He outlined that the proposal sought variation of the conditions to allow provision of the details prior to occupation or operation of the development. The Committee was advised that it would allow the applicant to undertake a range of construction works before the details would have to be agreed.

The Committee was advised that the consultees had confirmed that the proposal was acceptable subject to conditions and/or informatives. Rivers Agency had confirmed that the proposal would not result in, or be subject to, Flood Risk. NI Water and the Council's Landscape section had also confirmed that they had no objections to the application.

No third party representations had been received in respect of the application.

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.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 16th March, 2021**

**LA04/2020/0798/F - Youth and Community Centre, with fenced
3G Pitch on vacant site, with associated parking and landscaping
on site of former Grove Swimming Pool Complex bound by York
Road, North Queen Street and Grove Place**

(Councillor McCullough, having declared an interest in this item, left the meeting at this point in proceedings)

The Principal Planning officer provided the key aspects of the application to the Committee.

She outlined that the 0.69 hectare site was located within the development limits for Belfast in both the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 (BUAP) and the draft Belfast Metropolitan Plan 2015 (BMAP). The site was unzoned whiteland in the BUAP, dBMAP 2004 and BMAP 2015.

Given the site's former and current use for sport and recreation, it was considered that the redevelopment of the site would bring the use back with a new state of the art facility for the benefit of the local and wider community. The scheme would also support much needed regeneration for the area. Within that context, she advised that the principle of uses at the location were considered acceptable and were compatible with PPS 8 Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation to encourage and promote sport and outdoor activity.

It was considered that the layout and separation distances proposed were acceptable and the scheme would also incorporate appropriate boundaries and landscaping which would improve the visual amenity on that stretch of the road.

She reported that DfI Roads, NIEA, and Environmental Health had considered the proposal and had offered no objections. The Members were advised that Rivers Agency had no objections to the proposal, subject to confirmation from NI Water for consent to discharge water into their system. No third party representations had been received.

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.

**LA04/2019/2756/F & LA04/2019/0863/LBC – Alterations to
vacant Gaol wing (Wing A) to facilitate change of use to
operational whiskey distillery (including ground water
abstraction, plant equipment and all associated works)
with tourist centre, new car park, alterations to existing car
park and associated site works. Tourist facilities to include
guided tours, bar and restaurant/café**

The Principal Planning officer presented the detail of the proposals to the Committee. She explained that the application was linked to listed building consent LA04/2019/0863/LBC.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 16th March, 2021**

She outlined the key issues which had been considered during the assessment of the proposed development including the principle of development and use; tourism; impact on a listed building; parking and access; impact on amenity of neighbours; economic benefits and environmental factors.

The Members were advised that, under the adopted BUAP 2001, the site was un-zoned white land. The site was located within the settlement development limit for Belfast, as designated by both the 2004 and 2015 versions of the Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP). She explained that the site was designated as land for mixed use in both iterations to draft BMAP.

She outlined that the principle of the development and use at the location was considered acceptable and in accordance with the SPPS for NI, PPS 4, PPS 6 and PPS 16. The Committee was advised that the proposal would secure the future survival of a listed building that had been vacant since 1996.

The Committee was advised that the proposal represented an investment of £25million with the creation of 12 jobs.

The Principal Planning officer outlined that 3 representations had been received in respect of the application, citing issues with traffic and parking, noise, pollution, road safety and overlooking. The officer's response to the issues were detailed within the report.

She explained that NI Water, DFI Roads, HED, NIEA, Environmental Health, Rivers Agency and HSENI had offered no objection to the proposal, subject to conditions.

The Committee granted approval and consent to the applications, 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.

LA04/2021/0104/F - Rear dormer to roof and a second floor side window. Works to include renovation of existing single storey side and rear extension to include replacement of pitched roof for flat roof, exterior render finish and fenestration changes at 16 Ardmore Drive

The Committee was advised that, as per the Scheme of Delegation, the application was before the Committee as it had been made by a relative of an Elected Member.

The Principal Planning officer outlined the details of the proposed house extension to the Members.

She explained that the proposals would not adversely impact the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The Members were advised that it was considered to be appropriate in its built form, scale, massing and appearance with the existing property and with surrounding neighbouring properties.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
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She advised that no representations had been received.

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.

**LA04/2020/1321/F - New footpath, path widening and resurfacing,
new park entrance, wayfinding signage and street furniture at/on
various park entrances and signage/wayfinding installations
bordering on the Glencairn Park and the Forthriver Linear Park
as well as at Forthriver Road**

The Committee was advised that the application was before the Committee as the applicant was Belfast City Council.

The Principal Planning officer provided an overview of the proposals.

She reported that the proposals would complement and improve the area and complied with the relevant policy and area plan designations.

The Members were advised that DFI Roads, NIEA and Environmental Health had been consulted and had offered no objection to the proposal.

The Committee was advised that three letters of objection had been received, raising concerns that additional seating in the park would encourage anti-social gatherings in the area. However, the Principal Planning officer explained that no additional seating or benches were proposed as part of the application.

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.

Chairperson

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Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Thursday, 4th March, 2021

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

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

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;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Cobain, Mulholland and Newton.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 18th January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st February.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Restricted Items

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

Performance Report - Quarter 3, 2020/21

The Chief Executive of ICC Belfast/ BWUH Ltd provided the Committee with an overview of the company's performance during Quarter 3 and of the year to date.

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders Committee
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As the venues had been mandated to close from 16th March, 2020, the Members were advised that there had been a major impact on sales revenue results and the majority of Key Performance Indicators.

She explained that the projected reopening date for both venues was 1st September 2021, but that it was liable to change based on lockdown restrictions.

The Committee was advised that the company had developed a Training and Development Plan with Belfast Met and SERC, offering a range of courses commencing February 2021 and which would operate throughout the next 3-6 months. As part of the programme, fourteen members of the permanent team would receive comprehensive training to ensure that the level of Health and Safety knowledge within the company was enhanced.

The Chief Executive outlined that internal communications was a priority for the company during such a difficult time and that they had ensured all staff were receiving regular, clear and transparent messaging relating to business updates.

The Director of Finance and Systems provided the Committee with an update on the economic impact and the financial data.

The Chief Executive outlined the challenges and the opportunities which faced the business. She advised the Committee that the pandemic had placed a focus on virtual and hybrid events, such as the successful “Live from the Ulster Hall” digital event experience.

In response to a Member’s question regarding the recent announcement of additional resources for apprenticeships, the Director of Economic Development advised the Committee that his Department was working with the Department for the Economy to try and remove the age and finance barriers which prevented more people from undertaking an apprenticeship.

The Committee noted the update which had been provided.

Update on Capital Projects

The Director of Physical Programmes provided the Committee with an update on the ongoing capital and maintenance works at the ICC Waterfront and Ulster Hall.

She outlined that, since 2016, a number of major capital projects had been undertaken at both the Waterfront and Ulster Halls, including:

- repairs to replace the glazing support system at the Waterfront Hall;
- upgrade of the PA system at the Waterfront Hall;
- upgrade of the emergency lighting system at the Ulster Hall;
- stabilisation and sealing of external brick walls at the Ulster Hall; and
- roof repairs at the Ulster Hall.

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She provided the Committee with an update in terms of the impact that Covid-19 had had on both the ICC and the Council from a financial and people resourcing perspective.

The Committee was advised that three major capital projects had been identified at the Waterfront Hall, namely, the replacement of the escalators and of the chiller units, as well as works to the roof.

In respect of the escalator replacement, she explained that the process had a lead in time of one year and the Members were asked to note that Council officers had investigated whether it was possible to bring the timelines forward due to the building being closed during the pandemic but that due to the tender timeline and the specialist nature of the project it had not been possible to do so.

The Committee noted the update and:

- agreed to receive regular update reports in respect of the ongoing capital and maintenance works at the ICC Waterfront and Ulster Hall; and
- noted that regular meetings had now been established between the ICC Management Team and BCC Physical Programmes Department to agree a forward work programme in terms of maintenance, subject to budget sign off.

Update on Casual Workers

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 18th January, it had received an update on the company's progress with the proposal around offering a number of casual workers permanent contracts. At that meeting, the Committee had agreed to invite a Union representative to the next meeting in order to discuss the issue with them.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. D. Noble, Production Manager at BWUH and Unite the Union representative, to the meeting.

In light of the UK Government announcement on 31st October 2020, extending the financial support offered by the Corona Virus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), the Chief Executive of ICC Belfast provided the Committee with an update on the progress which had been made regarding casual workers' employment status within the company so far.

The Director of Finance and Systems provided a timeline of the process, including the consultation period with staff and the staff categories which it affected.

Ms. Noble advised the Committee that the Union had been kept well informed throughout the process and that it had a good relationship with the company's management.

She outlined that the Union was content that a number of casual staff were proposed to be taken on as permanent staff members. She added that some members of casual staff did not want to become permanent, due to other commitments or jobs, but

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders Committee
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that it was important that all staff were consulted on the issue as it could impact on the requirement for casual staff in the future.

In response to a Member's question regarding those employees who would not be offered a permanent contract with the company, the Chief Executive advised that a number of staff wanted only to take on work when it suited them and that they did not want a permanent contract.

In response to a further question regarding the recent announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in relation to the extension of the furlough scheme until September 2021, whereby employers would be required to pay 10% towards the hours that their staff did not work in July, and increasing to 20% in August and September, the Director of Economic Development confirmed that any decision relating to those employers contributions would be subject to a financial analysis and would have to be considered by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

A further Member raised concerns that it might be difficult to bring apprentices into the business while the company was conducting a staff review. The Chief Executive pointed out that there was a demand and significant activity in future years, which would create opportunities for both current employees and those outside it.

In a discussion on the proportion of casual employees which would be offered permanent contracts, Ms. Noble confirmed to the Committee that the Union was content that the number corresponded with the discussions they had had with employees.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Ms. Noble for her attendance at the meeting.

The Committee noted the update which had been provided.

Proposed use of BWUH by Belfast Multi-Cultural Association

The Chief Executive of ICC Belfast (BWUH Ltd) advised the Committee that representatives from the Belfast Multi-Cultural Association (BMCA) had been given a tour of the facilities of the Waterfront Hall and had been expressed their gratitude both to BWUH and to the Council in terms of their offers to use their premises. The Director of Physical Programmes added that her Department, along with the Good Relations Unit, had also been liaising closely with the BMCA and that they were extremely grateful to the Members and the officers for their engagement.

However, the Committee noted that the BMCA had advised that, while they were very grateful for all the support and the offers received in respect of premises owned by both the Council and BWUH/ICC, they required a lockable, shop-front type building in a certain location, which was not within the portfolio of the Council or BWUH/ICC.

Noted.

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders Committee
Thursday, 4th March, 2021

Draft Business Plan 2021/22

The Chief Executive of ICC Belfast (BWUH Ltd) advised the Committee that, in what was a challenging time for the business, given the ongoing uncertainty with the timelines in terms of the various COVID-19 restrictions being lifted, she hoped to provide the Members with an interim Business Plan at the next meeting.

Extension of Directors' Contracts

The Director of Economic Development advised the Committee that an extension to a number of Directors' contracts was required in order to accommodate the pause in the recruitment process caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, and to provide continuity, expertise and support to the business.

He outlined that the Terms of Reference for the Shareholders' Committee included the recommending of the appointment of the Chairperson and non-executive Directors to the Board of the BWUH Ltd and to agree remuneration.

The Committee approved the extension of the ICC BWUH Directors' contracts for:

- Mr. A. Dixon, Mr. R. Holt and Mr. P. McClughan to 31st August, 2021; and
- Mr. S. Daniels and Ms. L. Jackson to 19th February, 2024.

During discussion a Member referenced a recent Workshop which had taken place in relation to the governance structure of BWUH Ltd.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor Collins,

That a report be circulated to the Committee Members, covering the issues which had been discussed at the BWUH Governance Workshop in December 2020; and

That a legal opinion be sought as to whether the governance operating model for BWUH Ltd. could be changed; specifically how a mutual agreement would work and if Elected Members of the Council could be appointed directly to the Board of Directors.

On a vote, six Members voted for the proposal, none against and three no votes and it was declared carried.

Chairperson

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Brexit Committee

Thursday, 11th March, 2021

MEETING OF BREXIT COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Flynn (Chairperson); and Aldermen Haire, Rogers and Sandford; and Councillors Baker, Brooks, Canavan, de Faoite, Ferguson, Gormley, Hanvey, Kyle, Magennis, McLaughlin, McMullan, Spratt and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, City Solicitor;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Ms. K. Walsh, Business Research and Development Manager;
Mrs. C. Sullivan, Policy and Business Development 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 Councillors Long, Newton and Whyte.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 11th February were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st March.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Brooks declared an interest in respect of item 3 – Port Health Verbal Update, on the basis that he was employed by Gordon Lyons MLA, who at the time of the previous Brexit Committee meeting, had temporarily taken up the post of DAERA Minister, given Minister Poots' treatment for his illness, and he left the meeting whilst the item was being considered.

Presentation

NI Tourism Alliance - Dr J. Stuart OBE

The Chairperson welcomed Dr Stuart OBE, Chief Executive Officer of the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance (NITA), to the meeting.

Dr Stuart advised the Committee that the NITA was established in 2018 as a joined up voice for the tourism and travel industry in Northern Ireland, representing hotels, attractions, direct marketing organisations, tour guides and transport.

**Brexit Committee,
Thursday, 11th March, 2021**

She highlighted that the tourism industry had been essentially closed since the end of transition period so many issues which might affect the tourism industry had not yet been uncovered. She added that tourism was a service with very little trading of goods and therefore not covered by the NI Protocol, however, supply chains in hospitality might be affected.

She advised that NITA was engaging with local and national government and gave the Committee an overview of the following four key areas it was focussing on:

1. Sharing of data;
2. Access to skills;
3. Reopening and rebuilding; and
4. Licenses and cabotage.

Dr Stuart reported that these were the main focus areas for tourism, but that more issues would be identified as the sector reopened, and that NITA would be working closely with businesses to try and anticipate issues in advance.

In response to a question from a Member regarding domestic tourism, Dr Stuart stated that the domestic tourism market was hugely important and that, in 2019, domestic tourism accounted for over 30 percent of the tourism business in Northern Ireland and, in 2020, it was shown to have been even more important as more local people holidayed at home.

She advised that Great Britain was the biggest market for Northern Ireland, followed by domestic tourism and tourism from the Republic of Ireland, and that in 2020, there had been a 200 percent increase in tourism from the Republic of Ireland, subsequently, feedback had suggested that Northern Ireland had far exceeded expectations. However, she reported that 2021 could be a challenging year due to the differences in the roll out of vaccination programmes.

The Chairperson thanked Dr Stuart for her presentation and she retired from the meeting.

Restricted Items

Presentation

The information contained in the discussion and presentation 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 the presentation and discussion on the following item as, due to its nature, there would be a

**Brexit Committee,
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disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust - Ms. J. Kennedy

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. J. Kennedy, Director of HR and Organisational Development at Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) to the meeting.

Ms. Kennedy provided the Committee with an overview of the implications of the NI Protocol on the delivery of services from the BHSCT.

Following discussion, the Committee thanked Ms. Kennedy for her presentation and she retired from the meeting.

The information contained in the discussion and presentation associated with the following item is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Port Health Unit - Verbal Update

The City Solicitor and Director of City Services presented the Committee with an update on the Port Health Unit.

The Committee noted the update.

Chairperson

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Presentation to Shared Island Unit/All-party Working Group

This Council will write to the Irish Government and seek representation from this Council to present to the Shared Island Unit on matters including but not limited to, planning for constitutional change, All Island Economy, Belfast to Dublin Economic Corridor, Brexit and the Irish Protocol and an All Island approach to the climate crisis.

As the second largest city on the island of Ireland, our citizens should have representation on any determination of their future.

Accordingly, to inform any presentation to the Shared Island Unit, this Council will create an elected member working group for the purpose of exploring how Belfast can establish and foster stronger social, economic and political linkages on the island of Ireland and how it can work collaboratively to avail of opportunities or deal with strategic issues and challenges to the benefit of our citizens.

Proposer: Councillor Gormley

Seconder: Councillor Donnelly

(To be debated by the Council.)

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Proposed Bank of Ireland Closures

“This Council:

- Notes the plans announced by Bank of Ireland to close 103 branches across the island of Ireland, including 3 in South Belfast;
- Notes the expectation set by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) that banks should assess customer needs and consider the availability and provision of alternative arrangements where closures are planned;
- Notes the concern expressed by the FCA that it may be harder than usual to reach all customers under the current restrictions and engage with them on closure proposals effectively;
- Supports the call from the Financial Services Union that there should be no closures of branches during the pandemic and their call for a moratorium on closures until the end of 2022;
- Agrees to write to the CEO of Bank of Ireland to call for such a moratorium.”

Proposer: Councillor McAteer

Seconder: Councillor Gormley

(To be debated by the Council)

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Violence against Women and Girls Strategy/Raise Your Voice Training

“This council notes with sadness the recent murders of Stacey Knell and Karen McClean along with Sarah Everard in London, adding to the hundreds of women and trans women across these islands who have lost their lives in gender related attacks where a man has been convicted or charged as the primary perpetrator.

We send our sympathies to their families and loved ones and we make clear our anger that these women were taken from them.

We are deeply concerned by the rising numbers of violent acts perpetrated against women and we are committed to doing everything within our powers to make Belfast more safe, fair and equal for all women.

This council welcomes the recent developments made by the Minister for Justice regarding a Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and so this council agrees to write to the Executive to ask that an open, transparent discussion and consultation about what needs to be in the strategy takes place. It is imperative that the Northern Ireland Executive listens to the voices of women and girls to provide direction and meet their needs within such a strategy.

This council will work with voluntary organisations, such as Women’s Aid, to promote the wider campaign to address violent acts perpetrated against women.

We will ensure that Belfast City Council has an up-to-date Anti-Harassment Policy in place for all council facilities and council run events. This council believes that this should set a precedent for all hospitality venues, workplaces, and events within this city to do the same.

This council will issue a commitment that elected representatives and officers of all genders will engage in training delivered by Raise Your Voice on the realities facing victims of sexual harassment and gender violence.”

Proposer: Councillor Mulholland

Seconder: Councillor Groogan

(To be debated by the Council)

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Legislation to tackle the third party sale of Pups

“That this Council expresses concerns regarding the illegal and cruel practice of puppy farming, the smuggling of puppies through the Port of Belfast and calls for the introduction of legislation to tackle the third party sale of pups and to strengthen the powers of local Councils to address the issue.”

Proposer: Councillor Newton

Seconder: Councillor Bunting

(To be debated by the Council)

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Legal Action against the Northern Ireland Environment Agency

“This Council must immediately prepare legal action against the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) for their dereliction of duty in protecting the rights of citizens around the Mullaghglass landfill site.

Dangerous odours are having a negative impact on the quality of life of our citizens who live within a large circumference of the Mullaghglass landfill site.

NIEA have refused to take action against the landfill operators and as a result, citizens of both Belfast and Lisburn are having to endure the daily effluvium of raw waste.

Clean air should be afforded to everyone, we must act now.”

Proposer: Councillor Baker

Seconder: Councillor Walsh

(To be debated by the Council)

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Support for Sign Languages Act and sign languages added to school curricula

“This Council notes that 15- 21 March was Sign Language Week, timed with the anniversary of the UK Government formally recognising British Sign Language (BSL) as a language in its own right on 18 March 2003. However, in 2021 neither BSL nor Irish Sign Language have legal status in Northern Ireland nor are sign languages part of school curricula.

This means at present, deaf people must rely on the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act (NI) (1995) to secure reasonable adjustments via sign language provision. In order to do so, deaf people are required to identify as ‘disabled’; in sharp contrast to their right to recognition as a cultural and linguistic minority under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

This Council believes there is a need to create a more accessible and inclusive society in Northern Ireland through greater learning of sign languages and awareness of Deaf culture.

It further notes this Council’s previous support for the Belfast Statement on Mental Health and Deafness following the 6th World Congress which met in Belfast in September 2014 to address issues around equal rights for deaf people in mental health care under the CRPD and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Noting the rights of deaf people to recognition as a cultural and linguistic minority under the CRPD, this Council expresses its support for the introduction of a Sign Languages Act for Northern Ireland. Further noting Article 24(b) of the CRPD that requires the State to facilitate the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community, this Council expresses its support for sign languages to be added to school curricula to ensure all children learn from the earliest opportunity.

Therefore, this Council will write to the Minister for Communities to ask when the New Decade, New Approach commitment to a Sign Language Act will be brought forward and further asks that this legislation includes provision for sign languages to be added to the Key Stage 1 and 2 Curriculum, with schools equipped to deliver these courses, as well as the introduction of sign languages as a GCSE for secondary school pupils.”

Proposer: Councillor McMullan

Seconder: Councillor Heading

(To be debated by the Council)

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10 percent pay increase for Council workers

“Over the last year, councils have led the way in efforts against the Covid-19 pandemic, providing a huge range of services and support for our communities. Local government has shown more than ever how indispensable it is.

But the pandemic has led to a massive increase in expenditure and loss of income, and the Government has failed to provide the full amount of promised support.

Local government workers have kept our communities safe throughout the pandemic, often putting themselves at considerable risk as they work to protect public health and deliver functioning services during this difficult time.

Since 2010, the local government workforce has endured years of pay restraint with the majority of pay points losing at least 23 per cent of their value since 2009/10. At the same time, workers have experienced ever-increasing workloads and persistent job insecurity.

The funding gap caused by Covid-19 will make local government employment even more precarious. There has been a disproportionate impact on women, with women making up more than three-quarters of the local government workforce.

Recent research shows that if the Westminster Government were to fully fund the unions' 2021 pay claim, around half of the money would be recouped thanks to increased tax revenue, reduced expenditure on benefits, and increased consumer spending in the local economy.

Council believes:

Our workers are public service super-heroes. They keep our communities clean and safe, look after those in need, and ensure services continue to function. Without the professionalism and dedication of our staff, the council services would not be deliverable. Local government workers deserve a proper real-term pay increase.

The Government should take responsibility to fully fund this increase; it should not put the burden on local authorities whose funding streams have greatly suffered and who have not been offered adequate support throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

Council resolves to:

Support the pay claim submitted by UNISON, GMB and Unite with NIPSA support on behalf of council and school workers, for a substantial increase with a minimum 10 per cent uplift in April 2021.

Council also calls on the Local Government Association to make urgent representations to central government to fund the NJC pay claim.

Council resolves to write to the Chancellor and Secretary of State to call for a pay increase for local government workers to be funded with new money from central government.

Finally, Council resolves to meet with local NJC union representatives to convey support for its pay claim and consider practical ways in which the council can support the campaign; including encouraging all local government workers to join a trade union.”

Proposer: Councillor Matt Collins

Seconder: Councillor Michael Collins

(To be debated by the Council)

Funding for the Citywide Tribunal Service

“This Council notes with alarm that the Belfast Citywide Tribunal service once again faces closure due to lack of funding.

Council is deeply concerned with the lack of core funding offered to this service over the past year and notes that the recent Department for Communities Budget did not include a necessary funding package to retain this vital service.

Council calls on the Minister for Communities to immediately release core funding for this service of £256,769 per annum, in order to meet the growing need and pressure that the service faces.

Until then, Council pledges to retain Belfast City Council funding for this project, through its reserves if necessary, until other sources of funding are secured. Accordingly, the Council agrees to call an emergency meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and, subsequently, a special meeting of the Council to discuss the logistics of this proposal.”

Proposer: Councillor Ferguson

Seconder: Councillor Matt Collins

(To be debated by the Council)

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